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ABSTRACT

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Today, when one is being constantly reminded that the cause of social justice is of the very essence of Christianity, it is important and helpful to reflect that this is not a new development in Christian teaching over the past hundred years, but has in fact solid roots in early Christian tradition. One of the strongest and most eloquent spokesmen for this demand for Christian responsibility and involvement in the issues of social justice is John Chrysostom, bishop, pastor, teacher and prophet in the Christian communities of Antioch and Constantinople in the latter part of the fourth century.

By way of introduction, a brief survey of the Early Church's attitude to wealth from its Gospel origins to the end of the third century is provided. Then follow three chapters: the first deals with the proper use of wealth, i.e. alms-giving and rich people as stewards of the poor. Chrysostom argued that some wealth is given by God to rich people, who in turn are to act as God's stewards. Riches used in the service of other people are much more likely to be considered gifts from God while wealth that is ill-gotten or selfishly spent is usually thought to be permitted by God rather than specially provided. The second deals with Chrysostom's argument that rich people who abuse their wealth make the poor suffer. He observes says that their wealth is derived from dishonest business, the misfortune of others and taking interest on loans. Finally, in the third chapter, Chrysostom's teaching on the use and misuse of wealth in the light of the after-life are discussed. The third chapter also examines the arguments of those scholars who suggest that Chrysostom's works were either socialist or communist and concludes that they are neither.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MPG	Migne, Jean-Paul Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeco-latina. Paris, 1862.

To my parents, to my grandmother
and to Michelle

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The earliest Christians lived in daily expectation of the end of the world, which they both feared and hoped for. In later times this expectation came to fade away, partly because of the passage of time and partly because upper class Christians had more of a stake in the affairs of this world. This development influenced the whole course of Christian life and thought.[1]

Jesus Christ counselled some of his followers to sell their possessions and contribute the proceeds to the poor(St. Mark's Gospel 10:21); He told them that they could not serve God and "Mammon", the God of wealth. In the Gospel of St. Luke one finds denunciations of the rich and the same spirit is reflected in the epistle of St. James. On the other hand, St. Paul does not denounce the wealthy, even though he recommends an attitude of aloofness from one's possessions (I Corinthians 7, 29-30).

In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles there is a description of primitive church life at Jerusalem which clearly shows, according to R. M. Grant,[2] that the Christians there practised a form of communism, even though aspects of voluntary cooperation were preserved. When the end of the world did not come, and when famine struck the Orient between 46 A.D. and 48 A.D., it was

necessary for Christian communities elsewhere to come to the aid of Jerusalem by making "the collection for the saints." Grant[3] says:

> "Jerusalem communism was apparently unique, and after the decline of Jewish Christianity we hear no more of it. In (St) Paul's Churches it was not a regular practice."

The social crisis of the Roman Empire that peaked in the third century, although improving in the two following centuries, led to the impoverishment of great masses of people throughout the Empire and to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few who for their part ruthlessly exploited those without property.[4] As a result of this social reality, reflected in its own composition, the Christian community saw itself obliged to consider the background of the claim to be a community of equals (Galatians 3:28, I Corinthians 12:13) and to strive to reach a solution that could prevent social differences and tensions being accepted within its own ranks and stop those who were discriminated against socially because of their poverty being neglected in the Church too. That poor people were humiliated twice over in this way is shown by the Epistle of James 2:1-4.

Ever since St. Paul's mission to the cities, well-off people also joined the Christian movement and placed their houses at the disposal of the congregations as places where they could meet. However, they will not have been very numerous. In any case it would be wrong to see Christianity only as the religion of the lower orders. This is shown among other things by Pliny's letter to the Emperor Trajan in the early second century in which he says that members of every social class were numbered among the Christians (Ep. 10:96:9). In other words the problems created by the coming together of different social classes within the congregation arose at an early stage. How this conflict was tackled

theologically could be guided by one of two Biblical methods. On the one hand the Old Testament already contained strong criticism of the rich (for example Amos, chapter eight, verses 4-8, eight Isaiah chapter 5, verses 8-10 and chapter 10, verses 1-3; Sirach chapter 34, verses 24-27) which was continued in the New Testament and further developed under the influence of the early Jewish spirituality of the poor (St. Luke 4:16, 7:22, 16:33 and 19-31, St. Mark 4:19, 10:24, James 1: 9-10, 2:5, 5:1-6). The high point is reached with Jesus calling the poor blessed (St. Luke 6:20). On the basis of this verse it was possible to ascribe preference to the poor in the matter of salvation. On the other hand, there was the method of using one's possessions to do good. Here too the roots are to be found in Judaism (Proverb 3:27). It is to be found in St. Paul's letters (Romans 12:13, 15:26, II Corinthians 8:4) and in the Synoptics (St. Matthew 6:3-4, 25:35-40, St. Luke 19:8). It was on the basis of these divergent ideas - renouncing possessions and using them for good works - that the integration of rich and poor had to be tackled. This was all the more imperative as the imminent expectation of the Parousia gave way to coming to terms with living in the world, and as the crisis of the Roman Empire intensified. Since the Christian message of salvation in Jesus Christ applied to everyone, because everyone stood in need of salvation it was a question of winning the rich for the Church without neglecting the poor. Hence a certain legitimating of property was necessary. A certain unsavouriness always clung to the wealthy and their wealth in the Church, even if they were not promised Heaven, but were given a cry of woe. Tertullian expressed this as follows: "If Heaven belongs to the poor it does not belong to the rich." (Ad Uxorem 2:8:5)

THE CHURCH BEFORE CONSTANTINE

In two places in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (2:44-45, 4:32-37) the community of goods is described as an expression of the love based on Christ which the members of the community have for each other. It found its Christian justification in the letter of Barnabas (first half of the second century); "If you share in that which is imperishable how much more in those things that are perishable?" (Barnabas 19:8, an argument echoed in Didache 4:8). Here what is called for is the renunciation of property for the benefit of others and in fact a new attitude to property. The argument is based not on the order of creation but on pointing to sharing in the goods of salvation that have been won in Christ. This feeling of mutuality must not be exhausted in theological speculation but must be made actual in social life. The Apology of Aristides (around 125 A.D.) presents a picture of the community that is filled with mutual solidarity and in which those who have give happily to those who have not (The Apology of Aristides 15:7)

It seems likely that among Christians who had parted from their possessions for the sake of some good work one would find little understanding for those who clung on to their wealth. The Shepherd of Hermas (around 150 A.D.) lays down that the rich are unfit for building up the Church because they are all tangled up in the world, it is only when they lose their wealth that they become useful. Nevertheless in the community described in this work there are rich people who are living in luxury while others are in need. Salvation for the well-off can only result from them giving up their possessions. Their goods, after all, are God's gifts which is meant for all and on which they have no exclusive claim. Poverty is an evil that threatens existence to the point that one is obliged to help the poor. Anyone who fails to do this

burdens himself with blood-guilt. In The Shepherd of Hermas one can see the radical demand for the complete renunciation of possessions being watered down to the demand to use one's possessions for the benefit of others. Whether those with possessions met at least this latter demand decided their affiliation to the Church.

Tertullian, as was mentioned earlier, sharply criticised the wealthy. Indeed he characterised Christ as the One who always justifies the poor and condemns the rich in advance. Tertullian also assumes the existence of a community of goods when he remarks that Christians have everything in common apart from their wives (Apology 39). However, this statement would need to be interpreted as an idealised picture presented for the benefit of the non-Christian readership he was aiming at. This is suggested by the fact that in the same context he talks of everyone voluntarily contributing to the alms box. Clearly for him alms giving was a form of renunciation of possessions which at least in intention corresponded to having everything in common.

Despite many difficulties in obtaining the financial means needed to support those in need, the early Church's system of looking after the poor worked effectively.[5] Money was raised by regular collections during services, by special contributions in emergencies or by larger donations. It was a question of voluntary giving: an obligatory contribution on the lines of the Old Testament tithes was not practicable. The relief fund was controlled by the Bishop. The sometimes generous contributions to the churches made it possible to support substantial numbers of poor people: around 250 A.D., one thousand five hundred widows and people in need were being provided for in Rome (Eusebius, Church History, vi:43:11) by Bishop Cornelius. Charitable activity found expression in visiting the sick, providing work and accommodating Christians on their travels.[6] In this way

it offered members of the community a certain social security which among other things had the effect that beggars were unknown among Christians. However, with the exception of major disasters, this welfare service was directed only at Christians. In looking after the poor the pre-Constantian Church had created a quasi-state organisation that looked after its members in a way that was not possible for the State. It was precisely this active help for the poor, which within the Church was seen as a major task, that created one of the organizational pre-conditions for the Church's incorporation into the State under Constantine. The Church had shown it was capable of building up an efficient system under the bishop's leadership in order to provide material aid. It had also given some indications of how it might be possible to provide a balance between social differences and contrasts. For the most part it had succeeded in unifying rich and poor without major conflicts by calling on the former to show solidarity and to use their wealth for socially beneficial ends.

The social status quo was not attacked, but its negative effects on the weakest members of society were softened, at least within the Church. Looking forward to the Church's subsequent attainment of a position of power in the Constantinian Empire one could say that its effects on behalf of the poor brought it the bonus of being trusted as the protector of those no-one else respected. On the basis of its theory the poor in the Church were not just the objects of other people's charitable activities but were on equal level with the rich as free-agents who received from the rich what God had bestowed on them. This theory found its most remarkable expression in the creation of the order of widows: one of the weakest sections of society became a respected class and thus contributed to the poor becoming independent agents.

Even with regard to the relationship of the rich and poor it was part of Christianity's earliest experience that claim and reality did not always match up. The cynicism expressed in the remarks about a brother's need recorded by the Epistle of James, 2:16, and the lack of solidarity were well-known symptoms later.

Thus the Shepherd of Hermas tells us that rich people stayed away from the community because they were afraid they would be asked to give something. They shunned public contact with other members of the community and preferred to associate with heathens. Something that sounds like an everyday occurrence indicates a particular source of tension.

The wealthy attempted to limit the community to the religious sphere and not to live out comprehensively the implications of being a community. For the author of the Shepherd of Hermas this was about an abandonment of the idea of community, about which there could be no half-measures. In addition there was the fact that because of their involvement in political and social duties the wealthy got mixed up with non-Christian practices (Tertullian, De Idolatria 18:21). They stood in particular danger of apostasy. St. Cyprian of Carthage recorded after the Decian persecution that the wealthy were especially quick to fall away, and indeed the whole persecution had occurred because of spreading greed (De Lapsis 5-6).

In his view their wealth was more important to them than their salvation. In this context he had grave doubts whether the wealthy were at all suited for discipleship (ibid 11-12), and after the persecution they were once again living in luxury (ibid 30). One must accept that this kind of attitude on the part of wealthy Christians -

lax in times of peace and unreliable in persecution - placed a heavy and permanent burden on relationships within the community. The community in Rome, for example, was split in 217 A.D., for social reasons when the former slave Calixtus was elected bishop. Since 198 A.D. he had been responsible for administering the cemetery and organising relief for the poor. He was so successful in this that when it came to an election the choice fell on him and not on the well-educated Hippolytus. The latter's contacts extended as far as circles close to the Emperor, and he moved among those with property. Calixtus' programme had a strong welfare stamp to it and looked forward to those with limited means having more influence in the community. The educated and the well-off joined Hippolytus in walking out. Only three decades later the same occurred in the dispute between Novatian, on the one hand, and his well-off adherents and, on the other , Comitus. The social differences could result in the break up of the community if other factors of a more or less theological nature were added to them, as was later to be the case with the Donatists too.[7]

To sum up, it seems that the Church of the first three centuries had not established any coherent theories to clarify relations between the wealthy and the poor. It reacted to the situation it was faced with and tried to transplant the Biblical message into a variety of contexts. It did not insist on everyone giving up his or her possessions but clung firmly to the view that possessions were gifts of God for the benefit of all. Wealth had to be shared with those who had nothing. The lack of solidarity that so often came in for criticism was to remain the problem during the centuries that followed.[8]

THE PERIOD OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

(i) The Church in the State.

With the reign of the Emperor Constantine the poor relief that had previously operated within the Church was now promoted by the State and seen as part of the State's social policy. The bishop, who had already been given the honorary title of `Father of the poor' (Jerome, Ep. 52:6), became the protector of the poor and the exploited. The State too recognised this role[9] which had its origins in the Church's welfare activities before the fourth century. Ultimately the bishop was the only person who could still represent the interests of the disadvantaged over and against corrupt officials and landlord bent on exploitation. The financial means needed for this came from imperial donations and especially also from bequests, which the Church was able to accept from 321 A.D. onwards. Skilful financial policies, already to a considerable extent in the hands of specifically appointed stewards, increased the Church's landed wealth to the point that at the end of the Roman Empire in the West it was among its largest landowners. This led to the danger that it would side completely with the `haves' and support their interests. Indeed, as far as slavery was concerned, its attitude developed in this direction.[10] But as a rule it had a different approach to the poor, who included an even larger section of the population. The economic crisis was escalating, thanks to a burden of taxation that had become almost unsupportable and that was laid on the inhabitants of the empire to support the enormous expenses of the court and of maintaining the army and the administration, as well as inflation and the permanently unsettling effect of barbarian incursions.[11] On the land numerous peasants sought protection from taxes with patrons, the possessors of enormous estates who were directly responsible to the governor and enjoyed fiscal

autonomy.[12] In any case for peasants who had formerly been free this meant that, since they often could not pay the rent, they became dependent on the landlords and were treated like slaves. If necessary private armies of thugs and corrupt courts ensured that the rich maintained the upper hand over the poor and rapaciously increased their holdings (Basil, Homily 7:5). In the cities, too, the number of poor people dependent on welfare was multiplying. In this way the excessive accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few rich people was contrasted with the progressive impoverishment of broad masses of the population. But it was not only the economic situation that had changed in the fourth century and the fifth century but also the religious implications: this was now happening in a society in which Christianity had become the dominant religious power. For the most part the exploiters and the exploited belonged to the same Christian community.

Efforts to accumulate more and more wealth were the subject of sermons by Zeno, bishop of Verona from 363 to 372 (Tract 15, 14, 21), and St. Basil the Great (Homily 6). What they had to say about the lack of compassion shown by wealthy Christians indicates that Christian solidarity with the poor was flagging.

In view of the unscrupulousness of the rich and the partial surrender of sections of the Church to their interests it is not surprising that there were radical movements in opposition to this tendency. Thus Eustathius of Sebaste (who died after 377) insisted that the rich had to separate themselves from their entire wealth if they wanted to find hope with God: he also encouraged slaves to flee. These teachings were condemned by the Synod of Gangra.[13]

Therefore, given this historical context of the situation of the wealthy and the poor it was necessary for a

preacher like Chrysostom to preach about a Christian attitude to its use and misuse.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT IN PATRISTIC LITERATURE

The early Christians who wrote on wealth, the misuse of wealth and poverty generally did so in response to a specific set of problems and questions; the arguments which an author might offer in one context were not necessarily in accord with those developed by other Christians in another context. As a result there is no document or individual to which one can turn for a definitive expression of the mind of the ancient church on this matter. No statement on the issues surrounding wealth and poverty ever attained normative status. On the other hand, even a brief survey of the literature reveals the recurrence of particular features. Two of these are especially striking. First a persistent call to alms giving was coupled with the promise of a divine reward. Second, the very persons to whom this exhortation and promise were most explicitly directed, wealthy Christians (the matter of Chrysostom's audience will be expanded on later), were treated with considerable ambivalence. An underlying theme of misgiving pervades references to the wealthy.

The frequent repetition of these two features suggests that the practise of alms-giving and negative attitudes toward the rich must have been prominent components in the thinking of early Christians.

An examination of these two elements in three different contexts, therefore, should provide some access to the factors which shaped the teaching of the Church on wealth and the misuse of it. Indeed any agreement amongst the views of these Church Fathers on the practice of alms giving (correct use of wealth) and on the situation of

wealthy Christians should provide a reliable guide to the mind of the early Church as a whole.

I have been very selective in my survey of the Patristic literature because of the limitations of an M.A. thesis. I will therefore consider a sampling of the works of two significant figures whose lives suggest something of the geographical and chronological range of the early Church itself. St Clement of Alexandria and St. Cyprian of Carthage will serve as spokesmen from the East and West respectively, prior to the conversion of Constantine (312) when the position of the Church in the Roman Empire was in jeopardy.

ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Ambivalence toward the wealthy was not peculiar to Christians. A pervasive mistrust of the material world characterised the age, as the ascetic withdrawal not only of individuals but also of organised groups shows. The Essenes, Therapeutae, and Neopythagoreans afford notable examples of such ascetic communities.[14] Among Christians voluntary poverty existed as early as the second century, and monasticism was already beginning to emerge in Egypt by the beginning of the third century.[15] The effect of this widespread asceticism was not lost on the Church at large. The radical critique of material goods posed by those who renounced them called into question the salvation of those with more worldly attachments.

In one of the Empire's most prosperous and cosmopolitan cities, Alexandria, around the beginning of the third century, this negativity toward wealth became quite specific: some Christians began to encourage a literal interpretation of Christ's statement, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." Understandably, such

an interpretation caused considerable dismay in the city's catechetical school where a substantial number of those receiving instruction were themselves wealthy.[16] For some of the catechumens hope of beatitude gave way to despair.[17]

As head of the school Clement (c. 150- c. 215) responded with a treatise on the story of the rich young man in St. Mark's Gospel, 10:17-31.

Written in the form of a sermon, St. Clement's treatise: Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved? developed a doctrine of wealth that was to be of fundamental importance for the further development of this subject. He argued that the attainment of salvation does not depend upon external matters, such as the outward condition of wealth or poverty, but on the internal condition of the soul. It is through the soul that one attains knowledge of God, and knowledge of God is life. The soul, therefore, must be purified of all disorders which distract it from God. Passionate attachments, such as the attraction to possessions, are among the foremost impediments to be removed.[18]

St Clement uses an allegorical interpretation (Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved, 5) to combat a literal understanding of the story of the rich young man. Even the command to sell everything (St. Mark 10:21) is not to be taken literally: it is rather a question of not becoming subject to riches (Who Is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?11). What is important, according to St. Clement, is the attitude which one has toward riches, not the riches themselves. Wealth is morally indifferent and it is the use that is made of it that determines whether it counts for good or evil (ibid 14). The complete renunciation of one's possessions would mean that nothing at all was left for one to do good with (ibid 13). The world's goods are a gift of God which are given to the

possessor for the benefit of people in general so that he can let his brothers and sisters have a share in them (ibid 16).

Thus Christ's command to the young man could not have been a literal command for him to renounce his possessions, for such a renunciation would have been merely an outward act. What Christ really required was the internal renunciation of his attachment to them (ibid 11-12, 14-15, 20). Elsewhere also St. Clement was even more explicit in the relegation of riches to the category of things indifferent and in his emphasis upon the necessity of interior detachment as a precondition for knowledge of God, for example, in Miscellanies 2.20, 4.6; in The Instructor, Books 2, 3, St. Clement encouraged austerity of habits as appropriate to the Christian life.

Rebecca H. Weaver[19] argues that St. Clement, in employing and developing these notions, was drawing less upon elements within the Christian tradition than upon popular philosophical currents of the day, particularly stoicism which taught that the ideal life was one freed of passionate attachments, including the attachment to possessions. In themselves possessions are morally neutral; it is only their use which can be judged good or evil. However, more convincingly, one can argue against this view and say that St. Clement was in the Christian tradition by using an allegorical approach, as Rainer Kampling says.[20] Also there is evidence of this kind of teaching in the New Testament, as well as in other early Christian writers (for example, I Corinthians 6:18, 7:29-31, letter to Philemon, 4:11-12, I John 2:15-16, Sentences of Sextus 18, 49, 98, 130, Origen On Prayer, 29:5-6).

St. Clement insisted that alms giving is the means by which the Christian can fulfil the Scriptural command of love for the neighbour. The identification of that

neighbour, however, is crucial. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, St. Clement argued, the neighbour was the one who healed the wounded: thus our neighbour must be the Saviour who heals our wounds, who eradicates our passions (Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved? 29). It is he whom the commandment enjoins us to love, but love for our neighbour Christ can be expressed only indirectly through acts of love for Christ's friends, His disciples.

The important role of alms giving now emerges. The rich can use their assets to care for the poor, since the poor stand particularly in the love of Christ, and one should give to them of what one possess and in doing so caring for Christ Himself. As a result of the difficulty of identifying Christ's true disciples, St. Clement advised the wealthy simply to seek out those in need and give to them. In feeding the hungry, in clothing the naked, in receiving the stranger, and in visiting the sick and imprisoned, the wealthy cannot fail to benefit some who are beloved of God, and thus have influence in Heaven (ibid, 30-33). St Clement did not make a simple equation of poverty and discipleship, but he did suggest that among the poor the disciples of Christ are to be found.

The advantage of befriending the friends of Christ can hardly be overstressed. The beloved of Christ have His ear, and can be expected to pray for the salvation of their earthly benefactors (ibid 35). Through generosity to the Lord's friends (the poor) one is, in effect, buying their prayers, God's good will, and ultimately one's own salvation (ibid 32). The giving of alms, or Christian charity, has as its motive the attainment of divine reward in eternity. For very practical reasons, therefore, it would be unwise to renounce one's fortune. Instead, the wealth should be used to obtain beatitude (ibid 32).

Rainer Kampling[21] says that St. Clement deduces the duty of giving from the example of Christ. One has to imitate His love in our relations with our fellow men and women (ibid 37). St. Clement thus succeeds in legitimizing private property while at the same time laying moral obligations on the owner of property. He or she may not have to rid himself or herself of what he or she owns, but he or she must share it with those in need. The poor are not downgraded to mere recipients but are given an important mediatory role. In this way St. Clement did not call existing social relationships into question but was concerned to achieve a "compromise of effective balance"[22] that bound rich and poor together through alms. This provided the framework for future discussion. While criticism of wealth that was unjust because it was used selfishly was retained, the rich were put under the obligation to use their wealth for those in need and as it were to make this wealth legitimate.

To sum up, according to St. Clement, possessions which are morally neutral in themselves can be used to enormous spiritual advantage. When rightly employed, they can win favour with God. Thus one can see that the beginning of the second century at least one influential teacher in the East was advocating alms giving on the basis of its redemptive value. The motivation for charity was the hope of Heaven. The conditions of wealth and poverty were of no ultimate consequence; it was one's attitude toward possessions and the behaviour which issued from that attitude which counted before God.

ST. CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

As mentioned before, the views of St. Clement of Alexandria on wealth emerged from the environment in which he lived. He was the head of the Catechetical school with a substantial number of wealthy constituents,

many of whom were troubled by the ascetic demands of the age. The themes which he developed were to appear again and again, reshaped by the constraints of divergent contexts.

About three decades after St. Clement's death, Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, shortly after his election to the episcopacy (c. 248), prepared a treatise for the instruction of wealthy women who had dedicated their virginity to Christ. In this treatise, called On the Dress of Virgins, St. Cyprian argued, amongst other things, for the salvific value of alms giving. Riches are used properly when they are employed for the salvation of the possessor. If the virgin devotes her wealth to the benefit of the poor, the prayers of gratitude of her beneficiaries will promote her cause with God. This bears a striking similarity with St. Clement's view. Indeed, the Lord will strengthen her resolve of virginity, forgive her transgressions, and reward her with salvation (On The Dress of Virgins, 11). So, like St. Clement, St. Cyprian could find a positive, redemptive value in the possession of wealth.

In the years which followed, St. Cyprian's views on wealth underwent a marked hardening. It seems probable that the severe financial difficulties experienced by the Church at Carthage during the calamitous years of 250-252 contributed to, if not determined, the new severity in the bishop's position. Indeed also during the ten years he was Bishop of Carthage a fairly rapid series of calamities necessitated the active help of the wealthy: the Decian persecution in 250 caused many Carthaginian Christians, especially the wealthy ones, to apostatize. Further tragic events included a plague from 252 to 254 and incursions by nomads bent on plunder. Beyond this the effects of the Empire's economic crisis were becoming more strongly noticeable.

Even without the defection of wealthy members, the persecution itself would have taken a toll on the resources of the Church: care for imprisoned Christians and their families was not without cost. Moreover, soon after the persecution ended, money had to be raised for the ransom of those Christians in neighbouring Numidia who had been made hostages in the nomadic raid. The plague, which depleted the population and interrupted commerce, created even further financial strain. Thus during a period of multiple crises, when the demands upon the Church's treasury would have been considerable, the resources of some of the wealthiest members simply were not available.[23] The inconsistency of the rich was not lost on the bishop.

In his treatise, On the Lapsed, written at the conclusion of the persecution, St. Cyprian characterised the Roman oppression of the Church as God's judgement on the laxity and greed of its members, and he attributed the failure of many of the lapsed to their enslavement to their wealth. They had feared the loss of riches more than the loss of Christ. Moreover, once the persecution had ended, rather than lamenting their sin and engaging in heartfelt medicinal penance as prescribed by their bishop, they had continued to pamper themselves in self-indulgence and luxury (On the Lapsed 5-7, 10-12, 30).

The generally benign tone of "On the Dress of Virgins" had turned harsh. St. Cyprian was now convinced of the hazards of wealth and the unreliability of wealthy Christians. The enjoyment of possessions, with all the attendant pleasures, undermined allegiance to Christ, and derivatively, to the bishop.

Yet if St. Cyprian's attitude to wealth had changed from the earlier treatise, his perception of its proper use had not. With the Church treasury depleted and the lapsed in need of suitable means of penance, St. Cyprian

developed a theme which he had employed earlier: the value of alms-giving with regard to salvation.[24] So St. Cyprian wrote a short treatise On Works and Alms. What is particularly remarkable about it is the high value attributed to alms-giving. Also in this treatise he brought forth passage after passage of Scripture as evidence that the purging of sin and the appeasement of divine wrath are accomplished through works of mercy, specifically alms-giving: alms ensure salvation (On Works and Alms, 1). Just as baptism wipes out one's old sins, so alms are capable of doing away with more recent ones (ibid 2). Prayer and fasting obtain their end only when accompanied by good deeds, for those who have not been merciful to the poor cannot expect to obtain the mercy of God (ibid 5, 6). The reality of the last judgement provides the motivation for Christian charity. More positively, care for the poor marks one as a child of Abraham (ibid 8).

However some feared that the liberty which their bishop urged would impoverish them and cause deprivation to their families. St. Cyprian responded that such reasoning is sheer folly. To hoard one's possessions out of concern for the future is self-defeating. Instead, it is through generosity that the future is secured. Not only will God provide the necessities of life for the righteous, but good works will buy that purity of heart which deserves to see God. Charity makes God one's debtor (ibid. 11-14, 26).

In a similar fashion it is a mistake for parents to accumulate wealth in order to provide an earthly inheritance for their children. On the contrary, they should use their resources to provide a heavenly one. It is the responsibility of the parents to redeem their child's transgressions, and the more children they have, the greater the parental obligation to charity (ibid 18, 19). Furthermore, St. Cyprian used biblical examples

(ibid 4-8) in an effort to convince the well off that they and their children would suffer no loss (ibid. 9-12). This could not arise if they allowed Christ to share in their wealth (ibid 13). He mingled criticism and exhortation to urge them to exercise charity.

R.H. Weaver[25] says that St. Cyprian's teachings on the redemptive value of alms giving and the hazards inherent in riches clearly had antecedents in St. Clement of Alexandria (2 Clement 16:4). Kampling[26] goes back even further and says that St. Cyprian relied also on an earlier tradition like that of the Shepherd of Hermas. The congruence of their arguments suggests that by the middle of the third century in both East and West these notions had at least limited acceptance. Yet with St. Cyprian they take on a somewhat different character than they had with St. Clement: "The urgency which he recommends alms giving as a means of atonement needs also to be understood as indicating that it was not easy to move those with wealth to give generously." (R. Kampling).

In conclusion, he pointed to the example of the community in Jerusalem. He then argued that everything that comes from God belongs to all in common and serves brotherly solidarity: hence the wealthy man who gives to others from his possessions is an imitator of God, inasmuch as he is allowing the order of creation to re-establish itself as it should (ibid 25). In this way St. Cyprian justifies alms giving not just with the argument from its effectiveness in atonement but also from the common ownership of this world's goods intended by the Creator.

Whereas St. Clement held the idea of interior detachment from wealth as a necessary step toward knowledge of God and had encouraged alms giving as a means of winning the favour of God, St. Cyprian's increasingly pervasive theme was the need to forestall in this life the spectre of the

Last Judgement. Alms giving was a means to stave off the deserved divine retribution. These differences in emphasis can be explained at least partially by the differences in context. St. Clement's purpose was to encourage and guide rich Christians who had been dismayed by the harsh judgements of ascetic rigourism. St. Cyprian's intention was different. His demoralizing experience with the disobedient rich had created within him a profound distrust of the wealthy. Alms giving provided a penitential device for detaching the lapsed from the entanglements of their possessions and reincorporating them into the ranks of the faithful. The resources of the penitent rich would also serve the charitable work of the Church.

The themes from both these saints, on wealth, received further development in the work of St. John Chrysostom.

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S CONTEXT

Chrysostom Baur relates the uncertainty of John Chrysostom's birth date. He finally suggests a date between the years 344 A.D. and 354 A.D., probably 354 in Antioch in Syria.[27] His father, Secundus, was an army officer and provided a comfortable living for his family. Unfortunately Secundus died shortly after Chrysostom's birth, and his young wife Anthusa was left to care for the family alone. Philip Schaff says of Anthusa, "She gave her son an admirable education, and early planted in his soul the gems of piety, which afterwards bore the richest fruits for himself and the Church." Schaff further states, "By her admonitions and the teachings of the Bible, he was secured against the seduction of heathenism."[28]

Chrysostom learned the art of oratory from the sophist Libanius. Baur refers to Libanius as "The most

significant champion of the ancient classical culture and at the same time the best orator of his day."[29] Chrysostom also studied philosophy. All of his studies were in the schools of Antioch.[30]

After baptism in his late teens or early twenties, Chrysostom turned his attention to the study of Scriptures and a life of piety. He desired the monastic life but practised his asceticism at home until his mother died.[31] He seems to have practiced severe asceticism as a monk for six years near Antioch until his health broke and he was obliged to return to the world.[32] The last two years of monastic life were spent living in a cave from which he finally emerged in the winter of 380-381, sick and half frozen.[33]

In 381, following his return to Antioch, Chrysostom was ordained deacon. He performed various ecclesiastical services including distribution of Church funds to the poor and sick in the city.[34] Chrysostom's experience as deacon in Antioch seems to have contributed greatly to his later preaching on wealth and poverty. Antioch at this time has been described by Baur: "The wealth and luxury of nobles and the successful merchant contrasted strongly with the poverty and misery of the slaves and the wage earners, for whom no social legislation existed, whose only help was the public help and the alms of the Church.[35]

Frederick Farrar says, "From his work as deacon, Chrysostom derived an ever deepening impression of the misery of the world."[36] Stephens further states: "The deacons' function of searching out and relieving the necessitous by distribution of alms must have been peculiarly congenial to him. There is no Christian duty on which he more constantly and earnestly insists than that of alms-giving, not only in order to alleviate the sufferings of poverty, but as a means of counteracting

the inordinate avarice and selfish luxury which were the prevailing vices in the higher ranks of society, both in Antioch and Constantinople.[37]

Five years later he was ordained as a priest and served primarily as preacher in Antioch until his elevation to Patriarch of Constantinople in 398. Galusha Anderson described his preaching as popular, but accurate, expositions of the Scriptures always thorough, applied to meet the real needs of the congregation.[38] The change from priest to Patriarch of Constantinople was against Chrysostom's wishes, but he seems to have resigned himself to it and entered into the work energetically.[39] After a short period of popularity, he found himself confronted by several enemies made by his denunciation of the vices and follies of the clergy and aristocracy.[40]

Finally, Chrysostom's enemies (including Empress Eudoxia and Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria) conspired against him, deposing him in 403 at the Synod of the Oak. Charges brought against him were false, but Chrysostom surrendered peacefully and went into exile. The superstitious Eudoxia recalled him quickly after she interpreted an earthquake as God's wrath against the banishment of Chrysostom. In 404, however, Chrysostom was again banished. He died in 407 during a forced journey into further exile.[41]

CONSTANTINOPLE AT THE TIME OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Ever since Constantine the Great's era the Church received favourable financial measures. The Church became the recipient of spectacular imperial benefactions: the emperor constructed numerous ecclesiastical buildings, provided substantial sums of money and property to insure the prosperity and increase of faith, and gave lavishly to those whom the Church

traditionally supported: the poor, the sick, widows and orphans. This improvement in the financial status of the Church made possible a considerable expansion of its charitable work. To some degree the Church even began to function as a welfare agent of the state. For several decades at least, clerics became the distributors of the grain ration provided by the government.[42]

Also one result of this situation that the Church found herself in was that the generosity of wealthy Christians was no longer absolutely indispensable to the benevolent work of the Church. The Church could have continued and even expanded its care for those in need without the full compliance of its richest members. However, a significant disadvantage of this was that many wealthy Christians had no incentive to contribute to a considerably enriched Church. Therefore R. H. Weaver [43] says that Chrysostom, to some extent of course, was reacting against the indifference of wealthy Christians as St. Cyprian had reacted against their fickleness and impertinence, since the expanded capacities of the Church and its enormous charitable outlays in no way gets rid of the responsibility of the individual before God.[44] Weaver says: "The circumstances of the Church had changed, but even across the Constantian chasm the need to pay the price for sin remained.[45]

Comparatively the level of social life in Constantinople was higher than in the West[46] because of the economic, political and spiritual advantages offered by the new capital. It is true that the ruling classes influenced the Eastern Empire, nevertheless, their spiritual influence was limited, because they were ruled by the desire for wealth which was a great hindrance to spiritual development.[47] Chrysostom preached to the rich, urging them to give up their avarice, to help the poor and not to bear themselves in a haughty or condescending manner toward the poor.[48] The rich man is at the bottom

like a city without walls, given up defencelessly to all the attacks of the malicious enemy. The rich are also much harder to teach and to discipline than the poor. For the soul of the rich man is full of vices and follies, of ambition, of numberless desires and curiosities, of wrath and ill-humour, of avarice, of unrighteousness and of whatever other vices there are.[49]

The rich people displayed their wealth in their luxurious life, that is to say, in the silver and gold dinner services, the heavy tables, the soft beds and carpets, the golden pitchers and goblets, the army of young, beautiful and richly clad servants, the many musicians with their devilish songs and the shameless dancers.[50] Chrysostom again and again condemned a luxurious lifestyle.[51] Sozomen[52] writes that "the people depended so much on Chrysostom, and were so insatiable to hear his sermons, that they brought him into danger by their pushing and shoving: every one wished to come nearer to him, in order to hear him better. During the sermon, he sat, not on the episcopal throne, as was customary, but at the lectors ambo (the pulpit) in order to be in the midst of the people." Gibbon writes that Chrysostom's reproach against the degeneracy of the Christians in Constantinople was itself dignified by some ideas of superiority and enjoyment.[53]

Constantine the Great had been the founder of the economic policy in Byzantium so that it had all the marks of Roman oppression of the masses. The same economic policy had been continued by the other ruler from the West, the Emperor Theodosius. The historians of that time write about the cruel taxes which were imposed by the State and especially by Theodosius, who needed money to pay the Gothic soldiers. Levtchenko and Cordatos[54] quote a lot of sources which are witnesses to the difficult position of the people because of the heavy taxes. It is true that the Christian Church protected

the people who were persecuted by reason of the taxes.[55] The taxes which burdened the poor people were so heavy that they caused the violent riots of Antioch in 387, and of Thessalonica in 390. Chrysostom preached against those who cause the misery of the poor, and against those who caused the misery of the poor, and against those who wasted the money of the people.[56]

The population of the Eastern Empire during the fourth century was divided into three classes. The higher class of the "Honestiores" the lower of the "Humiliores" and the slaves. The inequality in society led to the inequality of the laws.[57]

Chrysostom's predecessor, Patriarch Nectarius, erected a new Palace[58] "with considerable splendour and luxury ..." But the revenues, which Chrysostom's predecessors had consumed in pomp and luxury, he diligently applied to the establishment of hospitals. It was an open scandal at that time a number of bishops had acquired their offices through simony, others had shown themselves far too greedy for money and riches. Some bishops enriched their relatives with Church property, or wasted it in other ways, some who had no see took dioceses by force; some ambitious priests accused their bishops of heresy, says Gibbon, or other lapses in the hope of succeeding them. Chrysostom made a series of reforms amongst the clergy themselves. He gave himself as an example of the simple apostolic life to his fellow bishops and the clergy. He had the marble of the bishop's palace sold, and used the money for social and charitable purposes. He abolished the great banquets which had been so numerous under Nectarius, and which had caused so much expense, because he considered it "a robbing of the temples", to use the property of the Church for such things."[59]

In these social conditions, Chrysostom advocated the most vigorous principles which he not only preached but also

practised. He appears to have used for this purpose a part of the Church treasure. The splendid example of St. Basil the Great had moved Chrysostom and he, for his part, seems to have served as a model and example for others. "The money which he managed to save by his economies he used for the erection of hospitals for the sick, and hospices for the strangers, which were very badly needed. He not only provided those which already existed with a richer income, but built new ones, and at the head of each he placed two suitable priests who provided doctors, cooks and nurses for the sick."[60] In fact, the hymnody of the Orthodox Church praises both the virtues and the social conflicts of the Doctor of the Church. St. John Chrysostom is called "The Father of the injured, orphans, widows and the poor," "to the injured the most speedy help," the introducer of Divine Charity." "food of the men who hunger," "provider for poor men." [61]

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S CONGREGATION

I want to look in particular at just who, and from what social class, were the people who listened to Chrysostom preach.

It is easiest to approach the subject from his many homilies in which it should be possible to pick up hints of the kinds of people he was addressing. One's first impression is that they were remarkably patient of rhetoric pitched at a high level of stylistic and exegetical sophistication. The implication being that his listeners were assumed by John to have enjoyed an expensive education - that they were from the upper-most ranks of society. R. MacMullen[62] says that this is confirmed by Chrysostom calling his audience the rich, comparing them to the poor who are not before him. For example, in Chrysostom's twenty second homily (PG 59.138) on St. John's Gospel, also in his seventy seventh (PG

61.420) homily on St. John's Gospel the poor are `ekeinoi' in contrast to `you'. In homily twenty four on Romans (PG 60.626) `you' invite the poor to your table: `you' would not want to be such a one as that rope-maker or smith or the like, seen in the market place. Further evidence that he was addressing the rich lies in the second homily On Lazarus and The Rich Man (PG 48.986), where it says `most of you' hold the common view that the poor are meant to be so by God and you spread the opinion in the market place, circus, and theatre; `we' contrasted with `they' `ekeinoi' who are artisans of various sorts (ibid 3.2) (PG 48.993) and in his twentieth homily on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (PG 61.468); again, the poor are `ekeinoi'. Also in his thirty fifth homily on the Epistle to the Ephesians (PG 57.409) it says: `you' are idle from choice, but the poor from unemployment .

The rich he often has occasion to characterize. They have luxurious belongings, furniture, adornment, banquets, and style of life; those whom he terms the poor are instead petty merchants, they work with their hands, or have no work at all. Again, the rich have slaves, a sure sign of their membership somewhere in the upper tenth of the socio-economic pyramid; for prices for slaves remained in John's day about what they had been through out the earlier empire, typically two or three times the year's earnings for a labourer.[63] Slaves served in part for mere display - they were brought to Church, and John there occasionally addressed them directly - because without such parade of servants their masters and mistresses could hardly claim a proper place in society. But it was, of course, to the masters and mistresses that he normally addressed himself. The evidence in the texts for all this is in Homily 77 on John's Gospel (PG 61.420) where it says `you' have crowds of slaves, including overseers; `your' children have their own slaves. In the ninth homily to the Colossians (PG 62.363) and in his

thirty fifth homily on St. Matthew's Gospel (PG 57.411) it may be assumed that `citizens' have slaves, plural. In homily 40.5 on I Corinthians (PG 61.354) it says that `you' (i.e. the rich) should live simply, and, if one slave is not enough for you `you' should make do with only a second; in homily 5:4 on I Thessalonians (PG 62.427), `your slave' has ill-kept clothes. In homily 28.4 (PG 63.197) on Hebrews where, as a respectable woman, `eleuthera' `you' would expect to have at least a couple of slaves, just as a priest must have at least one slave in order to preserve appearances (this is also mentioned in homily 9:4 on the epistle to Philemon (PG 62.251)). Furthermore homily 40:5 on I Corinthians (PG 61.353), "You deem it a disgrace if you do not lead whole flocks of slaves around with you." Also, interestingly for the slaves addressed, and a rebuke to masters who do not bring their slaves with them, Chrysostom mentions this in homily 22:1-3 on I Corinthians (PG 62.156-8) and in homily 4:4 (PG 62.686) on the Epistle to Titus.

Also, John Chrysostom occasionally delivered his remarks to `the poor' by name. They were present before him. For example in homily 24:3(PG 60.625) on Romans, he rebukes drunkenness among both rich and poor, and in homily 43.2 and 4 on I Corinthians (PG 61.369 and 374) the `indigent ' (`deomenoi') are still able to give a tithe to the really poor. Indeed very surprisingly, when Chrysostom adds a few details to what he means by `the poor', he says these needy persons own slaves. They were only less well off than the decidedly well-to-do. In homily 22.2 on I Corinthians (PG 62.158), there are domestic slaves (`oiketai') in the household of the needy (`hoi penetai'); in homily I.4 of the epistle to the Colossians (PG 62.304), there are only two `boys' `neaniai', wait on the table of the `needy' (`penetai'); in homily 19.5 on I Corinthians (PG 61.158), the `needy' buys a slave only to preserve appearances. Therefore from the evidence one can see that `the poor' whom

Chrysostom preached to were not desperately poor. However, R. Macmullen[64] says that that did not, however, prevent them feeling `impecunious', `impoverished', `poor', since the lines of socio-economic stratification were evidently so well marked and so consciously observed.

At moments Chrysostom would indeed see quite ordinary folk of the city in Church. They were artisans, they had a `technic' of some sort (though that need not have consigned them to the truly lower class). They must not, he reminds them, abandon self-respect entirely, for St. Paul and the disciples had all had a trade of some sort (for example, he says this in homily 5.6 on Corinthians (PG 61.46f) ). Even the `agroikoi', the most ordinary folk of all from the surrounding countryside, are sometimes before him, on the great festival days at martyr's shrines, where they had gathered in immemorial Syrian fashion to banquet together at the holy places, according to the text: `To the population of Antioch,' 19.1 (PG 44.187) written by him. Thus on the year's fair-days and for baptism, Chrysostom's congregation became more truly representative of the whole population of the city (here Antioch) and its surrounding territory.

Concerning the ordinary audience's capacity to understand and the extent to which preaching served as a means of shaping opinion: John is conscious of repelling members of the Christian community in both Antioch and Constantinople by the length and complexity of his pulpit rhetoric, and he rebukes them for their ignorance of Scripture; they can read, but they will not take the trouble. For example in homily 3.2 on The Rich Man and Lazarus (PG 48.994f), John's difficulties in holding his audience is mentioned; and on people's not knowing the Bible in homily 32.1 on St.John's Gospel (PG 59.187) it says: "those who gather here know nothing of the things going on here - rather, are ignorant even of the number of the very books (of the Bible)!"

R. Macmullen says that in no city, at that time, was the Church (or were the Churches, plural), able physically to accommodate at one time any large minority of the total resident population, even after several generations of post-Constantian growth of congregation and ecclesiastical building. It was a selection that came to worship, just as it had always been a selection (quite tiny) that attended Roman popular assemblies.

To sum up, it seems that `the rich', the upper ranks of society, accompanied by their slaves supplied the attendance before John. While women would be present, either they would be far fewer than men, or were not ordinarily to be addressed directly, for example, in `Ad illuminandos catechises,' 2:4 (written by him). Also from the evidence one sees that `the poor' are present but are probably not desperately poor since they do even own at least one slave! More respectable artisans such as goldsmiths, really quite well-to-do, might be expected among those present; smaller landowners, likewise. Perhaps also, says R. Macmullen, as sprinkling of the pious poor (genuinely poor). Overall, however, it was a distinctly upper class audience with a less narrow sampling of the population on certain days of special importance and in special settings, notably in martyr-churches. Indeed Galusha Anderson[65] says that there were two hundred thousand people Antioch, and one hundred thousand of them were reckoned as Christians, and three thousand of these stood in need of charity.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF CHRYSOSTOM'S TEACHING

Although it is not possible here to survey the considerable range of his teaching on the subject, it is possible to locate in a fairly narrow scope the main features of his teaching on the use and misuse of wealth.

Donald Attwater[66] relates how "many of the early Fathers (notably, for example, St. Basil, who died seven years before Chrysostom began to preach) were distinguished for their concern for the needy and oppressed, speaking out against the abuse of wealth and preaching that personal property is not strictly private, but a trust, some declaring that everything superfluous to one's reasonable requirements should be distributed. But none of them surpassed Chrysostom in eloquent, moving and repeated insistence on generous alms giving.

Chrysostom taught that some wealth is a gift from God entrusted to people, who in turn are to act as his stewards. Other people are merely permitted by God to acquire wealth, especially when it is gathered through unjust means. Chrysostom says in homily 75 on Matthew's Gospel:[67] "Where then is such a one rich? I will say now; many acquire wealth, by God's gift; and many by his permission. For this is the short and simple account."

Chrysostom believed that instead of totally rejecting all possessions because of the temptations which they bring people must become even more radical in their use of wealth. He says, "it is not enough to despise wealth, but we must also maintain poor men, and above all things follow Christ."[68] For Chrysostom, this "maintenance" falls under the title `alms-giving' and represents the most noble use of wealth. Evidently he spent much of his preaching time on this subject. At one point, toward the end of his 90 homilies on St. Matthew's Gospel, he says: "What sayest thou? Am I forever speaking of alms giving? I would wish myself that there were not great need for me to address this advice to you ... but when you are not yet sound, how can anyone arm you for the fight."[69]

Chrysostom comments further on the people's need to hear his message, "But if thou tellest one of money-getting,

and of traffic, and of the care and increase of good, I also would say unto thee, not these, but alms, and prayers, and the protection of the injured and all such things, are truly works with respect to which we live in thorough idleness."[70] Chrysostom placed a great importance on the role of alms giving in the Christian life.

Chrysostom taught, in On Lazarus and the Rich Man 1:9, 4:2, 6:5, 6;8, 7:3 and 5, that it is not the external conditions of wealth and poverty that are crucial but one's attitude toward them; here one can see a similarity between the teachings of St. Clement and St. Cyprian. The conditions themselves are little more than masks which hide the true character of the person. Nevertheless, the masks do have an enormous power. Riches can overwhelm the reason, darken the mind, and incite a mad avariciousness, just as poverty can lead to envy, despair, and even blasphemy. If both rich and poor could only recognise worldly status for what it is, they would be freed from the tyranny of passionate attachment to false appearances.

Again as St. Clement and St. Cyprian had done, Chrysostom stressed the salvific benefits of alms giving. Generosity toward the poor functions as a means of detaching oneself from the lure of riches, atoning for sin, and attaining favour with God. These ideas were not new. What was new was the lengths to which he carried them. The ascetic ideal combined with the prospect of the Last Judgement led him to advocate not only alms-giving but also self-imposed poverty. Voluntary suffering on earth could forestall divine retribution in the world to come.

The reason why I have used mainly his homilies on the Biblical texts is because of the fundamental importance of the Bible to Chrysostom. The life, teaching and character of Chrysostom prove how the Bible can inspire human actions. Palladius says that Chrysostom had used the period of his life as a solitary to learn the Testament of Christ. The ascetic principles of his character and the development of his spiritual life were Biblically supported. From the Bible he derived his longing for holiness and purity of living, his splendid moral power and ardent charity, his admirable devotion to truth, justice and goodness, and above all his unshakeable faith. The Bible was for Chrysostom the real book of life, from which he derived the certain witness to the truth which he preached.[71] No other Father of the Church demonstrated with an equal persistence and activity the ideas of practical Christianity as Chrysostom did.[72]

Fighting against every evil, trying to uproot the mutual jealousies of the people, he strove to create in them a state equal to that of the angels.[73] Therefore, his sole purpose was to lead human beings to the fundamental teachings of Christ, having as his ultimate aim the salvation of his congregation.

In his sermons on various parts of the Bible, Chrysostom intended not only to instruct his hearers and his readers theoretically, but much more to correct their moral life. To each homily is appended, at the end of the exposition proper, an `ethical' application of the lessons to be learned from the passage expounded.[74]

His aim was that his hearers should not only be Christian in name but also in deed, and stressed that in order to achieve this they must live according to the teachings of Christ. The Christian must not only believe in Christ,

speak about Him and know Him and know His teaching, but he/she must live with Christ, and in Christ, and walk unswervingly in His immutable way. Since Chrysostom teaches a practical Christianity he commands goods works as a supplement to the faith. Chrysostom insisted upon the necessity of creating in the life of a Christian a full reconciliation between those ideals which are fundamental and real.

As a matter of fact Diodorus influenced Chrysostom in expounding the New Testament. Chrysostom also studied the personal characters of, and differences between, the various authors of the Bible and on many exegetical problems his wise judgement still carries weight today. Ultimately, however, all scholarly exegesis must serve the preaching of the Gospel, in which alone it can attain full effect and development. Campenhausen says that "in the sermon we hear the voice of Christ and the call of His Apostles." Stephens says[75] that Chrysostom deemed the reading of the Bible the best means for the promotion of Christian life. A Christian without the knowledge of the Scriptures is to him a workman without tools. Even the sight of the Bible deters from sin, how much more the reading. It purifies and consecrates the soul: it introduces it into the holy of holies and brings it into direct communion with God.

He is equally at home in the Books of the Old Testament and the New Testament "and has the skill to use even the former for the conditions of the present and the problems of daily life."[76]

It would be an exaggeration if one was to say that the whole of the sermons and the teaching of Chrysostom should be used for the instruction of our present society. But he is the only Father whose sermons can be used in the present time, because "his sermons show that Theology was still able to fulfil its task in the Church

to a large extent. The homilies of Chrysostom are probably the only ones from the whole of Greek antiquity which at least in part are still readable today as Christian sermons. They reflect something of the authentic life of the New Testament, just because they are so ethical, so simple and so clear-headed."[77]

Chrysostom "combines great facility in discerning the spiritual meaning of the scriptural text with an equal ability for immediate, practical application to the guidance of those committed to his care. The depth of his thought and the soundness of his masterful exposition are unique and attract even modern readers.[78]

FOOTNOTES

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25. R.H.Weaver, op cit., p374
26. R. Kampling, op cit., p55
27. C. Baur, op cit., p3
28. P. Schaff, op cit., p5
29. C. Baur, op cit., p16
30. C. Baur, op cit., p25
31. C. Baur, op cit., p107
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CHAPTER 1

THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH: ALMS-GIVING AND THE RICH PEOPLE AS STEWARDS OF THE POOR.

BACKGROUND

How ironic that, only a few score years ago, people who advocated a life of community of goods for society at large tended almost to take it for granted (as of course did their adversaries) that their position was somehow implicitly atheistic, or at least agnostic. After all, it surely seemed to be at odds with institutional religion. How surprised these people would have been had they known that, a millenium and a half before them, St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers had held precisely the contrary (as will be seen in this chapter). It was private ownership, in the view of Chrysostom, that was "atheistic" or "idolatrous". Chrysostom never forgot the perfect disjunctive that Jesus had set before his own followers: "You cannot give yourself to God and money" (St. Luke's Gospel chapter six, verse thirteen). Property was a "false God". Property and money had become an object of worship, enslaving both the possessor and the dispossessed. The hoarding of wealth had become a passion that could not be satisfied, an unending process which always demanded more after each new acquisition. The hoarder was identified by St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers as the landgrabber, the usurer, the trader, and the political power-holder, and accused of sacrificing both nature and people on the altar of this newly developed god, money, and its veritable religion, the ideology and practice of absolute ownership. Chrysostom and Patristic thought in general found it repulsive that God's creation had been made into property (as will also be seen in this chapter). They refused to make Mammon the supreme reality of human existence.

In the first two centuries A.D., when Christianity had spread internationally, Christians had often preferred torture and death, or the underground life, to the sins of idolatry. The significance of Chrysostom's thought was that it now challenged people to see that Roman law's idea of absolutist and exclusivist ownership was just as much a direct affront to the Christian faith-view, that God alone is Absolute, and that God alone is the One Absolute `Dominus' or `Despotes' of all things.

Chrysostom tells us that the idea of an absolute human right of ownership amused him to the point of laughter.[1] To him, as we shall see, the notion itself was meaningless.[2] All things are God's - only God's, whose servants we all are together, `sundouloi' of his. He will require an accounting of our stewardship over his possession.[3] "Existence itself we have through Him, and life, and breath, and light and air, and earth."[4] For "is not `the earth's God's and the fullness thereof?" If then our possessions belong to One Common Lord, they also belong to our fellow servants. The possessions of One Lord are all common."[5] St. Augustine agreed: "God commands sharing not as being from the property of them whom he commands, but as being from his own property."[6]

SOME PRESUPPOSITIONS TO CHRYSOSTOM'S THOUGHTS ON WEALTH

(i) Every over-estimate of the worth of money impedes the freedom of the Spirit and is incompatible with the purity of Christianity. Chrysostom, first of all, distinguishes between the possession of money and the desire to acquire more and more. He does not deny the use of money to men.

This problem Chrysostom examines, not only as a social reformer, but as a Christian moralist, an ardent and unresting herald of the moral teaching of Christ. Chrysostom is a most austere and most passionate teacher

of Christian ideals. When he attacks wealth, he seeks to awake the conscience of the rich, to affect their hard and cruel hearts, to make them help the poor, if not to give away their wealth. Nevertheless he emphasizes the fact that the rich must not be hated by the poor.

Baur[7] suggests that perhaps nobody else amongst the Fathers of the Church spoke from the pulpit with such power and such persuasiveness to the conscience of the rich as St. John Chrysostom.

His polemics against wealth are the words of a "loving father," not flattening, but inspired by ardent zeal for the Justice of God on the Earth and for the salvation or the people.[8]

In Chrysostom's teaching wealth and poverty in this earthly life are like a theatrical costume, which covers the real person of man.[9] For Chrysostom wealth is nothing and poverty is nothing, lack of honour is nothing, and honour is nothing. All these are temporary and are distinguished from each other only by their name. Neither is wealth good and poverty bad. "You have seen by facts, that riches are not good, poverty not evil, but they are things different."[11] The moral value of wealth is determined by the relationship between good action and the free will of man. The inward disposition of man and his manner of distributing it make wealth good or bad. So then if riches are good, he says, it is not riches, but the will of the possessor that effects this, for, if the will does this, it is in the power even of a poor man to win Heaven. "For, as I have often said, God does not regard the amount of the gifts, but the will of the givers: it is possible even for the poor man, who was given but little, to bear off all, for God requires a measure proportioned to our ability, neither will riches secure Heaven to us, nor poverty hell; but a good or bad will, either one or the other."[12]

Chrysostom having in mind the moral side of wealth firmly underlines that wealth offers more opportunities for temptations in the life of a Christian. "For how, I would ask, can it be otherwise, but that the soul of the rich must deal with evils: folly, vainglory, numberless lusts, anger and passion, covetousness, iniquity and what not?"[13] It is apparent that Chrysostom tries to point out that wealth is not always profitable. "I do not wish to punish sinners but to heal the sick. "[14] The fall of the government minister Eutropius was a very suitable occasion for Chrysostom to point out the bad contribution of wealth to human life. "Have I not always said to you that riches know no loyalty? And now - now is shown to you the actual proof that wealth is not only unreliable and ungrateful, but even a murderer. It is wealth that is to blame for your trembling and quaking here."[15]

(ii) **Not to Share One's Resources Is Robbery**

Most of Chrysostom's writings, like the first text to be analysed, are exegetical homilies on the books of the Old and New Testaments. Most of these sermons were delivered at Antioch between 386 and 397. The following passages are from a commentary on St. Luke's Gospel chapter sixteen, the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (MPG 48:987-988).

A "This is robbery: not to share one's resources. Perhaps what I am saying astonishes you. Yet be not astonished. For I shall offer you the testimony of the Sacred Scriptures, which say that not only to rob others' property, but also not to share your own with others, is robbery and greediness and theft . . . "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house." (Malachi 3:10 - Chrysostom reads, "for the robbery of the poor is in your houses," for the last clause). Because you have not made the accustomed offerings, the prophet says, therefore have you robbed

the things that belong to the poor. This he says by way of showing the rich that they are in possession of the property of the poor, even if it is a patrimony they have received, even if they have gathered their money elsewhere."[16]

B. "And again we read, `My son, rob not the poor man of his livelihood' (Ecclus 4:1). The one who despoils takes the property of another. For it is called spoliation when we retain others' property. On this account let us learn that as often as we have not given alms, we shall be punished like those who have plundered . . . God has given you many things to possess, not in order that you may use them up for fornication, drunkenness, gluttony, costly clothes, and other forms of soft living, but in order that you may distribute to the needy. Therefore . . . those who have something more than necessity demands and spend it on themselves instead of distributing it to their needy fellow servants, they will be meted out terrible punishments. For what they possess is not personal property; it belongs to their fellow-servants."[17]

Chrysostom makes it clear enough in the first lines here (part A) that he is speaking literally when he says, "This is robbery: not to share one's resources." Not only to take what belongs to others, but also to refuse the needy a share in one's property, is theft in the strict sense. He uses three synonyms, `harpage', `pleonexia,' and `aposteresis,' to emphasize that he is speaking literally. He adds expressly that it does not matter how the rich owner has actually come into the possession of property - whether by inheriting it from parents or by some other means. If one does not share with the needy, one is a robber.

What is the reason for John's "astonishing" assertion? Passage A appeals to the authority of the Bible. All that one has, no matter how we have come to possess it,

essentially belongs to God. God is the Supreme Lord and we are all fellow-servants: `sundouloi'. The poor and the needy are therefore just as much under God's care and entitled to God's providence as the rest, for all, even the rich, have received whatever they have from God.

If the poor do not receive what is needed for their sustenance, it is because the rich have robbed them of what is due them from the material goods that essentially belong to God. The purpose of property is "not in order that you may use it up for fornication, drunkenness, gluttony ... but in order that you may share it with the needy."

We are all alike - we are all fellow-servants - so that we have essentially the same sight to the goods of earth, which never cease to belong primarily to the Supreme Lord. Those therefore who do not share with the needy as God shares with them are nothing more than robbers. Chrysostom uses the same word for "sharing" which St. Clement of Alexandria used `metadidonai'. Unlike St. Clement, however, John was not a great friend of pagan philosophy and preferred to work as a Biblical exegete.[18]

(iii) **The Meaning of "Mine" and "Not Mine"**

The following group of passages are all directly concerned with the meaning of the concept "mine" and "thine". Passage A is part of an address John delivered at Antioch while he was still a deacon. The topic is virginity. In this section of his sermon he speaks of calm and tranquillity as characteristics of virginity. Avarice, he says, and a misunderstanding of the real meaning of ownership, cause the loss of tranquillity, and anxiety.

A. "But what is the meaning of "mine" and "not mine"? For, truly, the more accurately I weigh these words, the

more they seem to me to be but words . . . And not only in silver and gold, but also in bathing places, gardens, buildings, "mine" and "not mine" you will perceive to be but meaningless words. For use in common to all. Those who seem to be owners have only more care of these things than those who are not. The former, after so much effort, obtain but just as much as those who have expended no effort."[19]

B. "God generously gives all things that are much more necessary than money, such as air, water, fire, the sun - all such things. It is surely not true to say that the rich person enjoys the sun's rays more than the poor person does. It is not correct to say that the rich person takes in a more abundant supply of air than the poor person does. No, all [these] things lie at the equal and common disposition of all . . . That we may live securely: . . . again, that we may have an occasion for growth and merits, money is not made common, so that, hating avarice and following justice, and sharing with the needy, we may seize through this means some remedy for our sins."[20]

C. "For `mine' and `thine' - those chilly words which introduce innumerable wars into the world - should be eliminated from that Holy Church ... The poor would not envy the rich, because there would be no rich. Neither would the poor be despised by the rich, for there would be no poor. All things would be in common."[21]

Setting aside the prevalent Roman legal point of view and meditating from a purely Christian position, St. John Chrysosotom says that the more he delves into the inner meaning of ownership, by which one can call a thing "mine" or "not mine", the more he is convinced that these words have no realistic content. The use of material goods should be common to all. No one can have a claim to the exclusive use of material goods. Therefore, the

legal proprietors of worldly goods, "who seem to be owners" or "masters" - "hoi dokountes auton einai kurioi" - differ from those who are not even legally owners only by the fact that they have a greater responsibility to society. The difference, ethnically, does not imply the owner's right to do what they wish with "their" property, or to use it exclusively for themselves - "for use is common to all."

In Passage B, Chrysostom states that the reason why the use of property is common to all and not an exclusive right of owners: all things, not excluding those that are "owned" essentially belong to God. It is God who "generously gives all things."

Having stated this general principle, Chrysostom proceeds to distinguish between (1) anankaiotera - "the things which are more necessary," or the "causes of life" - and (2) chremata - "money," "fortune." Under the former category he lists "air, water, fire, the sun - all such things."

In which of the two categories will land be included? Surely in the former. Land, too, is a free gift of nature, which everyone can find to be simply there and of which therefore no one can claim merit or origination. St. John Chrysostom says that all such things have been intended by God for all equally and in common - precisely because they are absolutely necessary, because they are the "causes of life."

Other things which some possess in greater measure than others, but which are not strictly necessary, are not made common. Those who have these - "money," or "fortune," that is, luxuries - must share them with those who may still lack the necessities.

In Passage C, Chrysostom elucidates for Christians of his time what it means to be in "that Holy Church" - a reference to Acts 4:32, on which the whole passage is a commentary. The differentiation between rich and poor must be abolished. The "chilly words" "mine" and "not mine" are to be banished. Envy, contempt for others, and wars would all no longer exist where exclusive individual ownership ceased and where there were no more "mine" and "thine" but only "ours."

Property should be a matter of social ownership. In St. John Chrysostom's view, in light of the message of Acts 4:32, or what has been called the socialist thought and practice of the first Christians (whether Chrysostom himself was a socialist will be discussed in chapter three), C. Avila[22] argues that to be a Christian implies subscribing to this idea and spelling it out in practicable arrangements.

(iv) **To Possess and Not Be Possessed by One's Possessions**

St. John Chrysostom was accused of attacking the rich "without reason." And he defends himself:

A. "I do not say these things simply to accuse the rich or praise the poor. For it is not wealth that is evil, but the evil use of wealth. Nor is poverty good, but the use of poverty. That rich person who lives at the time of Lazarus was punished not because he was rich, but because he was cruel and inhuman."[23]

B. "It is not wealth, therefore, that is evil, but the illegitimate use of it . . . Every creature of God is good, . . . so now I am not accusing the rich, nor do I begrudge them their wealth . . . Money is called `chremata' so that we may use it (chresometha), and not that it may use us. Therefore possessions are so called that we may possess them, not they possess us. Why do

you regard the master as a slave? Why do you invert the order?"[24]

Like St. Clement of Alexandria before him, Chrysostom asserts the goodness of all creation. Wealth or material goods are not evil, rather, in themselves they are good. "Every creature of God is good." It is not wealth itself, but the evil or illegitimate use of wealth which is morally bad.

There is, then, according to Chrysostom, a law regulating the use of wealth. If one owns wealth, one should act as a real "owner" or "master" as one possessing the property rather than one possessed by it. Otherwise one would be a mere doulos, or slave. The word `doulos' connotes the classic picture of bondage and limitation, and to call anyone by this name was one of the worst insults one person could hurl at another.

The etymological root of the Greek word for "money" (chremata) meant "use". The rich, however, as Chrysostom observed, were so attached to this material called money, which should have been for use rather than for hoarding, that they put their whole hearts and minds to pursuing money endlessly - not for common use, but simply for unlimited private accumulation. John endorsed the goodness of all creation, including wealth or material goods. But he condemned the drive for what seemed like unlimited private accumulation.

(v) **The Root of Accumulated Wealth Must Be Injustice: Private Ownership Causes Antagonisms, As if Nature Itself Were Indignant.**

In the following passages, Chrysostom explicitly speaks of land ownership, and of what may be described as the communal character of land and other natural wealth-producing resources.

St. John delivered eighteen homilies on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, probably at Antioch before he became bishop. Passages A and B, however, represent an excursus into a consideration of St. Luke's Gospel chapter sixteen, verses one to nine, the parable of the Unjust Steward. St. John Chrysostom asks why Christ calls riches the "mammon of unrighteousness". How unrighteous is wealth, then? Is it unrighteous of its very nature? It is the context of this question that St. John Chrysostom reviews the origin of wealth, and draws the following conclusion.

A. "Tell me, then, how did you become rich? From whom did you receive it, and from whom he who transmitted it to you? From his father and his grandfather. But can you, ascending through many generations, show the acquisition just? It cannot be. The root and origin of it must have been injust. Why? Because God in the beginning did not make one man rich and another poor. Nor did He afterwards take and show to anyone treasures of gold, and deny to the others the right of searching for it: rather He left the earth free to all alike . . .

Why then, if it is common, have you so many acres of land, while your neighbour has not a portion of it ...? But I will not urge this argument too closely. Let us grant that your riches are justly gained, and not from robbery. For you are not responsible for the covetous acts of your father ... or granting that he did not obtain it by robbery, that his gold was cast up somewhere out of the earth ...

What then? Is wealth, therefore, good? By no means. At the same time it is not bad, you say, if its possessor be not covetous; it is not bad, if it be distributed to the poor; otherwise, it is bad; it is ensnaring. "But if he does no evil, though he does no good, it is not bad," you

argue. True. However, is this not an evil, that you alone should enjoy what is common? Is not `the earth God's and the fullness thereof?' If then our possessions belong to One Common Lord, they also belong to our fellow-servants. The possessions of One Lord are all common."[25] (Homily 12, 4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, MPG 62:562-563.)

B. "Mark the wise dispensation of God . . . He has made certain things common, as the sun, air, earth, and water, the sky, the sea, the light, the stars, whose benefit are dispensed equally to all as brethren . . . And mark, that concerning things that remain common there is no contention but all is peaceable. But when one attempts to possess himself of anything, to make it his own, then contention is introduced, as if nature herself were indignant."[26] (Homily 12, 4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, MPG 62:563-564.)

Roman law, which embodied the accepted philosophy of ownership in fourth century Antioch, provided for an action called vindicatio.[27] Here the possessor of a piece of property vindicated, or asserted, his or her right over it in the face of the claim of someone else, who claimed to be the actual lawful proprietor of the same piece of property. Possession itself was prima facie proof of ownership: it was the burden of the non-possessor, then, to prove ownership; and if he or she failed to do so, the property remained in the possession of the current possessor.

In these particular texts, St. John Chrysostom refuses to recognise possession as any kind of proof of ownership at all. Rather, he would impose on the possessor the burden of proving that the acquisition of the property in question has been just. In other words, Chrysostom is boldly re-examining the prevailing concept of property by using an altogether new approach - a moral-theological approach, as one might term it. The "root and origin" of current property, St. John Chrysostom contends, "must

have been injustice:" otherwise how explain its concentration in the hands of a few, in the face of an original Divine disposition placing all things in common ownership, so that there could be neither rich nor poor? Legal facts, Chrysostom contends, come second. And in this instance, law merely legitimizes an unjust situation - a situation which, in his view, needed to be changed.

Unless the present property-owners, then, can show a posteriori that their property had been justly acquired, St. John Chrysostom will contend a priori that it must have been unjustly acquired somewhere in the course of the generations. His stunningly simple assertion rests on the fact that "in the beginning God did not make one man rich and another poor." Thus, in a situation in which so much wealth lies in the hands of a few, while so many are impoverished, the burden of proof of just acquisition lies with the wealthy.

Chrysostom's indictment will not go beyond reason. He grants that, after all, present owners may not be responsible for the covetous deeds of their forebearers. Still, he emphasizes, the wealth that has accumulated in their hands throughout generations of unjust practices is in any case not truly theirs to do with as they like. Rather they should open their eyes to the fact that "our possessions belong to One Common Lord," and that "they also belong to our fellow-servants. The possessions of One Lord are all common." The wealth of creation is not evil. What is evil is "that you alone should enjoy what is common."

Indeed, Chrysostom argues that the equal right of all to the use of the wealth of the earth is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air - a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence, and by the equal and equalizing gift of the Creator - a right natural and inalienable, vested in all persons as they enter the

world, and which, so long as they continue in the world, can be limited only by the equal rights of others. No one of us can rightfully make a grant of exclusive and absolute ownership in land or other wealth-producing resources, because no one of us has made the earth, that we should determine the rights of those who shall have tenancy of our creation after us. All are equally "fellow-servants" of the One Lord, whose possession all things are, and who makes them available to all. To recognise the robbery and injustice of past owners is only a first step that must lead to rectification in the present social arrangement. If restitution is not made, then indeed, property is nothing but a continuing and fresh robbery.

In passage B, Chrysostom invites people to lift their eyes to the larger horizon: "Mark the wise dispensation of God . . . He has made certain things common." Social justice is natural justice, he seems to say, and conversely, social injustice is against nature. When some appropriate to themselves exclusively the things, that are given in common, then antagonism ensues, "as if nature herself were indignant."

Chrysostom has scant respect for Roman legalization of ownership. To him, absolute ownership is meaningless, because God alone is true Owner. As he says in another passage:

C. "We have received all things from Christ. Both existence itself we have through Him, and life, and breath, and light and air, and earth ... `We are sojourners and pilgrims' And all this about `mine' and `thine' is mere verbiage, and does not stand for reality. For if you say the house is yours, it is a word without a reality: since the very air, earth, matter, are the Creator's; and so are you too yourself who have framed it; and all other things also."[28] (Homily 10,5 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (MPG 61:85)

For Chrysostom, then, everything is, in the most realistic sense, God's property. Human arrangements of ownership should merely be actualizing God's intention to place all material goods at the disposal of everyone. There should be no longer any strictly "mine" and "thine," because everything is profoundly "ours" to use. As St. John Chrysostom has already said, "When one attempts to possess oneself of anything, to make it one's own, then contention is introduced, as if nature herself were indignant." Human ownership-arrangements should never be regarded as absolute. This would only render them meaningless. Nor may they be viewed as exclusive. Rather, they would be seen as a way to attain the purpose of the world's wealth, which Chrysostom sees as being essentially ordained for the requirements of all human kind.

"We are sojourners and pilgrims," St. John Chrysostom reminds us. We are but tenants for a day. As we travel through history in a common pilgrimage, we shall surely find enough along the way for the requirements of all - if only we do not allow some to rob others of what belongs to all. A new consciousness of reality must supersede the socially and legally accepted notion of ownership, which merely legitimizes and perpetuates robbery by a few, resulting in the degradation of many.

(vi) **Where Is The God-Given Dignity Of All, When The Poor Rank Beneath The Dogs Of The Rich?**

In the last year of his episcopal tenure at Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom delivered thirty four homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews. The following passage, from one of these homilies, is a digression on Psalm forty one, verse 1: "Happy is he who has regard for the lowly and the poor."

A. "When you see a poor man, do not hurry by, but immediately reflect what you would have been, had you been he ... Reflect that he is a freeman like yourself, and shares the same noble birth with you, and possesses all things in common with you; and yet, oftentimes, he is not on a level with your dogs. On the contrary, while they are satiated, he oftentimes sleeps hungry ... But you say that dogs perform needful services for you? What are these? Do they serve you well? Suppose then I show that this poor one too performs needful services for you, far greater than your dogs do. For he will stand by you in the Day of Judgement, and will deliver you from the fire."[29] (Homily 11,7 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, MPG 63:93-94)

B. "Do you give to the poor? What you give is not yours but your Master's, common to you and your fellow-servants. For which cause you ought especially to be humbled, in the calamities of those who are your kindred . . . And after all, what is wealth? `A vain shadow, a dissolving smoke, a flower of the grass,' or rather something meaner than a flower."[30] (Homily 33,3 on the Gospel of St. John, MPG 59:192)

C. "Let us set to work all the different kinds of alms-giving. Can you do alms by money? Be not slack. Can you by good office? Say not, because I have no money, this is nothing. This is a very great point: Look upon it as if you had given gold. Can you do it by kind attention? Do this also. For instance, if you be a physician, give your skill: for this is also a great matter. Can you by counsel? This service is much greater than all."[31] (Homily 25,4 on the Acts of the Apostles, MPG 60:196)

In these passages one sees the basic underpinning of Chrysostom's social philosophy: God-given human dignity. Chrysostom emphatically posits both the dignity of the individual and that of the human species as a whole.

Every human person "shares the same noble birth." Hence, also, all humanity possesses all things in common.

But the accumulation of wealth by the propertied few has wounded human dignity. The poor are poor because they have been oppressed and deprived of common resources. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has afflicted them. They live in a permanent state of anxiety, without the requirements for decent human life - "not even on the level of the dogs" of the rich. All suffer, including the wealthy. For there is no escape from "The Day of Judgement." And wealth, in the end, no matter how huge the accumulation, is nothing but "a vain shadow, a dissolving smoke."

However, St. John Chrysostom notes optimistically, this degradation, this unjust state of affairs, can be remedied - by our common awakening to the reality of human dignity, which awakening must necessarily lead to acts of sharing. "Let us set to work all the different kinds of alms-giving." The wealth accumulated in the hands of the rich must be shared, for "what you give is not your" after all, but must be returned, to meet the requirements of the dignity of all. And this sharing is to be not only of money or gold, but of skills, time, talent, and counsel, in human solidarity - in one family under God. Thus we shall have respite from our anxiety to lord it over one another, for we have One Lord Alone, who has given us everything on common for the realization of the dignity of all. We shall all be sharing, just as the Lord Himself has shared.

In summing up, concerning the matter of private wealth, Chrysostom speaks, as we have seen, most compellingly of the need to eliminate oppression and poverty, and to build a more just, more humane social order. Throughout our selection of passages, the Theistic Factor is dominant. John Chrysostom looked at the prevailing

social order and saw that it did not seriously, practically recognise the Creator as the Absolute Owner of all things. So St. John went "back to basics" and emphasized that all wealth, primarily and essentially, belongs to God, the One Lord. That God, for Chrysostom, is Lord in the sense of "owner" is shown by his use of the word `Despotes' for God. (`Despoteia,' we recall, is his word for "dominion," "ownership.")

Second, Chrysostom emphasizes the solidarity of humankind. We all have the same destiny, we are all "sojourners and pilgrims" together. Further: we are all the `sundouloi,' fellow servants, of the One, true Lord, called to a common destiny, we may not be allowed to lord it over one another, but must rather assist one another along the way of this common pilgrimage. Human ownership, then, human lordship over material goods, is but a means to ensuring the availability of these goods for all our co-pilgrims. We cannot stay, we have to move on. We should not hoard, then, but share.

Finally, Chrysostom invests his reflections on property with a Christian personalist tone. He restores the phenomenon of ownership to the universe of person-to-person relationships. The prevailing view of the right to ownership conceived that right simply as a legalized relationship of exclusion, a relationship whereby an owner excluded others from access to his or her possessions. Thus the relationship of ownership was a negative one and one fixed in a world of "it" - a world that ignored the ethically negative consequences of this relationship for the dignity of the human person. In other words, the Roman law notion of ownership precisely promoted the wounding of other, genuine, human relationships by legitimizing the robbery, spoliation, and oppression that made so many people poor and dependent and kept them in a state of continued anxiety and resentment.

The notion of ownership as "mine" and "not mine," Chrysostom held, was meaningless. To him, the notion of an absolute and exclusive right of ownership was a caricature of its true nature, which was essentially that of a means serving to deepen genuine human relationships among fellow pilgrims and fellow servants of the same Lord. Chrysostom conceived the nature of ownership essentially as that of a dynamic function of sharing the world's wealth to meet the requirements of a life of dignity for all.

THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE POOR AND THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH: ALMS-GIVING

Chrysostom argued that some wealth is given by God to rich people, who in turn are to act as God's stewards. All the other people are simply allowed by God to gain wealth, especially when it is gathered through unjust means. Chrysostom says in Homily LXXV on St. Matthew's Gospel:

"Whence then is such a one rich? I will say now; many acquire wealth, by God's gift; and many by His permission. For this is the short and simple account."[32]

Riches used in the service of other people are much more likely to be considered gifts from God while wealth that is ill-gotten or selfishly spent is usually thought to be permitted by God rather than specially provided. Chrysostom further demonstrates this idea:

"What then? It is said, doth He make the whoremongers to be rich, and the adulterers, and him that made a bad use of his possessions. He does not make them but permits them to be rich; and great is the difference, and quite infinite between making and permitting."[33]

Chrysostom draws this distinction possibly to refrain from attributing the evils that accompany misused wealth to the work of God. However, sometimes Chrysostom blurs the distinction between wealth as permitted or gift. He says, "God honoured thee with a gift, why disgrace thyself with the excess thereof ?"[34] This statement, made with reference to people living luxuriously, suggests strongly (as mentioned in the previous section) that Chrysostom viewed all wealth as coming from God, whether by gift or permission. On the basis of this belief, he is able to talk about the wealthy as God's stewards.

In Chrysostom's second sermon on St. Luke's account of the Rich Man and Lazarus, he declares, "The rich man is a kind of steward of the money which is owned for distribution to the poor."[35] Chrysostom goes on to apply this to his hearers, "For you have obtained more than others have, and you have received it, not to spend it for yourself but to become a good steward for others as well."[37] Here Chrysostom refers to the wealthy as stewards of God's gift to others, namely the poor and afflicted. Later in the same sermon, he leaves no doubt as to the meaning when he says, "We do not possess our own wealth, but theirs (the poor's)."[37] Again, Chrysostom says in his homilies on St. Matthew's Gospel:

> "And let us also that have money listen to these things. For not unto teachers only doth he discourse, but also unto the rich. For either sort were entrusted with riches."[38]

Interestingly G. Uhlhorn[39] says, as a comparison, that the Fathers in general see the right use of wealth in giving it away. Its use for our own necessities is indeed conceded, and even the adornments and enjoyments of life permitted, but still these are already under a cloud. They are not exactly sins, but they are weaknesses. The Christian must only use his property for himself, so far as the necessities of life require .

It is quite common to meet with the maxim, that all that a man possesses beyond what is necessary, belongs to the poor, and ought to be given away. St. Augustine[40] says: "All that God has given us beyond what is necessary, He has not properly speaking given to us, He has but entrusted it to us, that it may by our means come into the hands of the poor. To retain it is to take possession of what belongs to others." "Of what God has given you, take before-hand what you need. The rest, which is the superfluous for you, is necessary for the poor." "Let not what remains after moderate food and modest clothing are provided for, be retained for luxury, but laid up, by means of alms distributed to the poor, among Heavenly treasures." One can see here a very close similarity with Chrysostom's writings. And to give another example, Jerome[41] quite similarly says: "We are debtors to the poor of all that exceeds necessary food and raiment." As a Scriptural proof St. Luke chapter eleven, verse forty two was now adduced, according to the interpretation, "What is superfluous, give as alms."[42]

Thus the rights of wealth were limited to the necessary, the superfluous is not the property of him who possesses it, but of the poor. This idea can also be seen in another Father of the Church: "Thou dost not give to the poor what is thine own, thou restorest to him what is his. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich only. Thou art there for paying thy debt, and givest him only what thou owest him," says St. Ambrose.[43] Chrysostom[44] says: "The poor beg for their own, not thine." The rich man is truly a debtor; he is only doing his duty, when he does not use his riches for himself, but shares them with the poor. But he is God's debtor, and his alms have a moral worth, just when it is for God's sake, that he gives to the poor what is really God's own. G. Uhlhorn[45] says that to divide property into the necessary and the superfluous, and to limit the rights of property to the

former, and consequently to restrict the duty of alms-giving to the latter, is to make a false distinction and one really impossible to carry out. The Christian is in the fullest sense the possessor of all that God has given him, but also on the other hand bound, when need requires, to give away all.

As mentioned in the previous section, Chrysostom[46] agreed with St. Clement of Alexandria before him the goodness of all creation. Absolute wealth, riches or material goods are in themselves good. "Every creature of God," he says, "is good." They are gifts of God. However while Chrysostom considered absolute wealth good in itself, good as all of God's creation is good, he denounced, in the harshest terms, the phenomenon of relative wealth: that is, he denounced the appropriated wealth that differentiated humanity into rich and poor. He could think of the rich-poor cleavage only in terms of a relationship between exploiters and exploited, expropriators and dispossessed.

> "Tell me, then," John Chrysostom asks the wealthy, "how did you become rich?" From whom did you receive [that large estate], and from whom [did he receive it] who transmitted it to you? . . . The root and origin of it must have been injustice. Why? Because God in the beginning did not make one man rich and another poor . . . He left the earth free to all alike. Why, then, if it is common, have you so many acres of land, while your neighbour has not a portion of it? . . . Is this not an evil, that you alone should enjoy what is common?'[47]

Chrysostom was unwilling to blame contemporary owners for the thefts of their forebears. Nonetheless he denounced them for continuing the act of robbery in the present: "I do not ask you mercifully to render from what you have plundered, but to abstain from fraud ... For unless you desist from your robbery, you are not actually giving alms. Even though you should give ever so much money to the needy, if you do not desist from your fraud and robbery you shall be numbered by God among the murderers."[48]

These words are strong, and C. Avila[49] says that they did not make Chrysostom popular with large landowners. Still he kept on: "This is robbery: not to share one's resources. Perhaps what I am saying astonishes you . . . Not only to rob others' property, but also not to share your own with others, is robbery and greediness and theft . . . The rich . . . are in possession of the property of the poor, even if it is a patrimony they have received, even if they have gathered their money elsewhere."[50]

It is interesting that St. Ambrose, too stressed the causal relationship between wealth and poverty. "Do spacious halls exalt you? They should rather sting you with remorse, therefore, while they hold crowds, they exclude the cry of the poor . . . You cover your walls, you strip men naked . . . A man asks you for bread, and your horse champs gold under his teeth . . . the people are starving, and you close your barns; the people weep bitterly, and you toy with your jeweled ring."[51] Because the few rich have kept their wealth instead of redistributing it, the poor, whose deprivation is the cause of this wealth, have remained poor and miserable.

St. Basil takes the same position:

> "Do you think that you who have taken everything into the unlimited compass of your avarice, thereby depriving so many others, have done injury to no one? Who is avaricious? One who is not content with those things which are sufficient . . . Are you not a robber? You who make your own the things which you have received to distribute? . . . That bread which you keep, belongs to the hungry; that coat which you preserve in your wardrobe, to the naked; . . . that gold which you have hidden in the ground, to the needy."[52]

Chrysostom, Ambrose and Basil here note the purely factual-legal approach of ownership to reject it, because they find it inadequate for purposes of changing the unjust reality of so much poverty caused by the

accumulation of so much wealth in the hands of so few. One can see a further close similarity with Chrysostom (and the other Fathers mentioned) in St. Augustine: "Do we not prove that those who seem to rejoice in lawfully acquired gains, and do not know how to use them, are really in possession of others' property? . . . He who uses his wealth badly possesses it wrongfully, and wrongful possession means that it is another's property . . . You see, then, how many there are who ought to make restitution of another's goods."[53] These may still be owners from a legal point of view, but in reality they are thieves. "You have received food, and necessary covering. (I say necessary not useless, not superfluous). Why do you take more than your riches? Tell me! Surely all your possessions are superfluous. The superfluous things you have may be the necessities of the poor."[54]

Thus the Fathers here refused to see wealth and poverty separately. They saw them as a unity of opposites, in causal relationship. The many are poor because a few have succeeded in depriving them: the surplus wealth of the rich should be given as the necessities for the poor.

It has been argued that a widespread belief in the reality of "fate" has helped to separate wealth and poverty in so many minds over so many centuries. Believing that riches were a gift of destiny, both rich and poor could intellectually accept the status quo - the unjust structures which they had inherited and which were maintained and legitimized by the Roman law concept of ownership. Patristic thought, however, ignored mere legality. It was making a moral judgement and proposing a new way of looking at things as they were, from the point of view of things as they ought to be.

The following texts from Chrysostom illustrate this idea further:

A. "Even though you are rich, if you spend more than you need to, you shall have to render an account of the money entrusted to you . . . You have received more than others not that you may use it for yourself alone, but that you may be a good steward for those others."[55] (On the Rich Man and Lazarus 2,5, MPG 48:988)

B. "The Scriptures are full of warnings: today a rich man, tomorrow a pauper. For that reason I have often laughed while reading documents that say: That one has the ownership of fields and house, but another has its use. For all of us have the use, and no one has the ownership . . . Having received only its use, we pass to the next life bereft of its ownership."[56] (To the Population of Antioch 2,6, MPG 49:42)

C. `But perhaps someone may say, "Why then has he given to me, a rich person, and not also to the poor person?" ... He has not willed your riches to be unproductive, nor the other's property to be without its reward. He has given to you, rich person, that you be rich in alms-giving, and make distribution in justice.'[57] (On Penance 7,7, MPG 49:336)

D. "We do all things ignoring the fact that we shall have to give account of everything that goes beyond our use, for we thus misuse the gifts of God. For He has not given us these things that we alone may use them, but that we may alleviate the need of our fellow human beings."[58] (Homily 37,5 on Genesis, MPG 53:348)

E. "But if you are rich, reflect that you shall be giving an account ... and not only of your expenditure, but also of how you acquired you property: whether you gathered money by just labour, or by robbery and avarice; whether it was an inheritance from your father, or the result of your exploiting orphans when you ejected them from their homes, or by robbing widows."[59] (De Decem Millium Talentorum Debitore, 4, MPG 51:22)

Chrysostom repeatedly implies that to be the owner of material goods does not mean to have the unrestricted right of control over these goods - contrary to what prevailing Roman law prescribed and society accepted. First, all of us must sooner or later part with all the things we use. Therefore no one can ever have absolute control over property. Second, whatever property one may have remains a gift from God and does not cease to belong to the Absolute Lord. One will have to give an account of whatever one has received. "He has given to you, rich person, that you may be rich in alms-giving, and make distribution in justice." Wealth accumulated in the hands of a few is the opportunity for these wealthy few to rectify the injustice that has made such accumulation possible in the first place. The control over property which ownership brings is essentially related to this purpose of achieving social justice.

Passage B registers Chrysostom's amusement with the legal fiction of ownership. Documents of ownership are meaningless to him because of his moral-theological approach to the concept of ownership. Legal papers cannot void the ethics of ownership, nor therefore its essence. If the owner of a house or fields has ceased to have need of the use of such property, then his or her actual ownership, regardless of what the law may say, has ceased - again, because of the ethical and theological determinant of what possession is in actual fact. `Despoteia,' `chresis,' or use, of the property concerned.

In passage E, John adds that the account every owner will one day have to render to the Absolute Owner will include not only an account of the disposition made of his or her property, but one of the acquisition of that property as well. It is not enough to recognise that the right of ownership implies the duty of sharing one's superfluous goods with the needy, if one came to one's "right" by exploiting others. In this

case, ownership becomes doubly unjust: in itself, and by reason of the unjust manner of its acquisition.

F. "I do not ask you mercifully to render from what you have plundered, but to abstain from fraud . . . For, unless you desist from your robbery, you are actually giving alms. Even though you should give ever so much money to the needy, if you do not desist from your fraud and robbery you shall be numbered by God among the murderers."[60] (De Verbis Apostoli, "Habentem Eumdem Spiritum," 3,11, MPG 51:299.)

Distribution of wealth in an ongoing context of oppression is but the height of self-deception and hypocrisy. The many are poor because they have been oppressed by the rich few. If the heirs of the latter wish to rectify social injustice, as of course they should, it is not enough to appear charitable or merciful by token, or even substantial, alms-giving. What is essential is to "desist from your robbery," to desist from a continuation of the concentration of your wealth, which debases the poor and renders them dependent. To refuse to undertake this task is tantamount to the murder of those whom you deprive of a worthy human life.

St. John Chrysostom and other Fathers never discussed a so-called "just compensation" to expropriated landlords. There is nothing to be "compensated". It was a matter of simple justice. He says: "Do you give to the poor? What you give is not yours, but your Master's common to you and your fellow-servants,"[61] St Ambrose of Milan concurred: "Not from your own do you bestow upon the poor man but you make return from what is his. For what has been given as common for the use of all, you appropriate to yourself alone. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich . . . Therefore you are paying a debt."[62] Whatever form it takes, this restitution is a demand of justice, "because the giver knows that God has given all things to all in common . . . They are just, therefore, who do not

retain anything for themselves alone, knowing that everything was given for all."[63]

Also St. Augustine says: "God gives the world to the poor as well as to the rich . . . who offer something to the poor should not think that they are doing so from what is their own."[64]

Legality is not the question. Justice is the question. Chrysostom and these other Fathers are in agreement that there could be no justice in the matter of private property unless the expropriating rich were to restore to the poor the common goods which they had stolen from them.

Chrysostom makes his strongest statement concerning stewardship of wealth in his homilies on St. Matthew's Gospel when he says, "For thou art steward of thine own possessions, not less than he who dispenses the alms of the Church." He goes on to say, "For even though thou hast received an inheritance from thy father, and hast in this way all thou possessest: even thus all are God's."[65] Therefore, from these statements Chrysostom makes clear his contention that the wealthy do not have possessions for their own sakes but for the sakes of the poor.

Since wealth has its origins either as a gift from God or is at least permitted by Him and is intended to be used for the benefit of others, Chrysostom is able to describe wealth as not being intrinsically evil. He says:

> "Wealth will be good for its possessor if he does not spend it only on luxury, or on strong drink and harmful pleasures; if he enjoys luxury in moderation and distributes the rest to the stomachs of the poor, then wealth is a good thing."[66]

He reinforces this idea in Homily 20 on St. John's Gospel:

> "I blame not those who have houses, and lands, and wealth, and servants, but with them to possess these

> things in a safe and becoming way. And what is `a safe and becoming way?' As masters, not as slaves; so that they rule them, be not ruled by them; that they use, not abuse them."[67]

When wealth is controlled by the person, then it serves a blameless or even a good purpose. However, there is a constant danger that the wealth will become the master over the person causing him or her to desire greater riches. Chrysostom says that when this happens wealth begins to take on evil ways:

> "And truly a bitterer thing than any tyranny is the desire of riches; for it brings not pleasure, but cares, and envyings, and plottings, and hatred, and false accusations, and ten thousand impediments to virtue, indolence, wantonness, greediness, drunkenness, which make even freemen slaves, nay worse than slaves bought with money, slaves not to men, but even to the most grievous of the passions, and maladies of the soul."[68]

Wealth often takes control when hoarded or "buried" as Chrysostom suggests: " Riches are called `usables,' that we may 'use' them rightly, and not keep and bury them; for this is not to posses them, but to be possessed by them."[69] Thus riches often provide the motivation for people to follow their own sinful desires.

C. Avila[70] says that Chrysostom (among other Fathers) "had seen that, with each expropriation of nature's bounty and the fruits of worker's labour, owners had gradually accumulated wealth and increased their dominion to a point where that wealth and that dominion enslaved workers and owners alike. For the latter had become slaves of what they owned and of the drive to own more and more. Surely this could not be the right order of things."

C. Avila quotes Chrysostom to back up the above assertion: "Money is called `chremata' (from 'chraomai,' "I use") so that we may use it, and not that it may use us. Therefore possessions are so called that we may possess them, and not they possesses us. Why do you invert the order.?"[71] One can see here a distinct similarity between this latter quote and the former quote from John Chrysostom's Homily LXXX on St. John's Gospel. One can also see a further similarity in St. Augustine of Hippo, who held that the owner of money and property falls in love with them, and becomes so enmeshed in them as actually to become subject to them, when of course they ought to be subject to him or her.[72]

The first power that owners ought to have over their possessions is the capacity to part with them voluntarily - the power to share: to be a steward of the poor. But owners have lost this power. Chrysostom says: "the covetous man is a keeper, not a master of wealth; a slave, not a lord. For he would sooner give one a portion of his flesh than his buried gold . . . for what he can neither determine to bestow upon others, nor to distribute to the needy, how can he possibly account his own? How does he hold possession of those things of which he has neither the free use or enjoyment?"[73]

The Herculean task of Chrysostom's thought was to confront the established ownership concept and stand it on its head. From becoming an instrument of exclusion and separation it was to become one of inclusion and community building. Instead of an unlimited and absolute power it was to be a limited one, related to genuine human values. Instead of being an end in itself it was to be considered a means, through stewardship of the poor, to certain ends.

A further observation concerning the nature of wealth in the mind of Chrysostom must be made. He believes wealth should not be totally relied upon due to its transitory nature. Also, for this reason no one should grow proud of their status as wealthy people. Chrysostom states:

> "And after all, what is wealth? A vain shadow, dissolving smoke, a flower of the grass, or rather something meaner than a flower. Why then are you high-minded over grass? Does not wealth fall to thieves, and effeminates, and harlots, and tomb-breakers? Does this puff you up, that you have such as these to share in your possession."[74]

Elsewhere Chrysostom comments:

> "How long shall you be rich, and that man poor? Till evening, but no longer; for so short is life, and all things so near their end, and all things presently so stand at the door, that the whole must be deemed but a little hour. What need do you have

> of bursting storehouses, of a multitude of domestics and house-keepers?"[75]

Chrysostom seems to be suggesting that wealth alone is a very unstable foundation upon which to build one's life. Rather, he tells his listeners that wealth must be joined with alms-giving if it is to have any positive meaning.

THE PROPER USE OF WEALTH: ALMS-GIVING

Chrysostom believes that instead of totally rejecting all possessions because of the temptations which they bring; people must become even more radical in their use of wealth. He says, "It is not enough to despise wealth, but we must also maintain poor men, and above all things follow Christ."[76] For Chrysostom, this "maintenance" falls under the title of "alms-giving" and represents the most noble use of wealth. Evidently he spent much of his preaching time on this subject. At one point toward the end of his ninety homilies on St. Matthew's Gospel he says,

> "What do you say? Am I forever speaking of alms-giving? I shall wish myself that there were not great need for me to address this advise to you . . . but when you are not yet sound, how can anyone arm you for the fight."[77]

Chrysostom comments further on the people's need to hear his message,

> "But if you tell someone of money-getting and of traffic, and of the care and increase of your goods, I also would say to you, not these, but alms, and prayers, and the protection of the injured and all such things, are truly works with respect to which we live in thorough idleness."[78]

Chrysostom placed a great importance on the role of alms giving in the Christian life. In fact M.G. Fouyas[79] says that no other Father of the Church recommends as strongly as Chrysostom the distribution of wealth and private property to those in need. For practical purposes St. John Chrysostom looks to alms giving for alleviation, if not remedy, of existing conditions. He was quite

definitely out to make "The rich poorer and the poor richer, and both holy" and the rich could begin reforming themselves by giving generously to the less well-off. "I do not call on you to get rid of all your money, but to give according to your means to those in need."[80]

For Chrysostom, giving alms included, but was not limited to, dispensing money. He reminds his audience of the different aspects of alms giving when he says:

> "Let us clothe the naked, let us bring in the stranger, feed the hungry, give the thirsty drink, let us visit the sick, and look upon him that is in prison."[81]

Attwater says, "Obviously by alms giving Chrysostom did not mean merely the giving away of money and (unwanted) goods to those who were in need of them. He included under the term all services that can be rendered freely to a neighbour, from what is vaguely called `help' on to the professional services of doctors and lawyers, and especially public hospitality and relief."[82]

Attwater further relates how Chrysostom, "urges his hearers freely to give of their money, their goods, their talents, their knowledge, their services generally to all who stood in need of them."[83]

Chrysostom claimed commitment to Christ as the motivation behind alms giving. For him, Christian commitment could not be divorced from Christian action. Such action served as evidence of the commitment to God. This seems to be the idea in Chrysostom's closing to Homily XX on St. John's Gospel when he says:

> "For to say that we love, and not to act like lovers, is ridiculous, not only before God, but even in the sight of men. Since then to confess Him in word only, while in deeds we oppose Him, is not only unprofitable, but also hurtful to us; let us, I entreat you, also make confession by our works; that we also may obtain a confession from Him in that day, when before His Father he shall confess those who are worthy in Christ Jesus Our Lord."[84]

Chrysostom emphasized that the people should attain, not to the name of Christian, but to the fact; not to the faith, that is, not to the faith alone, but to the Christian life, to good works. This union of faith and life, of principles and moral actions, of convictions and works, is for Chrysostom so essential that he shows that the lack of a practical life corresponding to one's faith is the bridge to unbelief. "It is absolutely impossible not to become vacillating in the faith if one leads an unclean life."[86]

Also Chrysostom understands wealth to be given to Christians to provide them with an opportunity to be faithful to God and neighbour through giving of alms. He declares:

"Therefore though he was able to take them (riches) away from you, He left them, that you might have opportunity to show virtue; that bringing us into need one of another, He might make our love for one another more fervent." Chrysostom continues, "What? Could not God have taken away these things from you? But He does not this, to give you power to be liberal to the poor."[87] Now, since this purpose is clear, Chrysostom urges:

> "Let us make our mercifulness abundant, let us give proof of much love to man, both by the use of our money, and by our actions. And if we see anyone ill-treated and beaten in the market-place, whether we can pay down money, let us do it?"[88]

According to Chrysostom, this outward example of love toward God and humanity is the way to earn eternal wealth. He writes, "Let us then seek this wealth which endures forever, and never deserts us, that becoming great here and glorious there, we may obtain everlasting blessing."[89] Elsewhere Chrysostom says:

> "So we, if we enter upon the work of aiding the poor, shall easily become truly wise, . . . and soaring up to Heaven shall easily obtain the eternal blessings."[90]

M.G. Fouyas[91] says that Chrysostom argued that faith and love belong together. They are one coin with two sides. Love should be expressed by all means of charity, and charity is for Chrysostom the only right use of wealth. This topic returns so often in his sermons that he has been called "St.John the Alms giver."[92] "Set apart one room in your house for that guest, for Christ; appoint one of your servants - and don't be afraid of choosing the best - to look after it and wait on the beggars and the sick. Or, if you will not do this, at least give Christ shelter - with the mules in your stable. You may well shudder. I am saying this to shame you."[93] Chrysostom again and again urges his hearers freely to give their money to all who stood in need of it, the poor of Christ, to the poor who were Christ.

Chrysostom defines alms giving as a matter entirely left to the free will of the individual. "God might have constrained us to give alms, He chose instead to make it depend entirely on our free will, that He might have the opportunity of rewarding us." We are at liberty to give or not to give. Ananias and Sapphira were punished only because "they lied unto the Holy Ghost."[94]

Humility naturally leads to the giving of alms, because the truly humble man will readily understand his relation and duty toward his fellow men; and once understanding this relation and duty, he will give alms in all humility. G.J. Budde says: "The giving of alms in a humble spirit is very necessary, as St. Chrysostom states in one of his homilies, because without this humility God will not look with favour upon an otherwise good work."[95]

G.J. Budde[96] continues to say: "If a man has attained true humility, it naturally follows that he will give alms as secretly as possible. He does not wish to let the world know of his good deeds." Budde then quotes Chrysostom to back up this assertion: ". . . St. Chrysostom in one of

his homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew says that those who do not give in secret, cover with the mask of mercy `the spirit of cruelty and inhumanity.' " Since alms are not given for the purpose of impressing others, it is not necessary that any one know about the good deed." Thus for Chrysostom both humility and secrecy were very important qualities in giving alms.

Chrysostom proclaims alms-giving to be ineffective if not done out of the right motives. "It is not then," says Chrysostom, "the giving of alms which is required, but the giving as one ought, the giving for such and such an end."[97]

Alms-giving should not be seen as an opportunity to pass judgement upon the poor. Chrysostom reminds the congregation, "For if you wish to show kindness, you must not require an accounting of a person's life, but merely correct his poverty and fill his need." He continues, "A judge is one thing, an alms-giver is another. Charity is so called because we give it even to the unworthy."[98] Elsewhere Chrysostom says quite movingly concerning this issue:

> "Now what follows I do not say without good reason, for most people question the poor inquisitively, inquire their native land, their manner of life, their character, trade and their physical condition, making accusations and demanding a thousand statements in regard to their health. Because of this many of them pretend that their bodies are mutilated, and feign injury in order to move our hard-hearted indifference. And although it is serious to reproach them in this wise in summer, yet it is not so serious as in winter. For then, when they are oppressed by the cold, would it not be the height of cruelty to show oneself so harsh and inhuman a judge as to make no allowance for men who are without employment? . . . If God should examine us as closely as we examine the case of the poor, we would not obtain any Grace or mercy. For `With what judgement you judge, He (i.e. Jesus Christ) says, "you shall be judged," ' (St. Matthew 7:2). Be therefore merciful and kindly affectioned toward your fellow-servant; and forgive many sins , and

exercise mercy, that so you may yourself obtain a like judgement."[99]

Chrysostom settles this issue by announcing that if anyone is going to investigate the worthiness of the recipient and inquire exactly, then God will do the same to that person: "For if we were going to investigate the worthiness of our fellow servants, and inquire exactly, God will do the same for us."[100] Such attitudes and actions lead only to misuse of the possessions entrusted to people by God.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Chrysostom, `To The Population of Antioch,' 2, 6 (MPG 49:42)
2. John Chrysostom, `On Virginity,' 68(MPG 48:584-585)
3. John Chrysostom, Homily 77 on St. Matthew's Gospel, (MPG 58:707)
4. John Chrysostom, Homily 10, 7 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (MPG 61:85) (In the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. by P Schaff [1889], p57)
5. John Chrysostom,, Homily 12, 4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy (MPG 62:562-63)
6. St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermo L, 1 (PL 38:226)
7. C Baur, John Chrysostom and His Time, translated by M. Gonzanga, Volume I (1959), pp 380ff
8. Methodios Fouyas, The Social Message of St. John Chrysostom, (Athens: 1968), p91
9. John Chrysostom, Second Sermon on the Rich Man and Lazarus (MPG 48, p986).
10. John Chrysostom, Homily 38 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (MPG 61, p332)
11. John Chrysostom, Homily 3 on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians (MPG 62 p 479)
12. John Chrysostom, Homily 13 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians (MPG 62 p261).
13. John Chrysostom, Homily 14 on the Acts of the Apostles. (MPG 60, pp110-111)
14. John Chrysostom, MPG 50 p699
15. John Chrysostom, Homily on Eutropius (MPG 52 pp391-396)
16. John Chrysostom, On Lazarus and the Rich Man 2,4 (MPG 48:987-988)
17. John Chrysostom, Ibid., p988
18. Cf John Chrysostom's Homily 63, 1 on John's Gospel (MPG 59:349).
19. John Chrysostom, On Virginity, 68 (MPG 48:584-585).
20. John Chrysostom, To the population of Antioch, Homily 2, 6-7 (MPG 49:43)
21. John Chrysostom, ΕΙΣ ΤΟ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΡΗΤΟΝ: Τὸ λέγον· «Δεῖ δὲ καὶ αἱρέσεις εἶναι ἐν ὑμῖν, ἵνα οἱ δόκιμοι φανεροὶ γένωνται.» (I Corinthians 11:19), 2 (MPG 51, p.255).

22. Charles Avila, Ownership: Early Christian Teaching, London: Sheed and Ward, 1983), Chapter 6, pp81-104
23. John Chrysostom, ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΜΗ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΕΥΕΙΝ, 2, (MPG 51:355).
24. In Insciption Altaris et in Principium Actorum, 1,2 (MPG 51:69)
25. John Chrysostom, Homily 12, 4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy (PG 62:562-563)
26. John Chrysostom Ibid, (MPG 62: 563-564)
27. Avila, op cit, pp81-104
28. John Chrysostom, Homily 10, 5 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (MPG 61:85), in Schaff, op cit, volume 12, p6
29. John Chrysostom, Homily 11, 7 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, (MPG 63:93-94) in Schaff, op cit, vol 14, p420
30. John Chrysostom, Homily 33, 3 on the Gospel of St. John (MPG 59:192), in Schaff, op cit., p118
31. John Chrysostom, Homily 25, 4 on the Acts of the Apostles (MPG 60:196), in Schaff, op cit., volume 11, p166
32. John Chrysostom, Homily 76 on St. Matthew's Gospel in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p454
33. Ibid
34. John Chrysostom, Homily 57, 5 on St. Matthew's Gospel in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p356
35. John Chrysostom, Second sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man in St. John Chrysostom on Wealth and Poverty, translated by Catherine P Roth (New York; St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p50
36. Ibid
37. Ibid, p55
38. John Chrysostom, Homily 77 on St. Matthew's Gospel in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p466
39. G. Uhlhorn, Christian Charity in the Ancient Church, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1883), pp274-322
40. St. Augustine of Hippo, S.219; in Ps cxlvii; S.249
41. Hieronym. Ep. 150
42. G. Uhlhorn, loc. cit.
43. G. Uhlhorn, loc. cit.
44. John Chrysostom, Homily 11 on the Acts of the Apostles (MPG 60:p94)
45. G. Uhlhorn, loc. cit.
46. John Chrysostom, Homily 19, 3 on St. John's Gospel, (MPG 59: 123-124)
47. John Chrysostom, Homily 12, 4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy 62:562-563
48. John Chrysostom, De Verbis Apostoli, "Habentem Eumdem Spiritum," 3, 11 (MPG 51:299)
49. C. Avila, op cit., pp125-150
50. Chrysostom, On the Rich Man and Lazarus, 2, 4 (MPG 48:988)
51. St. Ambrose of Milan, De Nobuthe 11 (PL 14:747)
52. Homilia in illud Lucae, "Destruam ...," 7 (MPG 31:276-277)
53. Augustine of Hippo, Epistola CL111, 26, PL23:665
54. Augustine, Sermo LXI, 11, 12, PL38:413

55. John Chrysostom, On the Rich man and Lazarus, 2, 5 (MPG 48:988)
56. John Chrysostom, `To The Population of Antioch,' 2, 6 (MPG 49:42)
57. John Chrysostom, On Penance 7, 7 (MPG 49:336)
58. John Chrysostom, Homily 37,5 on Genesis (MPG 53:348)
59. John Chrysostom, De Decem Millium Talentorum Debitore, 4 (MPG 51:22)
60. De Verbis Apostoli, "Habentem Eumdem Spiritum," 3, 11, PG 51:299
61. John Chrysostom, Homily 33 on John's Gospel, PG 59:192 (in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p118).
62. Ambrose of Milan, De Nab. Jez., 11 (PL 14:747)
63. St. Ambrose of Milan, Commentarium in Epistlolam II ad Corinthos, 9, 9 (PL17:313-314)
64. Augstine of Hippo, Sermo L, 1 (PL 38:327)
65. John Chrysostom, Homily 77 on Matthew's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p467
66. John Chrysostom, Seventh Sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man in St. John Chrysostom on Wealth and Poverty, translated by C.P. Roth, p137
67. John Chrysostom, Homily 20 on John's Gospel, in Schaff, op.cit volume 14, p69
68. John Chrysostom, Homily 59 on John's Gospel (MPG 59: 321) in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p215
69. John Chrysostom, Homily 80 on John's Gospel in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p299
70. C. Avila, op cit., pp125-150
71. Chrysostom, Homily 19, 3 on John's Gospel (MPG 59: 123-124)
72. Augustine of Hippo, On Free Choice of the Will, 1, 15 (PL 32:1238)
73. John Chrysostom, Homily 2, On the Statues.
74. John Chrysostom, Homily 33 on John's Gospel, in Schaff, op. cit., volume 14, p118
75. Homily 76 on John's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p286
76. Chrysostom, Homily 66 on Matthew's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p388
77. Chrysostom, Homily 90 on St. Matthew's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p523
78. Chrysostom, Homily 35 on Matthew's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p235
79. M.G. Fouyas, The Social Message of St. John Chrysostom (1968), pp78-81
80. John Chrysostom, Homily XXIII on the Acts of the Apostles (MPG 60:181), and D. Attwater, St. John Chrysostom: the Voice of Gold (Milwaukee : The Bruce Publishing Company, 1939), p67.
81. John Chrysostom, Homily 59 on John's Gospel (MPG 59:321), in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p216
82. Attwater, op cit., p64
83. Attwater, op cit., p65
84. John Chrysostom, Homily 20 on John's Gospel (MPG 59:115), in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p72.
85. Baur, op cit., pp373-375
86. John Chrysostom, Homily 35 on The Acts of the Apostles (MPG 60:332)

87. John Chrysostom, Homily 76 on Matthew's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p467
88. John Chrysostom, Homily 16 on Matthew's Gospel in Schaff, op cit., volume 10, p100.
89. John Chrysostom, Homily 33 on John's Gospel, in Schaff, op cit., volume 14, p118
90. John Chrysostom, Homily 81 on John's Gospel, in Schaff op cit., volume 14, p302
91. M.G. Fouyas, loc cit.
92. J. Quasten, Patrology, volume III (1960), p454
93. John Chrysostom, Homily 14 on The Acts of the Apostles
94. John Chrysostom, Homily 90 on St. Matthew's Gospel.
95. G.J. Budde, "Christian Charity: Now and Always. The Fathers of the Church and Almsgiving," in The Ecclesiastical Review, Volume 85, no. 6, December 1931, pages 561-579
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98. John Chrysostom, Second Sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man, in St. John Chrysostom on Wealth and Poverty, translated by Catherine P. Roth, p52
99. John Chrysostom, Sermon on Alms, 6 (MPG 51:269)
100. John Chrysostom, Second Sermon on Lazarus and the Rich Man, in St. John Chrysostom on Wealth and Poverty, translated by Catherine P. Roth, p53

CHAPTER TWO

THE MISUSE OF WEALTH: ON LUXURY AND SELFISH USE OF WEALTH AND ON USURY

I. BACKGROUND - THE CONTEXT OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Antioch, the capital of the Roman province of Syria, where John Chrysostom spent most of his life, was one of the largest and most beautiful cities of the Empire. In the fourth century the greater part of the municipal land there was in the hand of a few rich landowners - the proprietors of the fine villas described by Chrysostom in his works. The well-preserved ruins of these villas show them to have been large and solidly built, with stables and slave quarters on the ground floor and luxurious apartments for the owners and managers above. The wealthy landowners represented only about one tenth of the population. Living in the city, they had succeeded in concentrating in their few hands most of the agricultural lands of the countryside.

Free tenants and hired labourers worked these lands. Exploited by the city landlords, the peasants lived in extreme poverty. They had no share in the life of the city and could not even dream of ever becoming citizens.

In the homilies on St. Matthew's Gospel he speaks with emotion on the hard life of the country folk of whom he was so fond, worked as if they were donkeys or mules. "Their masters take no more care of their bodies than if they were stones: they get no rest, and are equally badly off whether the harvest be good or not . . . They are terrified by the brutality and extortions of the foremen." Among the city artisans, too, of whom Chrysostom was no less fond, there was more goodness than material prosperity: many of the free workmen had to hire themselves out, instead of working on their own, and their wages were miserable. There were hosts of beggars, not a few of whom had deliberately chosen that way of life (and not for religious reasons), and a floating

population of hangers on and criminals, not all of whom had been forced into those ways by want. Altogether, among the Christians of Antioch alone, three in every hundred had to live principally on alms, and of the remainder a large proportion was not properly provided for.[1]

Unfortunately we have no statistical evidence as to the proportion of the poor people in the Byzantine Empire to the rest of the population. John Chrysostom, in one of his sermons delivered in Antioch between 386 and 388[2] when the imperial government had imposed an increase in taxation,[3] estimated that the poor of Antioch amounted to one tenth of the inhabitants. He remarked that one tenth more were very rich, the remaining eight tenths making up the middle class.[4] He appealed to the middle class as follows: "The very rich indeed are but few, but those that come next to them are many; again the poor are much fewer than these. Nevertheless, although therefore there are so many that are able to feed the hungry, many go to sleep in their hunger."[5]

Chrysostom estimated that the poor of Constantinople numbered about fifty thousand. He pronounced this number in one of the sermons which he delivered in Constantinople after his election to the patriarchal throne, sometime between his consecration on the 26th February, 398 and before the 9th June, 404, when he was banished to exile. He had made an appeal to the Christian population of approximately one hundred thousand to support the poor. He writes that the rest of the population were pagans and Jews.[6] If the fifty thousand poor made up one tenth of the total population of Constantinople, as Chrysostom had estimated the poor of Antioch, then the inhabitants of the capital might have been close to four hundred thousand, not an extravagant number for the beginnings of the fifth century.[7] Nonetheless, it is very difficult for us to

determine the accuracy of Chrysostom's estimate of the poor either of Antioch or of Constantinople. However, we do know that the Church was the true force behind the various charities that were organised in every Byzantine city. Much of the wealth of the Church and monastic establishments of later centuries was used for the poor, who had multiplied, and for the maintenance of philanthropic institutions.[8]

It was for this class of people that the Byzantine Church and state took special measures. Special houses known as `ptocheia' or `ptochotropheia' were built to shelter poor people unable to work and in dire need of support. Chrysostom avers that his Church in Antioch, when he delivered his famous sermons on the occasion of the imperial statues, had been supporting many widows, prisoners, maimed, orphans, and others in want, three thousand in all.[9] This charitable work was carried on despite the fact that the revenue of his Church was one of the lowest in the city.[10]

As early sources illustrate, St. John Chrysostom stood as a brilliant example of a bishop consumed by his sense of duty, justice, and love toward his fellow man and who lived the life of what he preached. In Antioch as well as in Constantinople his ecclesiastical programme included a great concern for the destitute. The patriarch was fully conscious of the social responsibilities of the Church, finding time not only for religious services and private study but for personal ministration to the needs of the less fortunate. He tended the sick, the orphans, the widows, the prisoners, and those in distress.[11] Chrysostom built charitable institutions, such as hospitals and old-age homes,[12] and redeemed many prisoners held by Isaurian robbers.[13] Palladius observes that all had a friend in his person.[14]

Palladius also notes that Chrysostom applied stern discipline in his private life and in diocesan expenditures for charity. He avoided dinners and expenses that might reduce his ability to assist the poor and restricted the expenditure of his diocesan stewards in order to provide food for the orphans and the poor.[15]

Indeed St. John Chrysostom built several hospitals in Constantinople. One of the first reforms he undertook following his election as Patriarch of Constantinople was the reorganization of Church finances. When he found extraordinary extravagance in a certain bishop's expenditures, he ordered that the large sums allocated to the bishop's residence be transferred to the hospital.[16] Unfortunately, we do not know which hospital this was, or even the founder's name. The Byzantine Empire of the fourth century also faced famines, the recurrent menace of barbaric invasions, the land-hungry power elite, and other natural catastrophes.[17] There was a pressing need for more hospitals. Chrysostom, who saw that "the need of treatment was very great, erected other hospitals, over which he appointed two devout priests, as well as physicians and cooks . . . so that strangers coming to the city, and there falling ill, could obtain medical care, as a thing which was not only good in itself, but also for the glory of the Saviour."[18]

Chrysostom's campaign against luxury in the midst of poverty and the causal relationship between the two was scarcely popular with the Empress Eudoxia and her advisers, the aristocratic ladies Marsa and Eugraphia. Their hatred for St. John Chrysostom has been likened to that of Herodias for St. John the Baptist. Indeed Socrates[19] and Sozomen[20] point out that the Empress Eudoxia was insatiable, and her avarice was the main cause of the clash between her and Chrysostom. The climax came when Chrysostom openly called Eudoxia a "Jezabel" who had robbed poor people of their lands as Ahab had robbed

Naboth. Chrysostom said this in light of the fact that Eudoxia, after the death of the Consul Theognostus, had seized the property of his widow. The widow sought protection from the Patriarch, who considered it his duty to write a letter asking the Empress to return the seized estates to the widow. The Empress regarded this action as abusive and so she consorted with Chrysostom's enemies within the Church, who were in the same position as she where vulnerability to the allegation of luxurious living amidst the poverty of others was concerned, and organized a united front against him. Her disfavour was increased when Chrysostom attacked the luxury of women and Eudoxia thought that the Patriarch included her amongst these women. Chrysostom said "Why do you wish to appear young in your advancing age? Why do you wear curls on your foreheads like demi-mondaines, and bring respectable people into disrepute? Why do you deceive those whom you meet? And all this, even though you are widows." (Palladius, Dialogue 8,27 MPG 47)[21]

In brief, John was declared deposed as Bishop of Constantinople at the Synod of the Oak, which he did not attend, and then exiled by order of the Imperial Court. He was subsequently recalled, thanks to his popularity among the common folk, but he seemed not to have learned his lesson according to his enemies, and continued to favour the poor against the rich, and was exiled again. He died on the 14th September, 407, at Comana, in Pontus, once more an exile.

In such a society where the rights of private property gave rise to numerous abuses and instances of social exploitation, unaccompanied by any discussion of principles, John Chrysostom vehemently responded for the poor - so that on the occasion of some of his sermons he was accused of attacking the rich "without reason". He surely did pay a great price for courageously treading the ground of social justice.

II THE MISUSE OF WEALTH IN ANTIOCH AND CONSTANTINOPLE AT THE TIME OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

In this section it will be shown that with very good reason could Chrysostom espouse the cause of the poor, due to the rich people's abuses of wealth in Antioch and Constantinople, which will also give an idea of the very pitiful conditions of the poor in the two great Eastern cities of the fourth century. The rich were described by Chrysostom, with picturesqueness and sometimes a grim humour. Their avarice, hard-heartedness and general immorality he scourged remorselessly, as "worse than wild beasts."[22] It is indeed to Chrysostom's great honour that his love and sympathy were always to be found on the side of the poor and destitute, for he did himself come from a well-to-do family. Baur[23] says that very seldom had anyone spoken from the pulpit to the conscience of the rich as he did.

In Antioch there were Christian families who were extremely wealthy, who owned horses, servants and slaves, great lands and splendid palaces: they slept in beds of ivory, silver and gold,[24] and had chairs, vases and other articles of solid silver.[25] The rich also had dishes, pitchers and scent bottles, as well as furniture, such as chairs and foot-stools, all made of solid silver.[26] The rich wives curled their hair, adorned themselves in silk and expensive garments. Men were also to be seen with many gold rings and costly jewels,[27] as well as ornaments and glittering sandals.[28]

These same families, says Chrysostom, often gave great banquets and entertainments, in which luxury and lavishness of all kinds prevailed, where not only exotic foods such as meat, fowls, pheasants, expensive fish and

pastry were consumed, and unmixed "wine of Thasos" was drunk, but also flute players, dancers and stage actors were brought in for the pleasure of the guests.[29]

However this was contrasted with the plight of the poor people who lay on straw in the great cold, in the middle of the night, under the colonnades of the public baths and temples, trembling with cold and tortured by hunger.[30] Also many shrivelled forms looked into the brightly lit dining rooms of the rich and begged, weeping for a gift, but no-one listened to them, Chrysostom says very movingly.[31] When such a situation exists, is it not we ourselves who make robbers, Chrysostom asks. Is it not we who minister fuel to the fire of the envious? Is it not we who make vagabonds and traitors when we put our wealth before them for a bait? What madness is this? For it is madness to cover one's chest with apparel and overlook him that is made after Christ's image and similitude; to let all be wasted away with time, and let not Christ be fed, and this when He is hungry.[32] Here once again one can see here an important aspect of Chrysostom's Theology - namely that he personified Christ in the poor people.

Often because of the insensitivity of the wealthy and in order better to win their pity and compassion, the poor would gather before the Church doors where they might be seen swearing, taking oaths and doing all sorts of indiscreet things.[33] At the thought and sight of such contrasts of the lifestyles of rich and poor Chrysostom naturally became angry. Then he would know how to portray the need and the misery of the poor in colours which were more than vivid. Chrysostom says that the poor might blind their own children or engage in spectacular feasts, for example, chewing the skins of worn-out shoes or fixing sharp nails into their heads. Others would lie in frozen ponds with naked stomachs or endure other more horrid trials. All of this in order to

amuse and delight spectators who might be moved thereby to give a pittance for a loaf of bread. How disgraceful and inhuman it is, Chrysostom would remind the Christians, to compel the poor to suffer such humiliations in order to support themselves. When we allow or encourage such practices we are even more guilty than one who kills another for "he who bids a man to slay himself (which is what happens in the case of these persons) does a more grievous thing than he that slays a man."[34] It is worth quoting further from Chrysostom here to get a better idea on the real misery of the poor:

> "It is foolishness . . ." to ". . .allow men who are created in God's Image and our likeness, to stand naked and trembling with the cold, so that they can hardly hold themselves upright. Yes, you say, he is cheating, and is only pretending to be weak and trembling. What! Do you not fear that lightening from Heaven will fall on you for this word? . . . Only see, you are large and fat, you hold drinking parties until late at night, and sleep in a warm soft bed. And do you not think of how you must give an account of your misuse of the gifts of God? (The relationship between wealth and the after-life will be discussed in the next chapter). . . If we would give our alms gladly and willingly, the poor would never have fallen to such depths."[35]

Chrysostom is especially angered by the arrogance and senseless luxury of the irresponsible wealthy in Antioch and Constantinople:

> "Don't envy the man whom you see riding through the streets with a troop of attendants to drive the crowds out of his way. It is absurd! Why, my dear sir, if I may ask you, do you thus drive your fellow creatures before you? Are you a wolf or a lion? Your Lord, Jesus Christ, raised man to Heaven: but you do not condescend to share even the market-place with Him. When you put a gold bit on your horse and a gold bracelet on your slave's arm, when your clothes are gilded down to your very shoes, you are feeding the most ferocious of all beasts, avarice: you are robbing orphans and stealing from widows and making yourself a public enemy." (Homily 48 on the Psalms).

This use of precious metals for display was such a craze that Chrysostom declared that some people, if they could,

would cover the ground, their houses and the sky itself with gold. In an amusing passage from his forty-ninth homily on St. Matthew's Gospel he ridicules the use of silk (then still regarded as a great luxury of dress) in the making of footgear:

> "Ships are built, sailors and pilots engaged, sails spread and the sea crossed, wife and children and home left behind, barbarian lands traversed and the trader's life exposed to a thousand dangers - what for? So that you may trick out the leather of your boots with silk laces. What could be more mad? . . . Your concern as you walk about the streets is that you should not soil your boots with mud or dust. Will you let your soul thus grovel while you are taking care of your boots? Boots are made to be dirtied: if you can't bear it, take them off and wear them round your neck. You laugh! - I am weeping at your folly."

Baur[36] says that the fact that Chrysostom dared to rebuke publicly the luxury and ostentation of the hard-hearted rich, and to tell them fearlessly what he thought, in Constantinople (and indeed Antioch) in which there was so much poverty and misery to be alleviated, took the common Christians' heart by storm. Also when they saw how simply Chrysostom lived, and that he neither gave nor attended banquets, and that he used whatever he could spare for the poor and the sick, and above all for the hospitals, the people knew that he was no court-bishop, but at last a people's bishop, whose heart and hand belonged first of all to the poor and needy, the little people and the down-trodden. And so he was.

III THE MANY POOR ARE NOT SLOTHFUL: THE HUGE INHERITANCE OF A FEW IS UNJUST

The following passages are from sermons St. John Chrysostom delivered at Antioch before he became Bishop. The first is part of one of his thirty-two homilies on the Epistle to the Romans. The other two are from a

sermon called `On Almsgiving' preached one winter season in Antioch on the subject of the beggars and other poor people who he saw had come to the principal church of the city. All the passages are in some fashion concerned with possession by inheritance and with toil.

A. "If you wish to leave much wealth to your children, leave them in God's care. For He who, without you having done anything, gave you a soul, and formed you a body, and granted you the gift of life, when He sees you displaying such munificence, and distributing your goods, must surely open to them all kinds of riches . . . Do not leave them riches, but virtue and skill. For if they have the confidence of riches, they will not mind anything besides, for they shall have the means of screening the wickedness of their ways in their abundant riches."[37] (Homily 7,9 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, MPG 60:453)

B. " `Anyone who would not work should not eat' (II Thessalonians Chapter three, verse ten) . . . But the laws of Saint Paul are not merely for the poor. They are for the rich as well . . . We accuse the poor of laziness. This laziness is often excusable. We ourselves are often guilty of worse idleness. But you say, `I have my paternal inheritance!' Tell me, just because he is poor and was born of a poor family possessing no great wealth, is he thereby worthy to die?"[38] (On Alms, 6, MPG 51:269)

C. "You are often idling at the theatres all day, or in the council-chambers, or in useless conversation. You blame many - but you fail to consider yourself as ever doing anything evil or idle. And do you condemn this poor and miserable person who lives the whole day in entreaties, tears, and a thousand difficulties? Do you dare bring him or her to court and demand an accounting? Tell me, how can you call these things human?"[39] (On Alms, 6, MPG 51:269)

First, Chrysostom calls into question the practice of amassing wealth and leaving it to one's children. Given the fact of God's Providence, he argues, such an idea is not logically tenable. The God who has given us all that we are and have will also grant those who come after us the things that they need. To accumulate possessions for the sake of future security is diametrically opposed to faith in Providence. Instead of providing for the future good of their children, the rich who accumulate wealth on that pretext are actually depriving their children of effective incentives to work and leaving them with so much `confidence in riches, they will not mind anything besides, for they shall have the means of screening the wickedness of their ways in their abundant riches.' The important thing to give one's children is not an accumulation of wealth, but `arete' - virtue, both in the general sense of `skill' and in the specific sense of morally good habits.

In passage B and C, John Chrysostom shows that he holds that one may be required to work for a living by citing St. Paul to this effect. But he questions whether this principle is correctly invoked by those who hurl the general accusation of indolence at the many poor, the accusers themselves belonging to the few rich. As he observes the concrete historical situation of wealth and poverty, Chrysostom sees the alleged idleness of the poor as much more easily excusable than that of the wealthy owners, who have gained so much of their property by `right' of succession. He considers a situation unjust where the descendants of a rich family can enjoy ever greater wealth in relative idleness, wasting their days in idle prattle, while those of a destitute family should sink into ever deeper misery despite honest efforts to overcome their poverty.

D. ` "Why does he not work?" you say "And why is he to be maintained in idleness?" But tell me, is it by working

that you have what you have? Have you not received it as an inheritance from your father? Or, even if you do work, is this a reason why you should reproach another? Do you not hear what Paul says? For after saying "Anyone who would not work should not eat," he says, "You must never grow weary of doing what is right." (II Thessalonians 3:13).'[40] (Homily 11,3 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, MPG 63:94.)

E. ` "But," you say, "he is an imposter." What are you talking about? Do you call him an imposter for the sake of a single loaf or garment? "But," you say, "he will sell it immediately." And do you manage all of your own affairs well? But what? Are all the poor poor through idleness? None from being robbed? None from catastrophe? None from illness? None from any other difficulties.'[41] (Homily 11,3 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews, MPG 63:94.)

St. John Chrysostom cannot emphasize enough the fact which he seems to think really ought to be self-evident, that not all the poor are poor because they refuse to work. As wealth begets more wealth even among idle heirs, so poverty breeds "a thousand difficulties" that conspire to make the poor even poorer. In passages D and E, a rich heir has gained property as an inheritance. By mere right of succession, perhaps with no further efforts, the heir has come to possess much more than need would justify. Even granting the investment of some labour in this property, still the very essence of the ethics of ownership demands that he or she share with the needy.

This thought is further clarified in a passage from a homily on St. Matthew's Gospel chapter twenty-four, which John Chrysostom delivered to the general public at Antioch.

F. "Even though you have received an inheritance from your father, and have in this way all that you possess,

even then, all are God's. Even you, for your part, would desire that whatever you have given should be carefully dispensed. Do you not think that God will require His own of us with greater strictness, or that He suffers them to be wasted at random? These things are not, they are not so. Because for this end He left these things in your hand, in order "to give them their meat in due season." But what does it mean, "in due season?" To the needy, to the hungry."[42] (Homily 77,4 on St. Matthew's Gospel, MPG 58:707.)

No matter how legal the manner in which the few rich may have acquired their property, ultimately the only ethically correct view of the ownership right, according to Chrysostom, is that it is subordinate to God's absolute dominion. The human right to own is subsidiary to the purpose of the Supreme Owner.

Thus, Chrysostom questions the task of a person's amassing wealth, and keeping it for the security of future generations, in the face of the present cry for liberation arising from the many who have been reduced to poverty by the oppressive practices that concentrate wealth in the hands of a few. One might say that, for Chrysostom, the phenomenon of inheritance was tantamount to wresting property from its essentially dynamic function and fixing it in a static order.

Secondly Chrysostom looked at the contemporary situation and then looked into the past. He saw that the laws of inheritance, reflecting the traditional Roman absolutist, exclusivist conception of ownership, provided the vehicle by which stolen `koina' were transmitted to and accumulated in the hands of a few. He rejected the very familiar position of the wealthy that the poor were poor because they did not work.

C. Avila says that Chrysostom's, and indeed the Patristic, defence of the poor offended and angered the

upper classes of the later Roman Empire. Chrysostom and other Fathers declared that owners had the luxury of idleness because they made their tenants and slaves produce surpluses for their accumulation and lavish consumption.

On the other hand, the dispossessed had the shame of idleness because their talents and energy had no access to the natural and social wealth which had been expropriated (legally, of course) by the wealthy few.

Chrysostom was careful not to reject a work ethic altogether. In fact, Patristic thought generally emphasised that people are called by God to be "co-creators;" and Chrysostom, for his part, arrestingly pointed out that the children of the rich, too, need a chance to co-create - to produce for themselves and for others, and not be condemned to wallow in the wealth which a private ownership system handed down to them, as mentioned in his seventh homily on Romans. (MPG 60:453).

St. John Chrysostom is not alone in attacking the easy wealth of inheritance, St. Augustine says: "For you do not entrust your children to your patrimony better than to your Creator . . . Why does such a one not give alms? Because he is saving for his children."[43]

IV THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S TEACHING

The Theological principles underlying Chrysostom's teaching flow naturally from his understanding of the Church as the Body of Christ. His Theological principles are never abstract theoretical formulations but are

always explained with descriptive and imaginative analogies and immediate practical applications.

St. Paul had spoken of the union between Christ and His Disciples. Each of them is a member of Christ (I Corinthians, 6:15); together they form the Body of Christ (Ephesians, 4:16); as a corporate unity they are simply termed Christ (I Corinthians, 12:12). As a human body is organised, each joint and muscle having its own function, yet each contributing to the union of the complex whole, so too the Christian society is a body "compacted and firmly joined together by that which every part supplieth" (Ephesians, 4:16), while all the parts depend on Christ their head.[44]

The concept of the Church of the Body of Christ was used a lot by the Fathers. For example, St. Augustine says in his commentary on Psalms 29:2, 5: "All mankind is in Christ one man, and the unity of Christians is one Man." Augustine also says in his commentary on Psalm 127,1,3: "Christ is therefore one Man, in his commentary on Psalm 26:2: "We are all in Him both Christ's and Christ, since in some manner the whole Christ is the Head and the Body."[45]

In the Church as in a body there is a solidarity among members. So it follows that one should not misjudge one's wealth and should instead help the poor because they are our co-members in the Body of Christ. To emphasize the awesomeness of this Body of Christ, Chrysostom compares it with the altar of stone in the Church which becomes holy and worthy of honour because it receives Christ's Body. The poor, suffering and destitute, those whom one can see "lying everywhere both in lanes and in market places" - this is an even holier and more awesome altar because "it is Christ's Body," ". . . and you may sacrifice on it every hour, for on this, too, is sacrifice performed."[46]

Chrysostom uses this same comparison when he rebukes the Christians on their neglect of the poor. "You honour indeed this altar because it receives Christ's Body, but him that is himself the Body of Christ you treat with scorn, and when perishing, you neglect."[47] One's acts of kindness and almsgiving to the poor will ascend as the smoke of sacrifice before the very throne of the king. Every beggar that one meets, Chrysostom tells us, should make us think of an altar and this should not only prevent us from insulting the poor man, but should make us reverence him.[48]

It follows then that whatever one does for another one is really doing for Christ Himself, since the poor and needy belong to His Body and are His Members.[49] This identification between Christ and His poor suffering members is referred to frequently throughout Chrysostom's homilies. For example:

"Your dog is fed to fullness while Christ wastes with hunger."[50]

"When Christ is famishing, do you so revel in luxury?"[51]

"Christ has nowhere to lodge, but goes about as a stranger, and naked and hungry, and you set up houses out of town, and baths and terraces and chambers without number, in thoughtless vanity: and to Christ you give not even a share of a little hut."[52]

Thus the root and ground of this charity to our fellow members is Christ Himself. If one truly loves Christ one will love others as He did, one will become like Him. Our love for others will never waver because it will be founded on Christ as its unfailing source. "Though he be hated, though he be insulted, though he be slain, a Christian continues to love, having as sufficient ground for his love, Christ. Therefore he stands steadfast, firm, not to be over-thrown, looking unto Him."[53]

In the Greek and Roman classical world, where the predominant motive impelling people to give to those less fortunate than they, would be the acquisition of honour, reputation as a generous benefactor, the strengthening of the bonds of friendship, or the desire to achieve a certain immortality, Chrysostom witnesses strongly to the very essence of true Christian charity.[54]

This mandate to care for those in need extends beyond "those who are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 10:6). "If you see anyone in affliction," Chrysostom tells us, "do not be curious to enquire further about who he is. His being in affliction is a just claim on your aid. He is God's, be he heathen or be he Jew, since even if he is an unbeliever, still he needs help."[55]

Moreover, (an argument of Chrysostom's that I have mentioned in the previous chapter) "we are all formed with the same eyes, the same body, the same soul, the same structure in all respects, all things from the earth, all men from one man, and all in the same habitation."[56] Thus the unity and solidarity of all men in Adam become for Chrysostom the basis for a universal love and charity. Though another man be neither a friend nor a relation, yet he is a man who shares the same nature with us, possesses the same Lord, is our fellow-servant, and fellow-sojourner, for he is born in the same world."[57]

Chrysostom exhorts Christians not only to share what they have but actually to search for the means of being useful to others. Material charity imposes itself on a Christian as a daily task because our neighbour is often badly in need of the most essential things - food, clothing, lodging, remedies, assistance in other matters: "It is not enough to come to the Church to say a few prayers, or even to fast and put on slack-cloth and ashes, one must exhibit works, acquaint ourselves with

the mass of woes, look upon the naked, the hungry, the wronged."[59] Love should find expression in our care for the poor members of the Body of Christ. John Chrysostom was concerned to help his hearers perform a loving gesture to soothe their conscience. They must have true compassion towards those who are weak, and give of the fruit of their toil and hardship.[60] Also it was of no consequence to Chrysostom if the poor person who begged for his help really deserved it or not. Responsibility lay with the poor not to accept what they did not need.[61] Neither should one give with a view of getting a return some day for it is more joyful to give than to receive. Love for a neighbour means to give to him, instead of receiving from him.[62] In fact the best assurance that one will avoid what may even be unconscious expectations in this regard is to give to one who is incapable of giving in return. Thus the concept of Christian love was fundamental to the teaching of Chrysostom.

V THE MISUSE OF WEALTH: SELFISH LUXURY

Selfishness and luxurious living rank at the top of Chrysostom's list of misuse of wealth. Included in the term "selfishness" are the sins of covetousness and ignoring the poor. Covetousness speaks of a person's desire for more wealth, no matter where it comes from or what it requires. Chrysostom describes the fundamental problem with this attitude: "For he that loves gold will not love his neighbour; yet we, for the Kingdom's sake are bidden to love even our enemies . . . He that loves money, not only will not love his enemies, but will even treat his friends as enemies." (Homily 87, 3 on the Gospel of St. John).

A) Covetousness

The Aristotelian philosopher Boethius (c. 480-524) had wisely observed that "greed is never satisfied" and that "wealth cannot remove want." Wealth tends to create a persistent desire for more wealth, which is never quite adequately fulfilled. Greed always wants more because it lives out of desire. What desire means is that one lacks something. Until one deals with the problem of desire one had not dealt with the problem of happiness. Money does not solve the problem of desire. Money tends to deliver a continuing, and even increased desire for more things.[63]

John Chrysostom treated this psychological syndrome in an extremely subtle and clear way. What caused pleasure, he argued, does not lie in the object of pleasure itself, but in the relationship that one has to the object. So the disposition of the recipient of pleasure is crucially important in whether it is experienced as pleasurable. For example, if one comes to a table hungry, the food tastes better. In fact, the plainest food obviously tastes better when one is hungry than a gourmet dinner when one is not. The wealthy tend to mistake this psychological paradox. They may continue to stuff themselves with delicacies without ever becoming hungry, to spread fine condiments, delicacies and "a thousand exquisite preparations for the palate" constantly before them, yet with little sensation of pleasure, because their appetite is not excited by hunger. The ironic conclusion: one must experience hunger if one is going to enjoy the pleasure of eating (John Chrysostom, Homily II on the Statues). Holy Scripture had already grasped this subtle point: "A man full fed refuses honey but even bitter food tastes sweet to a hungry man" (Proverbs 27:7).

John Chrysostom's exegesis of 1 Timothy, 6, and his second homily on the Statues constitute a self-examination for the wealthy. For those who labour for wealth alone and trust in its power, making it their god, "the labour is certain but enjoyment is uncertain." Chrysostom was fascinated by the psychology of covetousness, especially the relationship of pride and financial power. "The covetous man is not rich; he is in want of many things, and while he needs many things he can never be rich. The covetous man is a keeper, not a master, of wealth, a slave, not a lord." The truly rich person "is not one who is in possession of much, but one who gives much. Abraham was rich, but he was not covetous; for he turned not his thoughts to the house of this man, nor prided in the wealth of that man; but going out he looked around wherever there chanced to be a stranger, or a poor man, in order that he might succour poverty, and hospitality entertain the traveller" (Homily II, 15 on the Statues).

According to St. John Chrysostom what will lead one to acquire virtue and live for the common good is firstly that one has to be receptive to instruction, to God's Grace. One needs to come to acknowledge what is good. Consequently one needs to understand the real meaning of wealth and poverty. He makes a startling statement about riches:

> "The rich man is not the one who has collected many possessions but the one who needs few possessions; and the poor man is not the one who has no possessions, but the one who has many desires. We ought to consider this the definition of poverty and wealth. So if you see someone greedy for many things, you should consider him the poorest of all, even if he has acquired everyone's money."[64]

What Chrysostom means here is that if one desires one thing after another, then that person is going to be poor. This is a hard lesson for people growing up today who want many things. Unfortunately many people are

never satisfied with what they have got and they always think that somebody else has something better.

J. B. Benestad[65] discusses the emancipation of desire. He quotes two philosophers, Locke and Rousseau and compares them to Chrysostom. Locke, says Benestad, argued that people produce public benefits by trying to get all they can for themselves. Rousseau argued that one must learn to moderate desires, and have fewer desires, because desires never end. If one takes the Lockean path, according to Rousseau, and try to acquire more and more things, never attempting to still one's desires, one is not going to be happy. Rousseau, who wanted to bring happiness to people, argued that one should have moderate desires. Benestad[66] says that Chrysostom made virtually the same comment: he argues that one of the ways of overcoming covetousness is to avoid corrupt desires. Desires as opposed to actions. He says, "For this reason I beg you not to accept a corrupt desire from its very beginning. If we do accept it, we must choke its seeds within. But if we are remiss even this far, as the sinful desire goes forth into action, we must kill it by confession and tears, by accusing ourselves."[67]

Also one should consider oneself fortunate if one is punished for one's misdeeds, so one can come to see the error of one's ways. One should also learn when one sees other people punished around us, suffering for their misdeeds. In any case, one should pay great attention to our pangs of conscience. That kind of pain instructs us in the ways of God.

Indeed this thought is echoed by other Fathers. For example, St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: "A great thing is a faithful man being richest of all men. For to the faithful man belongs the whole world of wealth, in that he disdains and tramples on it. For they who in appearance are rich, and have many possessions, are poor

in soul; since the more they gather, the more they pine with longing, for what is still lacking. But the faithful man, most strange paradox, in poverty is rich; for knowing that we need only food and raiment, and being therewith content, he has trodden riches under foot."[68]

The covetous, selfish person refuses to share any possessions with the poor and needy. As mentioned in the last chapter, Chrysostom says this is theft since the wealth is provided by God to help the poor.[69] However, some people are not content to merely pass the poor by but use their wealth to strip the poor of what little things they have left. Chrysostom proclaims, "When we plunder, when we oppress those weaker than ourselves, we shall draw down upon us severest punishment."[70] He warns further that the judgement day will come as a thief in the night. Knowing this, family members should exhort one another not to care for present things, but to desire those which are to come, eternal blessings."[71]

B) Gluttony and Drunkenness

An abuse of wealth that John Chrysostom often saw as illustrative of the dehumanizing, carnal nature of excess in any form was gluttony. When food is consumed above the level of need, John Chrysostom remarked "The increase of luxury is but the multiplication of dung."[72] He pointed out with great illustrative flourish that all that is increased by excess consumption is excrement. One's spiritual desires were lessened as one put over-nourishment of the body ahead of any desire for food for the soul.[73] In addition to dulling the soul, gluttony also clouded the mind and made men irrational.[74] It also affected the body. It was bad for health and caused disease.[74] In his thirty-fifth homily on the Acts of the Apostles he vividly portrays for his audience a fat glutton. One may think his description coarse but it must be remembered that Chrysostom did not care for

delicacy and elegance when he wished to pour contempt on a beastly vice. The passage shows the extent to which he held a glutton up to scorn:

> "To whom is not the man disagreeable who makes obesity his study and drags himself about like a seal! I speak not of those who are such by nature but of those who, naturally graceful, have brought their bodies into this condition through luxurious living. The sun has risen, it has darted everywhere it s brilliant rays, it has roused everyone to his work; the tiller has taken his hoe, the smith his hammer, each workman his proper tool; the woman sets to work to spin or weave, while he, like a hog, goes to the business of expensive table. When the sun has filled the market-place, and other men have already tired themselves with work, he rises from his bed, stretching himself like a fatting pig. Then he sits a long time on his couch to shake off the drunkenness of the previous evening, after which he adorns himself and walks out, a spectacle of ugliness, not so much like a man as a man-shaped beast: his eyes rheumy from the effect of wine, while the miserable soul, just like the lame, is unable to rise, bearing about its bulk of flesh like an elephant."

Drunkenness was another example of excess and, like all the sins, a matter of choice. It was "a self-chosen demon; it eclipses reason, renders understanding barren, it feeds its fuel to our carnal passions."[76] Chrysostom's thoughts regarding excess in general were applied in this area. Excess was not of true Christianity and therefore dehumanized both men and women. It attacked the entire being in both body and soul. In the immaterial soul both the mind and the spirit were affected; the mind was clouded and the spirit was turned from God. There were also effects in the physical body that undermined spirituality. For example, excessive alcohol consumed at meals prevented one from giving thanks to God as one ought after eating from His provision.[77] Excess quickly became compulsion and obsession: "When wine-tipplers get up each morning, they start their meddlesome probing to discover where they will find the day's drinking-bouts, carousals, parties, revels, and drunken brawls; they busy

themselves searching for bottles, mixing bowls, and drinking cups."[78]

THE MISUSE OF WEALTH: USURY

Background on the teaching of usury

The New Testament, the life source of Chrysostom's reflections, makes no explicit judgement on the morality of usury. Interest is evident only in the two accounts of the parable of the talents, in St. Matthew's Gospel 25:27 and St. Luke's Gospel 19:23. The central issue of the parable is the dramatic day of reckoning, and in particular the position of the slothful servant whose complacency is sternly rebuked.[79] The details of the story are all subordinated to this climatic scene and actually vary considerably in the two versions.[80] Receiving interest, a common practice in the Graeco-Roman world, is simply incorporated into the parable, without any statement either for or against its morality.

Positively, however, the New Testament does recommend disinterested charity in lending, even when there is no hope of repayment (St. Luke's Gospel 6:34-35). Jesus urges his followers, as the Old Testament had (Deuteronomy 15:3f), not to turn away from those who wish to borrow (St. Matthew's Gospel 5:42).

Among the earliest extant writings denouncing usury in the Greek Church are those of St. Clement of Alexandria (c.150-215). In his Paedagogus (1,10:MPG 8, 364) St. Clement presents the Logos as the tutor who teaches new converts about the conduct of their lives. The Logos aims to improve the soul, to instruct the Christian in virtue. He trains all those who are God's children by

baptism in the basic principle of love. The Logos was active even under the Old Dispensation, which, though based on fear, did not exclude love, but rather prepared men for it by educating them to pursue good and to avoid evil. He fulfilled His function as Tutor through the Law and the Prophets. Thus through Ezekiel He said: ". . . he shall not lend his money at usury . . ." Quoting Ezekiel chapter eighteen, verses four to nine, St. Clement concludes that the passage is a prophetic description of the Christian life. By following the prohibition of usury, the newly baptized will attain eternal happiness.

In the second book of his Stromateis (2,19; MPG 8,1014) St. Clement takes up the usury question again. Attempting to show that the Mosaic Law is the source for all the moral teaching of the Greeks, he adduces the example of the Old Testament teaching on generosity and fellowship. He cites the prohibition of usury as an instance:[81]

> "Regarding generosity and fellowship, though much might be said, let it suffice to remark that the Law prohibits a brother from taking usury: designating as a brother not only him who is born of the same parents, but also one of the same race and sentiments, and a participator in the same Logos; deeming it right not to take usury for money, but with open hands and heart to bestow on those who need . . . We now therefore understand that we are instructed in piety, and in liberality, and in justice, and in humanity by the Law."

In this passage, as in other parts of the Stromateis, St. Clement borrows a lot from Philo. St. Clement takes the lines quoted above almost verbatim from Philo's De Virtutibus (14, 82-83). Philo, reflecting Jewish tradition on the point had attacked usury fiercely. In fact Philo also influenced Origen, who in turn influenced St. Ambrose. But although Origen mentions usury in his third homily on Psalm thirty-six (MPG 12, 1347-1348), he says nothing conclusive on its morality.

Tertullian (c. 155- c 220), writing around the beginning of the third century, gives indirect witness to the prohibition of usury. He does not treat the problem as a whole, but takes it up only in passing to refute Marcion.[82] The latter preached the opposition of the Old Testament to the New. In response, Tertullian attempts to show the harmony between the Judaic Law and the Gospel. He uses the loan at interest as an example. Comparing St. Luke's Gospel, 6:34, with Ezekiel, 18:8; he states that the purpose of the Law laid down by Ezekiel was to prepare for the Gospel, to lead men to the perfect discipline of Christ. The Old Testament prohibited interest (fractus foenoris) in order that men might more easily form the habit if losing the principal itself (ipsum foenus), according to Our Lord's words in St. Luke's Gospel, 6:34: "If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive in return, what reward shall you have?"

Tertullian treats usury only obliquely in his comparison of the two Testaments. It is significant that he does not view the new law as abolishing the old, but as surpassing it. In his eyes not only does the prohibition of usury remain, but it is now overshadowed by a call that goes beyond it - not even to seek the principal from one who is in need.

St. John Chrysostom took up the attack on usury in his homilies on Genesis and St. Matthew's Gospel, given at Antioch around 388 and 390 respectively. Chrysostom uses a very varied philosophical and theological approach. He attempts to show that usury is harmful to those who lend and those who borrow,[83] that it is openly opposed to sacred Scriptures and that it thus endangers eternal salvation.[84] Like St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Ambrose, Chrysostom also faces the problem of the attitude of the civil law toward usury.[85]

In his forty-first homily on Genesis he asks why usury is forbidden.[86] It is prohibited, he answers, because it inflicts great damage on both parties. The debtor is afflicted with want, and the creditor, though increasing his riches, heaps up a multitude of sins. To corroborate his argument, Chrysostom cites the prohibition of usury in Deuteronomy chapter twenty-three, verses twenty and twenty-one. He uses the text secondarily, however, since his main argument is that usury is forbidden because it is injurious to the poor and hence involves sin on the part of the rich. The Scriptural prohibition flows from the evils inherent in the practice. One can see here a similarity with St. Gregory of Nyssa. He argues that the money-lender increases the need of the borrower rather than diminishing it.[87] "If there were not such a great multitude of usurers," he writes, "there would not be such a crowd of poor people."[88] St. Gregory also outlines the grave social consequences that usury entails: multiplication of the poor, ruin of homes, occasion for deceit and debauchery.[89] He describes how many, steeped in misery and despair have killed themselves under the burden of usury. St. Gregory asks the usurer to face his coming judge:

> "What will you answer when accused by the Judge who cannot be bribed, when He says to you, `You had the Law, the Prophets, the precepts of the Gospel. You heard them all together crying out with one voice for charity and humanity: "You shall not be a usurer to your brother" (Deuteronomy 23:20), or in another place, "He did not lend at usury" (Psalm 14:5), or again "If you lend to your brother, you shall not oppress him (Exodus 22:25)?' "

In his fifty-sixth homily on St. Matthew's Gospel[90] Chrysostom takes up what must have been a touchy question at Antioch. He states that he knows that many would prefer him to be silent but that he must speak nonetheless.[91] It is evident from his sixty-first homily[92] that there were those in Antioch who could "think up new types of usury which not even the laws of the Gentiles would permit," who charged exorbitant rates and

oppressed those who needed help for supporting their wives and families.

> "Those who are forbidden to accumulate money even from just labour and, even more, are commanded to open their hands to the poor - those are growing rich from the poverty of others."[93]

Chrysostom was well aware of the permissive imperial attitude toward interest-taking. He fields the objection that the civil law allowed usury,[94] retorting that even a publican may keep the external law but still be worthy of punishment. So too the creditor will be punished unless he stops oppressing the poor and profiting from their poverty. Money is for alleviating poverty, not for aggravating it. The creditor should not labour for the `antesima' (the legal profit on a loan), but for eternal life. As a comparison St. Ambrose too condemns the legal `centesima'[95] as well as illegal anatocism[96] (anatocism being the practice of taking interest on interest: easily manipulated by adding the unpaid interest to the unpaid capital and using the sum as the base for the next interest payment.) Also Ambrose disapproves of all kinds of interest, whether of money, produce or anything else.[97] Finally, he exhorts to a generosity that goes beyond the law.[98]

In another argument Chrysostom uses the civil law to bolster his stand. A contemporary series of legal enactments was seeking to limit interest-taking by `viri illustres'. Taking this fact into account, Chrysostom notes[99] that even the exterior law regards usury as extreme insolence and so forbids it to certain dignitaries, especially to senators (cf. Cod. Theod. 2, 33, 3). If Roman legislators so honour their senators, how much more should Christians honour there fellow-citizens in the heavenly city.

Chrysostom takes up the obvious objection that debtors are grateful to get a loan and that some are quite

willing to pay interest.[100] He counters that this happens only because of the inhumanity of creditors. If they offered loans free of interest, debtors would not be reduced to feigning gratitude. To those who will not lend unless they receive recompense, Chrysostom recalls Deuteronomy chapter fifteen. Later he adds St. Luke's Gospel 6:35 to clinch the argument.[101]

In his thirteenth homily on the first epistle to the Corinthians (MPG 61, 113-114), also written at Antioch, Chrysostom uses a psychological argument aimed at the usurer's sense of honour. Money is not sinful, he begins, but it is sinful not to distribute money to the poor. God made nothing evil, so money is good as long as it does not dominate its possessors and is used to alleviate poverty. The man who is rich must not seek to receive from others, but must rather give to them.

> ". . .what is considered more disgraceful, to beg of the rich or of the poor? Everyone sees the answer at once, I suppose - of the poor. Now this, if you notice, is what the rich do; for they do not dare to apply to those who are richer than themselves. Those who beg, on the other hand, do so of the wealthy, for one beggar asks not alms of another, but of a rich man. Yet the rich man tears the poor in pieces. Again tell me, which is the more dignified, to receive from those who are willing and are obliged to you, or when men are unwilling, to disturb and compel them? Clearly not to trouble those who are unwilling. But this also the rich do."[102]

Chrysostom returns to the subject in a homily given at Constantinople.[103] Here he describes the usurer as worse than a thief or house-breaker. Unlike the usurer, the thief at least goes about his work in fear and trembling, as one who is ashamed to sin. But the usurer, more like a tyrant, stands in the market-place in broad daylight, haggling for greater gains. He climbs no walls, he puts out no lights, but before everyone he embarrasses the debtor, forces him to lay bare whatever he has and violently seeks to take away his goods. One can again see a similarity with St. Gregory of Nyssa. Both St.

Gregory's Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes and his Against Usury, attack usury from the creditor's point of view. The creditor who lends at interest is little better to Gregory than the thief who breaks into homes, though perhaps his methods are smoother. Both the thief and the usurer take away what belongs to others, whether men call that robbery or interest-taking or anything else.[104] St. Gregory describes the torments that the usurer himself undergoes. He continually fears about not being paid, even if the borrower is wealthy, for fortunes can soon vanish. He experiences even greater anguish when he lends to merchants, since his risk is greater. He watches the debtor anxiously as the date of repayment approaches. "Fathers do not rejoice as much at the birth of children," St. Gregory states scornfully, "as usurers do at the end of the month."[105]

To sum up this section, Chrysostom saw the Old Testament prohibition as still binding. He cites Deuteronomy 15 and 23:20-21. He also cites St. Luke's Gospel 6:34-35, but in relationship to the Old Testament (as fulfilling the Law rather than destroying it"). Chrysostom treated usury in the context of oppression of the poor, though he applied the prohibition quite generally even to cases where the poor were not involved. Although usury may have been legal during the time of Chrysostom, he condemns it nevertheless.

As Chrysostom preached against wrongful use of wealth he attempted, at times unsuccessfully, notes R.A. Krupp,[106] to maintain his stance that the abuse of wealth, not its possession, was sin (as mentioned in chapter 1). Christians should never be self-indulgent with what has been entrusted to them by God[107] since, after all, (as also mentioned in chapter 1) they are stewards of their wealth. Money should be used for eternal gain. In addition to giving it to others, it can be invested strategically for the Kingdom of God. Christians,

according to Chrysostom, must use their wealth to benefit others and always control it and not let it control them.[108]

Wealth that was not used to further the work of the Church or to meet basic needs turned against the one who held on to it wrongly. Wealth held in this way clouded the mind and blocked the full appreciation of spiritual things. After complaining on the impracticality of silk shoe laces because the wearing of them focuses the attention of the wearer of them on the ground so he can avoid soiling his treasured laces instead of focusing on the Kingdom of Heaven, John suggested that the shoes could be worn around the neck or on the head so they will not be soiled. When the response was laughter, he answered that he was inclined to weep for their madness because they would rather soil their bodies than their shoes, totally losing the functionality, and hence, the rationality of clothes.[109]

Chrysostom argues that rich people who abused their wealth made the poor suffer. Their money, he told the rich, was "tainted," derived from dishonest business, the misfortune of others, cornering the crops in bad harvest, taking interest on loans, grinding the faces of the poor and oppressing widows and orphans. Chrysostom had no doubt that the desire for money is the root of all evil. What the appetite for more wealth does for the rich, the need to earn a bare subsistence does for the poor.

Chrysostom intrinsically connected the after-life with almsgiving and abusing wealth (as will be more fully seen in chapter 3). He also preached that wealth is always accumulated at another's expense. He exhorted his audience to invest in the Kingdom of Heaven because there "our wealth comes not from another's loss."[110]

The very wealthy contemporary with Chrysostom were so interested in building larger fortunes that they refused to even glance at the poor and the needy. Chrysostom lamented that this cruelty is the worse kind of wickedness; it is very inhumane behaviour.[111] The tragic consequences are that such a person bent on gaining wealth for him or herself "knows no kindred, remembers not companionship, reverences not age, has no friend."[112] This person will never be able to use his or her riches because there will always be the anxiety to gain more.[113]

FOOTNOTES

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5. John Chrysostom, Homily 66 on St. Matthew's Gospel (MPG 58:630)
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25. John Chrysostom, Homily 7, 5 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians (MPG 62:349f)
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27. John Chrysostom, Homily 21,6 on Genesis (MPG 54:184)
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33. John Chrysostom, Homily 5,3-4 on Genesis (MPG 54:602-603).
34. John Chrysostom, Homily 21,5 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (MPG 61:178)
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CHAPTER THREE

THE AFTER-LIFE AND THE USE AND MISUSE OF WEALTH; THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRYSOSTOM'S TEACHING AND COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM

I. THE AFTER LIFE

A) The Surety of God's Justice

When Chrysostom commented on the Priesthood of Christ as expressed in the fourth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, he followed St. Paul in exhorting his listeners to hold fast to their profession. He then identified the profession of the Christian as the belief in the "Resurrection, that there is retribution, that there are good things innumerable, that Christ is God and that the Father is right."[1] A recurrent theme in Chrysostom's preaching is the need to prepare in this life for the life to come. We will all face God when we depart and we must be prepared to face Him and His judgement.[2]

The clear implication of Chrysostom's understanding of the basic Christian profession for his audience was that they must be sure to depart this life in righteousness.[3] If the Christian departed after baptism but in sin, he/she would receive no rewards in the eternal Kingdom and would have despair and sadness in Heaven.[4] We must also keep a Heaven-centred righteousness. If Christians receive rewards for their acts of service for God here on earth, then their reward in the Presence of God will be diminished.[5]

Christians, according to Chrysostom, must live in the light of eternity and lay up treasure in the eternal Kingdom. They can invest in this Kingdom by giving to the poor and pursuing virtue. The rewards which are available in the Kingdom of Heaven are greater than those that can be earned in the service of any king on earth.[6] Indeed, in Homily 1,12 on the Gospel of St. Matthew,

Chrysostom often asserts that it is important for Christians to keep their eyes on that fearful day of judgement. St. Paul lived in a heavenly manner on earth and the Christian who lives in this light should not fear.[7] Chrysostom wrestled with these two, seemingly contradictory, beliefs: First, Christians must diligently work out their salvation if they are to enter the Kingdom of God, second, that Christians should not fear. He saw St. Paul's struggle in his own life and concluded that the duty of each Christian was to live in a righteous manner and to commit their eternal future to God, the righteous Judge. He noted there was good and bad in all and God will reward each.[8]

For Chrysostom, the present is sweet only to those with no Heavenly perspective.[9] He proclaimed to an audience that included the very rich and the very poor that the dwellings of the righteous in the Kingdom of Heaven would surpass the palaces of the rich in this world.[10] An eternal perspective lifts the Christian's eyes off the present circumstances and looks at the one enduring question: What is a person's status before God? We should not grieve for the dead and have joy for the living but should rather focus on whether they are saved from their sins.[11] For Chrysostom, excess grief at a funeral belied a hope of the Resurrection.[12]

Christ's return to the earth will be preceded by a forerunner as was His first Coming.[13] The endtimes will be an era dominated by the Antichrist, of whom Nero was a type.[14] The Antichrist will be destroyed as God revealed to the prophet Daniel. Chrysostom believed the four kingdoms that figured in the prophecy of Daniel were the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans.[15]

B) The Reality of Heaven and Hell

While St. John's Chrysostom was a priest in Antioch (c. 388), he delivered a series of sermons on the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man (St. Luke's Gospel 16:19-31). Throughout the sermons runs the theme of reward and punishment. All persons do both good and evil in their lives, and a just God requites everyone accordingly. Evil will be punished and good rewarded.[16]

In the parable the rich man is enjoying the reward which he deserves for the good which he has done. Similarly, Lazarus is experiencing the punishment he deserves for the evil which he has committed. As the ultimate destiny of both men suggests, however, present circumstances are not necessarily indicative of what is to come. In this life, in the next, or in both, the price must be paid for one's inevitable sinfulness. If it is not paid on earth, eternity will be spent in unalleviated retribution. On the other hand, to live a life of affliction now, if the affliction is rightly endured, mitigates or even supersedes the purgative process of eternity. One has paid the debt to sin on this earth and is freed to enjoy beatitude.[18]

The warning to the rich is harsh and uncompromising. They should turn from their indulgence in luxury to a life of repentance and deprivation. Self-condemnation, confession and alms-giving, even voluntary poverty, will help to purge their sinfulness prior to the judgement and win a reward in eternity. The comfort for the poor is equally austere. If they will accept their sufferings now in the spirit in which Lazarus had accepted his, their pain will purify them for the enjoyment of life in the world to come.[19]

Again, a recurrent theme in the works of Chrysostom is his insistence that the sin of the rich man in the

parable was not the mere possession of wealth but the misuse of it. In fact, God had given him all that he had. As in the case of all wealthy persons, he was merely a steward of the Lord's bounty, and his responsibility was to use that bounty to care for the poor. His failure consisted in his misappropriation of the wealth for his own self-indulgence. He had scorned the cries of the poor. Yet if riches in themselves do not constitute sinfulness, neither does poverty constitute righteousness. Lazarus was rewarded by God not because he was poor but because of his patient endurance of that poverty.[20]

Chrysostom's seemingly central focus on hell and its punishments and the judgement awaiting all people must be balanced with another theme of his preaching. This theme was that being rejected by God and not going eternally into His Presence was worse for those who had led an unrighteous and uncharitable life than the actual torments of hell.

> "Now I know that many tremble only at hell, but I affirm the loss of that glory to be a far greater punishment than hell . . . "Yet though one suppose 10,000 hells, he will utter nothing like what it will be to fail of that blessed glory, to be hated of Christ, to hear `I know you not'"[21]

The righteous judgement of God will determine the eternal fate of those who stand before Him. No one who fails this judgement will enter Heaven with His people.[22] For Chrysostom, there is no hope of purgation or any repentance after death. This further enforces the importance of living in the light of eternity on earth:

> "But there the affliction is more bitter because it is not in hope nor for any escape, but without limit and throughout . . . For we shall not always hear these things, we shall not always have power to do them . . . Let us then repent here that so we may find God merciful to us in the day that is to come."[23]

In the end all will submit, but the submission that is not of a free will does not bring divine favour.

> " `Every tongue shall confess . . .'[24] But there is not advantage in that submission for it comes not of a rightly disposed choice, but of necessity of things. . . "[25]

The people that choose to misuse the wealth entrusted to them face punishment both here and hereafter, according to Chrysostom.

> "They are punished even here by the expectation of the retribution hereafter, and by the evil suspicion of everyone, and by the very fact of sinning and corrupting their own souls. After their departure from here they endure unbearable retribution."[26]

Chrysostom uses the story of Lazarus and the rich man to illustrate that the most pitiable person of all is the one who lives in luxury and shares his or her goods with nobody. Such a one suffers true poverty in eternity.[27]

Chrysostom urges everyone living selfish or luxurious lives to reject these living patterns in the light of the after-life. He uses an illustration to describe their dilemma:

> "If you were a guardian to a child, and having taken possession of his good, were to neglect him in extremities, you would suffer the punishment appointed by the laws; and now having taken possession of the good of Christ, and thus consuming them for no purpose, do you not think that you will have to give account?"[28]

In the after-life there is no option of annihilation. Those who perish will not cease to exist. When Chrysostom commented on the words of I Corinthians, that some shall be saved `through fire,"[29] he taught that those referred to in this passage were those who had failed the Divine judgement and would be preserved for punishment.[30] Those who fail the judgement will be punished for eternity:

> "And when you hear of fire, do not suppose the fire in that world to be like this; for fire in this world burns up and makes away with anything which it takes hold of; but that fire is continually burning those who have once been seized by it and never ceases: therefore it is called unquenchable. For those who have sinned must put on immortality, not for honour, but to have a constant supply of material for that punishment to work upon; and how terrible this is, speech could never depict but from the experience of little things it is possible to form some slight notion of these great ones."[31]

> "Who will stand up and help us when we are punished? There is no one; but it must be that wailing and weeping and gnashing our teeth, we shall be led away tortured into that rayless gloom, the pangs no prayer can avert, the punishments which cannot be assuaged."[32]

The reality of hell should be taught in the Church, Chrysostom teaches, because its teaching and the fear of damnation can keep people from taking their salvation lightly and falling into the eternal fire:

> "See what advantage is come of fear? If fear were not a good thing, fathers would not set tutors over their children; nor lawgivers magistrates for cities. What is more grievous than hell? Yet nothing is more profitable than the fear of it."[33]

Christians must never forget that the corollary of this teaching is that while they are here, there is hope and repentance. The sinner can always come back to God. Those who hear the word preached must always be watchful lest they depart unfaithful.

> "While we are here we have good hope; when we depart to that place, we have no longer the option of repentance, nor of washing away our misdeeds. For this reason we must continually make ourselves ready for our departure from here . . . The future is unknown, to keep us always active in the struggle and prepared for that removal."[34]

Chrysostom applied this message of watchfulness himself and could not feel secure in his eternal future. All must take care of their disposition toward God.

> "For here it is possible to go unto the king, and entreat: but there no longer; for He permits it not, but they continue in scorching torment . . . What then shall we do there? For to myself also do I say these things . . .
>
> But if you, said one, who are a teacher, speaks so of yourself, I care no more, for what wonder, should I be punished?
>
> . . . For tell me; was not the Devil superior to men? Yet he fell away. Is there any one who will derive consolation from being punished along with him?"[35]

Hell will be even more terrible than what is threatened.[36] There will also be gradations of punishment in hell.[37] Chrysostom soberly reminded the congregation that "God is at no loss for inflictions. For according to the greatness of His mercy so also is His wrath."[38]

II THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TEACHING OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND SOCIALISM

The new commandment of love in Christianity was so strong amongst the first disciples of Christ that it was regarded as a moral obligation on the rich to give to the poor from charity.[39] The Fathers of the Church characterized those who kept money for themselves alone as thieves and usurpers of the goods of others (and as usurpers of the goods of God).[40]

A brief definition of the term `socialism' is necessary here. As with communism, socialism can mean a variety of different things, not because of ambiguity or vagueness, but because it is a concept that operates in several different ideological vocabularies. At its simplest, the

core meaning of socialism is that it is a politico-economic system where the state controls, either through planning or more directly, and may legally own, the basic means of production. In so controlling industrial, and sometimes agricultural assets, the aim is to produce what is needed by the society without regard to what may be most profitable to produce.[41]

The control of goods and services, which are seen as social products, is central to socialism. Hence socialist arguments do not go very far before they address themselves to property. Socialists have generally used the term property to refer to private property, and particularly private property in the means of production. In this sense of the word `property,' socialism is its antithesis, and is sometimes used to indicate a state of affairs where the means of production are commonly possessed, and hence where property in the familiar sense has disappeared. But there is great disagreement amongst socialists as to the most appropriate means of effecting common possession, whether it is the state, nationally or locally, or associations of producers, or collectives of producers and consumers organised around particular forms of production.[42]

Several writers on `socialism,' for example Robert Von Pohlmann,[43] M. Beer[44] and J.B. Bury,[45] all hold that Chrysostom's ideas are communist and socialist. The Gospel is concerned with social problems because Christianity is not a religion outside society and because morality is an essential element of Christianity, (though it was not important in pagan religion, or other eastern religions).

Indeed, P.J. Healy asserts that: "the doctrines held by the early Fathers of the Church on the nature of property are perfectly uniform. They almost all admit that wealth is the fruit of usurpation, and, considering the rich man

as holding the patrimony of the poor, maintain that riches should only serve to relieve the indigent; to refuse to assist the poor is, consequently worse than to rob the rich. According to the Fathers, all was in common in the beginning: the distinction `mine' and `yours,' in other words, individual property, came with the spirit of evil."[46] The same or similar assertions are found in a large number of other writers.

Harnack[47] maintains that it is an error to think, with Levtchenko[48] and Cordatos,[49] that the sermons of Christ represented only the needs of the poor and the oppressed: the Gospel is not one of social improvement, but of spiritual redemption, as Gibly[50] writes, echoing a similar insight:

> "The rise of Christianity is a religious and not a social phenomenon. The Gospel Law is not a written system, nor a model constitution for the state, but a spirit shed in our hearts; a life, not of submission to the group nor of assent to a plan of life, both of which are demanded as predispositions, but of freedom in the enjoyment of divine truth and friendship, a righteousness exceeding that of the Scribes and Pharisees."

Chrysostom, who was above all a practical guide of souls and more particularly a preacher, followed a conservative attitude to all social and political problems, like other fourth-century Fathers who were influenced by asceticism.[51] He was fully aware of his position as shepherd and at the same time Patriarch in the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Chrysostom's preoccupation with social problems was a result of his love for the people, not of a socialist philosophy.

Let the case be examined whether Chrysostom's works lean towards socialism, and what socialism has received from them.

First of all Chrysostom lived many centuries before socialism was invented. It is a contradiction in terms to think that Chrysostom was a socialist according to the twentieth century idea of socialism. According to the law of priority, socialism probably borrowed something from him. But if one were to suppose that Chrysostom tried to bring the higher classes nearer to the toiling poor he did nothing but what Jesus had taught.

For an ecclesiastical leader such as Chrysostom, his religious character is fundamental. Hence it is useless to attempt to understand the sum of his ideas without understanding his religious ideas. Those who argue that Chrysostom's works are in parts socialist have not studied his works carefully, except the very well known part of his homily on the Acts of the Apostles,[52] and they have characterized him as one of the forerunners of socialism because his passionate denunciation of the rich there has the same importance as the denunciation of modern European plutocrats by socialists.[53] One of Chrysostom's official duties as a bishop was to be a protector of the poor. The circumstances of his age forced him, and all the other bishops, into the position of Defensores Civitatum, the natural protectors of the weak and the oppressed (Cod. Theod. I, 11,2) and hence it is not surprising that he should, at times, have been vigorous in his denunciation of the rich whose aggressions had increased the miseries of the poor and even pauperized the middle class. Chrysostom was making himself an advocate and petitioner on behalf of the `poor Christ' (St. Matthew's Gospel 25: 31-46). In this way, he tried to arouse and to keep alive among his hearers a sense of responsibility for the socially deprived. However, Chrysostom did not teach only about wealth, poverty and social judgement, he preached about salvation, about faith in the Holy Trinity, about the family, about ethics and about many other spiritual and

social questions on which socialism is indifferent, or even rejects his ideas.

Chrysostom is not a socialist Theologian nor a socialist philosopher nor indeed a socialist clergyman. He is a shepherd of souls and a practical teacher who seeks to remove for his congregation the obstacles in the way of salvation. What he teaches concerning society looks only to the ethical improvement in his flock from which social justice can arise.

Christianity rejects all anomalies, heresies and falsifications whether they are under its own name or not. Christianity's primary purpose is the spiritual salvation of man, the welfare of his body is of secondary importance. For it is impossible to sacrifice the spirit for the body. Jesus Christ sacrificed His Blood for the sake of the human soul. Nowhere in the homilies of Chrysostom is priority given to material over spiritual foods.[54]

Nevertheless one cannot deny that Chrysostom's concern extended to all problems which had an influence on the spiritual development of his congregation. An important factor was money. That, for socialism, symbolizes income. For Chrysostom it is nothing - neither purpose nor medium of life, but an unfaithful servant.[55] Chrysostom says that money is nothing and poverty is nothing. What is that which has value? The understanding between people. Socialism is concerned only with material purposes. Money for Chrysostom is neither good nor bad. He tried to uproot the love of money as the root of all evil, and in its place he put not empty ideas but the root of all virtues which is love. Chrysostom is really a spiritual reformer of society, not a founder of any social system, nor a political rebel as Beer has said.[56]

Also, socialist systems aim at materialistic equality, whilst Chrysostom teaches the equality of the souls of men. Economic and socialist systems often stress a reconciliation of men's material interests as the predominant task of the legislator and moralist, whilst Chrysostom attempts to abolish the material interests which are obstacles to the establishment of his teaching.[57]

For a proper estimate of the meaning of the sermons of St. John Chrysostom, they should be examined in the light of their time, because that which in that time was regarded as one of the higher virtues, charity, is today often considered unnecessary, because it humiliates the poor. Chrysostom is interested in social justice, he did not support a particular social system.

Chrysostom was beloved by the people[58] although he took no active part in political affairs. Of course, it can be said that his homilies resembled the fiery out-pourings of the social revolutionaries against the plutocrats, but his character differed greatly from theirs. It is true that his homilies displayed a holy indignation against the heartlessness of their wealthy and their materialistic ideas, but they did not call for an attack upon the established social and economic order.[59]

III THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TEACHING OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND COMMUNISM.

None of the Fathers of the fourth century remained indifferent to the social problems of their period and at the same time, none is comparable to Chrysostom in the enlightened and practical work which he carried out both in Antioch and Constantinople. "Charity and mercy are the marks and tests of any genuine Christian life. Human dignity of even the suppressed masses and social justice

for all are inevitably among the most immediate concerns of the Church. The Orthodox Church, in particular, can never forget the vigorous plea of St. John Chrysostom for social charity and justice."[60]

Before Chrysostom's time social problems drew the attention of other Greek and Latin writers and Fathers of the Church, but Chrysostom was the most characteristic example of practical Christian teaching. St. Basil the Great, the two Gregories and St. Ambrose are the other representative witnesses to the social side of the Church's message. But Chrysostom is distinguished for his fearless decision to realise the Will of Christ and his harshness towards sin and his love for the sinners. For this reason modern sociologists not only accept the social concern of Chrysostom, but have been led to maintain that his pure love for the members of the Church was similar in conception to the present day teaching of socialism and communism. As mentioned in the previous section, Chrysostom has been characterised by them as one of the precursors of modern socialism and communism. They express the same idea too about other Fathers: "The Church Fathers Barnabas, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, were the custodians of this religious, ethical and philosophical knowledge, and all of them were partly hostile to mammon and partly inclined towards communism, or at least in theory they regarded the communistic way of living as virtuous and as the ideal of a Christian."[61] In this section, as in the previous section on whether he himself or his works were socialist, it will be argued that St. John Chrysostom's works are not communist nor indeed was he himself a communist.

Again, at this point a clear definition of `communism' is needed. `Communism' connotes both sharing and community. Ideal communism would not merely herald the end of

private wealth and private ownership of productive assets but also a different way of life, based on co-operation and community solidarity.[62] As far as Marxist theory goes, communism is a slightly shadowy state in which private property has been abolished, equality reigns, and the state has `withered away' because all men live in harmony and co-operation, without classes or any social divisions requiring the exercise of authority.[63]

The key-words `equality' and `fraternity' characterize communism. However, central to communism is also an ideal of liberty. The logic of communism suggests that freedom - freedom from oppression, want and exploitation - must be achieved simultaneously for everybody, by destroying structures which militate against the freedom of the many while buttressing the privileges of the few. Freedom under communism would characterize the community as much as its individual members. Therefore essentially, communism means holding everything, including freedom, in common. The principle is less one of equal distribution than one of equal co-ownership of material and other resources.[64]

The purpose of the eternal and unchanged Christian teaching is the salvation of souls, and this teaching is given to the congregation by the shepherds of the Church or by persons who have particular authority in the Church. One has to distinguish two elements in their message. The unaltered speech of God, and the ever-changing speech which is derived from the personality of the preacher and from the conditions of the congregation. What gives real power to a speech is its awareness of its contemporary situation. The preacher should not be indifferent to social questions. Chrysostom says in his treatise On the Priesthood (MPG 47, 623-692): "The Bishop ought to have as thorough a knowledge of the world as those who live in close association with it, yet at the

same time his spirit ought to be even more free than that of a monk who lives on a mountain."

In any study of Chrysostom's teaching on the use and misuse of wealth one must not draw only on his teaching concerning the classes in society, but on his teaching concerning all the problems of society, that is to say, concerning the family, slavery, the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many, the consolations in cases of calamities or natural catastrophes and so on. All these questions are worthy of the attention of the Church, because they can hinder or help the ethical perfection of the people.

Chrysostom excels amongst orators in the relevance of his homilies, which are divided into two parts. First, the main interpretation of Holy Scripture and secondly, the moral teaching concerning the problems of contemporary conditions.[65]

As mentioned before, Pohlmann,[66] Beer[67] and Adler[68] contended that Chrysostom taught communism. Communism is a total philosophy of life. There is a communistic interpretation of history, which is a spur to revolutionary strategy. Also the metaphysic: "dialectical materialism," in communism, must be understood by Christian critics of communism to be a fighting creed. Dialectical materialism is a philosophical support for the material interpretation of history, according to which the primary factors in all historical developments are the forms of ownership and production.[69]

Between Chrysostom's time and the time when the communist system was created there was a very long interval in which many human ideas, as well as many social questions, changed, and as Bernard Shaw wrote, today there is not the same poverty as that which Jesus Christ blessed in

His Sermon on the Mount.[70] Nevertheless Pohlmann, Beer, etc. write that Chrysostom held views in accordance with the Communist manifesto.[71] They all base their statements on Chrysostom's well-known eleventh homily on the Acts of the Apostles (MPG 60, pp93-100).

According to Beer[72] not only Chrysostom, but almost all the Fathers of the Church spoke in a communistic way. Beer refers to the work of Ernest Renan "The Apostles" in order to prove that the life of the primitive Church had a communistic character, and that consequently, Chrysostom follows this communistic way. Nevertheless, it is not apparent that Renan accepts such an opinion. Renan considers the first life of the primitive Church to be a consequence of its spiritual unity "one heart and one soul" and that the concord was perfect (the morality was austere). An essential point of early Christianity was its brotherhood, in which inequality - "ἀνισότης" was erased.

M. Beer[73] further argues that Chrysostom recommends communistic experiments in a sermon delivered in Constantinople in the year 400. The sermon Beer refers to is the well-known passage in Chrysostom's eleventh homily on the Acts of the Apostles (MPG 60, p96):

> "Let us imagine things as happening in this way: all give all that they have into a common fund. No one would have to concern himself about it, neither the rich nor the poor. How much money do you think would be collected? I infer - for it cannot be said with certainty - that if every individual contributed all his money, his lands, his estates, his houses (I will not speak of slaves, for the first Christians had none, probably giving them their freedom), then a million pounds of gold would be obtained, and most likely two or three times that amount. Then tell me how many people our city (Constantinople) contains? How many Christians? Will it not come to a hundred thousand? And how many pagans and Jews! How many thousands of pounds of gold would be gathered in! And how many of the poor do we have? I doubt that there are more than fifty thousand. How much would be required to feed them daily? If they all ate at a common table, the

> cost could not be very great. What could we not undertake with our huge treasure! Do you believe it could ever be exhausted? And will not the blessing of God pour down on us a thousand fold richer? Will we not make a heaven on earth? Would not the Grace of God be indeed richly poured out?"

Chrysostom emphatically used the Christian way to solve social problems. His passionate faith, his abounding love for his flock and his suffering when seeing any social injustice moved his soul and gave rise to endless thought and experiments in bringing his flock into the Christian brotherhood.

One can see now the meaning of that passage in the Acts of the Apostles on which Chrysostom was preaching: "Now say, did their love beget their poverty, or their poverty their love? In my opinion, love begat poverty, and then poverty drew tight the cords of love."[74] This saying of Chrysostom justifies the view that Chrysostom's teaching starts from love and that mutual assistance comes after.

Chrysostom was not indifferent to the methods of solving current social problems. But for him there was only one royal road, that of love. Love and the brotherly feeling which springs from it are the basic principles of his social activities and thought. Any result achieved without goodness and actual Christian love has no place in the mind and work of Chrysostom.

Chrysostom discusses the story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 5, verses 1-10):

> "But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the Apostle's feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these

> words, he fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.
>
> After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much." And she "Yes, for so much." But Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Hark, the feet of those that have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband."

Chrysostom[75] puts this in the mouth of St. Peter: "That is, was there any obligation and force? Do we constrain you against your will?" In the same homily Chrysostom says:[76] "We neither obliged you to sell, the Apostle says, nor to give your money when you have sold; of your own free choice you did it; why have you then stolen from the sacred treasury?" Later on Chrysostom says, "Why then did you first make it sacred, and then take it?"[77] So that Ananias was punished, according to Chrysostom, not because he refused to give all his property, but because he stole a part of the property which belonged to God. He was not obliged to give the money for the field which he sold. The text on this case is as follows: "But not so Ananias: he secreted a part of the price of the field which he sold: wherefore also he is punished as one who did not manage his business rightly, and who was convicted of stealing what was his own . . . Do you see that his is the charge brought against Ananias, that having made the money sacred, he afterwards took it? Could you not, said Peter, after selling your land, use the proceeds for yourself? Were you forbidden to do this? So why do this after you had promised the money?"[78] Again Chrysostom says that Ananias was punished because he stole. "What? Ananias and Sapphira were immediately punished, because they stole part of what they had offered."[79] Chrysostom explains that St. Peter punished Ananias only because he stole sacred things.

Combining the above teaching of Chrysostom with other relevant points of his homilies we can infer that there is not a trace of communism in the preaching of Chrysostom.

However, Pohlmann insists that Chrysostom attempted to reform the social system of his period by force of revolution, but as Fouyas[80] convincingly argues, Chrysostom saw the means for effecting a change in the structure of contemporary social order not in revolution but in a Christian social justice. He endeavoured to transform the hearts of men by persuasion and teaching and thus to change social conditions. In consequence Chrysostom greatly desired the spiritual and intellectual regeneration of his people.[81] Esseling stresses correctly that Chrysostom never asked to be a ruler of the Church surrounded by secular splendour and power and receiving the homage of kings and emperors. His opposition to the Emperor was based entirely upon his Christian principles. The remarks of Chrysostom, especially concerning the services of wealthy men, continues Esseling, are in agreement with the Stoic philosophy of ancient Rome. He held that if men, in order to live, require as servants many cooks, sailors, shepherds, grooms and slaves, they themselves become slaves. Nothing deprives a man of his freedom more completely than having many needs.[82] A Patriarch who preached such ideas, who unceasingly criticised social inequality as wrong and a contrast to the evangelical teaching, was a danger to the State.[83]

Von Campenhausen very correctly characterizes the interference of Chrysostom in the economic and social life as follows: "Chrysostom was the prototype of the Churchman who remains loyal to the end to his spiritual mission, and who would think it treason to have any regard for political circumstances or for the mighty of this world. If it had been possible for him to remain

what he essentially was, the indefatigable preacher and interpreter of the Word of God, the teacher and true admonisher of his congregation, the friend and helper of all the poor, oppressed, and needy, perhaps his life would have ended peacefully. But the brilliant gifts which he possessed and the love and admiration which his work called forth bore him against his will to high places in the world of ecclesiastical politics."[84]

Chrysostom assured his hearers in Antioch that wealth is not forbidden, if it be used for that which is necessary.[85] He disposes of the idea of a communistic state, saying "That we may live securely, the sources of our existence have been made common. On the other hand, to the end that we may have an opportunity of gaining crowns and good report, property has not been made common: in order that by hating covetousness, and following after righteousness, and freely bestowing our goods upon the poor, we may by this method obtain a certain kind of relief for our sins."[86]

Indeed in his 23rd Homily on the Acts of the Apostles, he emphasizes that: "I do not part you from your wife. No, it is from fornication that I bar you. I do not debar you from the enjoyment of your wealth. No, but from covetousness and rapacity. I do not oblige you to empty out all your coffers. No, but to give some small matter according to your means to them that lack, your superfluities to their need."

In fact, according to Chrysostom, if the rich did abandon all they had one of the means of perfection would be removed. "If money was a universal possession and was offered in the same manner to all, the occasion for alms-giving and the opportunity for benevolence would be taken away."[87] From this standpoint, while wealth had its dangers, it also had undoubted advantages. The true philosophy of life, according to the Christian standard,

was that which counted riches, not according to earthly possessions but according to faith and virtue. In making all things in life subordinate to spiritual advancement and eternal salvation, Chrysostom adopted as a determining standard for the value of wealth and riches the uses to which they were applied. He compares riches to beauty in a woman, which had been called the greatest snare. The evil, he says, is not in the beauty, but in unchaste gazing. "For we should not accuse the objects but ourselves, and our own perversity . . . In the same way poverty brings innumerable good things into our life, for without poverty riches would be unprofitable. Hence we should accuse neither the one nor the other of these: for poverty and riches are both alike weapons which will tend to virtue if we are willing."[88]

Chrysostom does not deny that wealth as well as poverty may be good as well as bad. Their value depends on their use. "It is a good thing, care; a good thing, want; for they make us strong. Good also are their opposites; but each of these when in excess destroy us; the one relaxes, but the other (by overmuch tension) breaks us."[89]

A further reason why Chrysostom's works can not be labelled as socialistic or communistic is because of his teaching concerning the Church. The thesis of Chrysostom's anthropological teaching[90] is that the Church is the mystical Body of Christ and this is a social phenomenon which is linked with the social environment[91] upon which the Church exercises its Christian influence. But the difference between the teaching of Chrysostom and the socialists and communists is that the Church is a divine institution whose eternal truth acts secretly and operates through the Church as a social institution which is always relative and fallible. The socialists and communists see the Church only as a social phenomenon and institution and see nothing behind it.

DID ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ADVOCATE A SOCIAL UTOPIA?

According to Adolf Martin Ritter, in St. John Chrysostom's writings one finds an impetus to social change intensified over that found in the teachings of Jesus and St. Paul.[92] Ritter argues that Chrysostom's concern for the poor stemmed not so much from the preaching of individual improvement that was characteristic of the Cynic-Stoic diatribe as from a Christian, specifically Pauline, focus on the edification of the neighbour, on the welfare of the whole community.[93]

Chrysostom has often enough been seen only as a "moralist" in the tradition of the Cynic-Stoic diatribe, as for example, Arnold Stotzel's work shows.[94] In fact, anyone who reads Chrysostom's sermons can easily gain the impression that their main aim was to censure the vices and extol the virtues.[95] In just the same way, centuries before, Cynic-Stoic itinerant and mendicant philosophers (people, for example, such as Dio of Prusa [c. 40-112A.D.], who also was nicknamed "Chrysostom") tried to gather young and old to themselves "until they become wise and lovers of righteousness," until they had "learned to despise gold and silver" and hold "it of little account," as also "rich food, fragrant ointments and sexual love," and so came to live "as masters of themselves and finally as masters also of others."[96]

I agree here with Ritter who argues that the above impression, on closer examination, proves too superficial. For Chrysostom, it would not suffice simply to free people from greed: even the Greek philosophers cast away their wealth.[97] Rather, the Christian must use his possessions to benefit the poor. For Chrysostom, says Ritter, the decisive "rule of the most perfect Christianity, its exact definition and highest summit," is this: "to seek what serves the welfare of the community."[98] Ritter also quotes other homilies of

Chrysostom to suggest that Chrysostom's basis for the solution of social problems was by communal action. For example Homily 36,3 on St. Paul's First letter to the Corinthians (MPG 61:310): "Do you see what is the foundation and rule of Christianity? As the artisan's work is to build, so the Christian's is to profit the neighbour in all things." Basically it is to know that one's own well-being is for better and for worse bound up with that of the neighbour.[99] Therefore according to Ritter, Chrysostom's views here point beyond mere voluntary and private "solutions" to social problems and can even be called "utopian," for example, his theory that private property was not God's intention for the human race (refer to the first chapter of this thesis).

Ritter, quite rightly,[100] says that the idea of "perfection" remains for Chrysostom the goal to which it is important that everything be compared (Chrysostom mentions this in Homily 21,4 on St. Matthew's Gospel). For Chrysostom (as for St. Basil), the monastic ethic and the Christian ethic are at root the same. For example Chrysostom does say, in Homily 7,11 on St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews: "Whoever lives in the world ought not to have any advantage over the monk except that he" may marry; "in all else however he bears the same obligations as the monk."

Therefore "perfection," and with it the renunciation of property or, positively stated, the community of goods, remains the goal for Chrysostom, argues Ritter.[101] This is evident for example in Chrysostom's sermon on Psalm 48:17 (Homily 2 on Psalm 48:17 [MPG 55:512-518]), which dates from the beginning of his preaching activity in Antioch. In accordance with the Biblical text to be interpreted ("Be not grieved; when a man grows rich, or increases the splendour of his house"), the primary concern of this sermon is to show that one in fact has no reason to grieve over the wealth of another. In this homily

Chrysostom also states his view of how the problem of property and wealth is to be solved. Chrysostom's solutions centre on the "equality of rights" (ἰσονομία) - thus on a central concept of the Platonic social utopia - and on the "equitable distribution" of earthly goods, just as "nature" (Heaven; sun, moon and stars; air and sea, fire and water; life, growth, aging and death, etc.) and also "spiritual things" (the Holy Altar; Baptism as washing of regeneration and promise of the Kingdom of God, righteousness, salvation and redemption together with the "inexpressible" eschatological goods that "eye has not seen and ear has not hear" [1 Corinthians, 2:9]) are common to all.

Ritter[102] says that the idea of Christian "perfection" - according to which "perfection" also has essentially to do with social justice - led Chrysostom, in the end, to the insight that means of private alms-giving are hardly adequate, even if the aim is to address only the most grinding poverty. Thus, Chrysostom, according to Ritter, often and publicly pushed toward a comprehensive "social utopia," a utopia that would be based on the principle that "God did not in the beginning create one person rich and another poor . . . but left the same earth free to all."[103] Where there is no talk of "mine" and "yours," Chrysostom insisted "no conflict or strife arises. Therefore community of goods is the more fitting form of life" - because it is clearly God's intention for us - "than private property, and it conforms to our nature."[104] Furthermore, Chrysostom is convinced, continues Ritter, this is the most effective form of the utilization of goods (a point on which Aristotle,[105] as is well known, held precisely the opposite view).

Ritter also says that one can see a "utopian" scheme in Chrysostom's sixty-sixth homily on St. Matthew's Gospel in which he undertakes an analysis of the economic conditions in Antioch. In this particular homily

Chrysostom says that one-tenth of the residents are wealthy, one-tenth are poor, without possessions of any kind, and the rest occupy a "middle position." The Church only has "the income of one of the very rich and one of those of moderate means" (Homily 66,3 on St. Matthew's Gospel). From that, according to the official list of the poor, nearly three thousand widows and virgins are supported daily, not counting the prisoners in the prisons, the sick in the hospices, the transients, the cripples, the church beggars, etc. If only ten of the wealthy were willing to spend as much as the Church, poverty would be banished from Antioch. So Chrysostom seems here, argues Ritter, to present the solution to the social problem in such a way that he assigns particular poor individuals to particular rich individuals and thus wants to call to life something like a community poor-relief system with an honorary and individualistic character.

Indeed in Chrysostom's homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, delivered in Constantinople, he takes up the idea of community of goods as it was practised, according to St. Luke, in the early Jerusalem community. Ritter says here: "There is no doubt that the bishop and preacher is entirely serious in his proposal (i.e. for a social utopia), even though he likens it at first simply to an idea hastily thrown out. For at the end he calls for an attempt at the daring venture."[106] However, M.G. Fouyas[107] disagrees with this view and says that in all of Chrysostom's fifty-five homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, there is no teaching of the communal life as a general rule. Although Fouyas does concede that in Chrysostom's seventh and eleventh homilies there are apparent traces of teaching concerning communal life. Also in his twelve and twenty-fifth homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, there are references comparing communal life with non-avariciousness (ἀφιλοχρηματία) in the twelveth, and with charity in the twenty-fifth homily.

E.A. Clark[108] in her critique of Ritter's work makes some very good points. Firstly, she argues that although Chrysostom's corpus does indeed include a few utopian passages such as Ritter cites, the views Chrysostom customarily expresses do not tend in this direction. She however agrees with Ritter's point that monasticism is central as the frame for Chrysostom's social thinking. For Chrysostom, the hope of a "utopia" realizable on earth finds its locus in the monastic community.

Clark,[109] convincingly argues that Ritter is correct to insist that for Chrysostom, it was not a matter simply of despising wealth but of using wealth for the benefit of the community. This indeed is the whole point of Chrysostom's exergesis of the Gospel story of the rich young man.[110] Moreover, Chrysostom argues, since it is not much a matter of freeing the rich from their burden as it is of helping the impoverished, even people of the humble classes should be encouraged to give.[111] As is well known, Chrysostom interprets the "oil" that the foolish virgins lacked (in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins) as alms-giving.[112] Likewise, he gives a vigorous exegesis of St. Matthew's Gospel 25:31-41 (the questions that will be asked us at the Last Judgement): although we do not have the ability to cure the sick or free the prisoners, we are indeed obliged to do whatever is in our power to lend assistance to the unfortunates.[113] Given this approach, Chrysostom's criticism of female adornment centres not so much on the sexual lure that fine clothes, jewels and make-up constitute, as on the help that could have been given to the poor if the money had been correctly used.[114] Charity, Chrysostom concludes, is one of the few virtues we can rightly say humans share with God.[115]

Despite these emphases, Chrysostom's practical solutions to poverty remain within the province of individual

charity, argues Clark. Thus Chrysostom complains that if individuals would give as they ought, priests would not have to spend time buying corn and wine for the poor relief - an activity that subjects them to ridicule - and could devote themselves more fully to their religious duties.[116] If each of the approximately one hundred thousand Christians in Antioch gave one loaf to a poor person, all would have plenty to eat.[117] Moreover, although Chrysostom admires the communal arrangements of the early Jerusalem Church as described in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 4, he assures his readers, both rich and poor, that they should not get "excited" by his description of it: after all, he is neither demanding the renunciation of private property, on the one hand, nor inciting the poor to claim it as their own, on the other.[118] Even when Chrysostom states that injustice is the original source of riches (as he does in Homily 12 on St. Paul's First Letter to Timothy, cited by Ritter), he softens his conclusion both by exonerating those with inherited wealth from the deeds of their forefathers and by claiming that wealth is not in itself evil, since it can be used to help the poor. Thus Chrysostom's advice for daily living is not seasoned with much utopian salt.

Moreover, it can be further argued that Chrysostom did not entertain utopian thoughts by his notion that a household is a miniature monarchy, of which there is only one king - or, if the wife may be called a "second king" to her husband, she cannot wear the diadem, as he does.[119] At times, Chrysostom imagines this hierarchy to have been present from the moment of creation: only the male was made in the Image of God, since "image" connotes authority. When God made "male and female one," according to Chrysostom, He made one a ruler and the other a subject.[120] Also if one looks at Chrysostom's discussion of Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither Jew nor Greek, their is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

[R.S.V.]), yet does not find him using that verse to urge the liberalisation of women's position in his own day, except for women who adopt (and women of the past who had adopted) the ascetic life - but not to contemporary women.[121] Rather, he uses it, for example, to urge servant girls not to participate in night wedding ceremonies - thus they can show that they too exemplify the virtues of the *freeborn*.[122]

Furthermore Chrysostom does not believe in an absolutely equal society and he makes this clear in Homily 34, 6 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians: ". . . equality often leads to strife, God suffered it not to be a democracy, but a monarchy as in the army or the family in order that one might be subject and another rule."

Therefore, the only "utopia" Chrysostom imagines for his own era lies in the monastery. Monasticism provides the closest parallels with both Eden before the Fall and the early Christian community in Jerusalem. Just as those early Christians lived without private property, distinctions between rich and poor, or slaves, so live the monks of Chrysostom's own day. They have plenty of everything to go around, just as did the Jerusalem Christians; there life replicates the exemplary practices of the first Jerusalem Christians as Chrysostom imagines them.[123]

Monks of his own time live in a bliss that reminds him of Eden prior to sin. Like Adam in Paradise, they converse with God and have no worldly cares; a minimum of effort provides for their physical needs. Just as, in Eden, there was nothing to give rise to envy, jealousy, passions and "diseases of the soul," so nothing in monastic life should (theoretically) prompt such manifestations of vice. The monastic life can be called "angelic," an adjective Chrysostom uses to describe the monks' sharing of everything in common.[124]

Thus, to conclude, because of Chrysostom's belief in the monastic ideal his limited utopian view was speedily compromised. For Chrysostom the exemplary character of the monastery rests not least in its representation of the "societas perfecta," insofar as in it there is no more private property and no more domination of man over man but only mutual submission and voluntary service.

If one were to ask whether Chrysostom's works are socialistic and communistic or if he himself was a socialist and communist, the answer must surely be `no.' From the actions as well as the words of St. John Chrysostom it is clear that he based his teaching regarding economic relations on the general principle of the innate dignity of human nature. Through this common possession all men were in a certain degree equal, and entitled, in those things necessary for the proper maintenance of life, to a just share of the fruits of the earth. The main purpose of human existence was to attain salvation: to this all other considerations were secondary and subordinate. As a result of being all human, men were viewed as forming one family, united in the strongest bonds of fraternal love, and thus constrained to mutual aid and protection. Compared with the destiny appointed for them in the Kingdom of God the best the earth could offer was looked on as worthless. Injustice and rapacity were equally opposed to man's earthly privileges and supernatural end. Worldly possessions were valuable only in proportion as they aided in securing a Heavenly reward. This reward came to those who looked on what they owned as a trust, and administered it in the way prescribed by the Gospel, thus gaining the intercession of the needy and the approval of Him in Whose Name they acted. The best interests of Christianity were not to be attained in a communistic or socialistic form of society, but in a social condition

which offered opportunities of mutual succour and care and a more righteous distribution of possessions.

FOOTNOTES

1. John Chrysostom, Homily 7,5 on St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.
2. For example in Homilies 20,6; 23,10; 81,5; 90,3; on St. Matthew's Gospel and in Homily 9,2-6; Homily 22,4 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
3. John Chrysostom, Homily 31,6 on St. Matthew's Gospel
4. John Chrysostom, Homily 13,9 on St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.
5. John Chrysostom, Homily 16,5 on the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
6. John Chrysostom, Homilies 54,4; 76,3; 77,5 on St. John's Gospel and Homily 2,11 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
7. John Chrysostom's Homily 83, 1 on St. John's Gospel and De laudibus sancti Pauli apostoli, 2
8. John Chrysostom, Homily 6 on Lazarus and the Rich Man; Homily 2,11 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians; Homily 23,9 on St. Matthew's Gospel; Homily 42,5 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians and Homily 10,6-7 on the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
9. John Chrysostom, Homily 67,1 on St. John's Gospel
10. John Chrysostom, Homily 56,3 on St. John's Gospel
11. John Chrysostom, Homily 3 on St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians
12. John Chrysostom, Homily 62,4 on St. John's Gospel
13. John Chrysostom, Homily 57,1 on St. Matthew's Gospel
14. John Chrysostom, Homily 1 and Homily 4 on the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians
15. John Chrysostom, Homily 4 on the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians
16. John Chrysostom, Homily IV, 2 and Homily VI, 3,4,8,9 on Lazarus and The Rich Man
17. John Chrysostom, Homily 3,4 on Lazarus and the Rich Man
18. John Chrysostom, Homily III 4, 5, 6 and Homily VI, 3,4,9; Homily VII, 4 on Lazarus and the Rich Man
19. John Chrysostom, Homily IV 2,4,7 and Homily VII, 1,3,5 on Lazarus and the Rich Man
20. John Chrysostom, Homily I, 6,7,9 and Homily II 4, 5,6; Homily VII, 5 on Lazarus and the Rich Man
21. John Chrysostom, Homily 23,9 on St. Matthew's Gospel
22. John Chrysostom, Homily 10,6-7 on the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
23. John Chrysostom, Homily 13 on St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians (taken from the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, ed by P. Schaff, volume 13, p245). Similar comments are made in Homily 34,3 on St. John's Gospel; in

Homily 43,5-6 on St. Matthew's Gospel; in Homilies 9,2f and 42,5 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
24. John Chrysostom, Homily 2,9 on St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians.
25. John Chrysostom, Homily 36,3 on St. Matthew's Gospel (taken from The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ibid, volume 10, p241).
26. John Chrysostom, Homily 1 on Lazarus and the Rich Man (taken from St. John Chrysostom On Wealth and Poverty, Translated by Catherine P. Roth, p35)
27. John Chrysostom, Homily 3 on Lazarus and the Rich Man (ibid, p57)
28. John Chrysostom, Homily 48 on St. Matthew's Gospel
29. John Chrysostom, Homily 3 on the First Letter of St.Paul to the Corinthians
30. John Chrysostom, Homily 9,5-6 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.
31. John Chrysostom, Letter I,10 to Theodore after his fall (taken from The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ibid, volume 9, p98)
32. John Chrysostom, Homily 42,5 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (in The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, ibid, volume 12, p248).
33. John Chrysostom, To the population of Antioch 15,2 (in The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ibid, volume 9, p439)
34. John Chrysostom, Homily 2 on Lazarus and the Rich Man
35. John Chrysostom, Homily 43,5-6 on St. Matthew's Gospel (in the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ibid, volume 10, pp276-277)
36. John Chrysostom, Homily 3 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.
37. John Chrysostom, Homily 4 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians
38. John Chrysostom, Homily 43,5 on St. Matthew's Gospel
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52. John Chrysostom, Homily 11,3 on the Acts of the Apostles, (MPG 60:96-98)
53. Bury, op cit, p140
54. M.G. Fouyas, op. cit., p85
55. John Chrysostom's first homily on the Fall of Eutropius (MPG 52, 391-414)
56. Bury op cit, p142
57. M.G. Fouyas, op. cit., p90
58. Socrates says that the people bestowed great applause on Chrysostom on account of his sermons in the Church and depended on him with love (in Socrates' Ecclesiastical History VI, 4 and VII, 6, 10). Sozomen confirms Socrates' saying that "John governed the Church of Constantinople for the best, and brought many pagans and heretics back to it. The people flocked to him from all sides, some because they wished to hear his sermons, others only to see how he was. He won them all, and moved them to embrace the same religion" (Sozomen, Ecclesiastical History 8,5).
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96. Dio Chrysostom, Oration 13,33
97. John Chrysostom, Homily 7 on the Acts of the Apostles
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99. John Chrysostom Homily 25,4 on the First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians (MPG 61:211f)
100. Ritter, op cit, page 188
101. Ritter, ibid
102. Ritter, ibid
103. John Chrysostom Homily 12, 4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy (MPG 62: 562-564)
104. John Chrysostom, Homily 12,4 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy (MPG 62:562-564)
105. Aristotle, Politics, 2.1261b 33-38, 1263a 11.
106. Ritter, op.cit., p188
107. M.G.Fouyas, op cit, pp82-98
108. Elizabeth A. Clark, Comment: Chrysostom and Pauline Social Ethics, in Paul and the Legacies of Paul, edited by W. S. Babcock, pp193-199

109. Elizabeth A Clark, Ibid
110. John Chrysostom, Homily 63,2 on St. Matthew's Gospel
111. John Chrysostom, Homily 64, 1,5 on St. Matthew's Gospel
112. John Chrysostom, Homily 78,2, on St. Matthew's Gospel
113. John Chrysostom, Homily 79, 1-2 on St. Matthew's Gospel
114. John Chrysostom, Homily 89,4 on St. Matthew's Gospel
115. John Chrysostom, De Laudibus Sancti Pauli Apostoli, homily 3
116. John Chrysostom, Homily 85, 3-4 on St. Matthew's Gospel
117. John Chrysostom, Homily 66,3 on St. Matthew's Gospel
118. John Chrysostom, Homily 11 on the Acts of the Apostles.
119. John Chrysostom, Homily 34,6 on the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians; Homily 22,2 on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians
120. John Chrysostom, Homily 2,2 on Genesis; Homily 12,5 on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians
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122. John Chrysostom, Homily 12, 11-12 on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians
123. John Chrysostom, Homily 11,3 on the Acts of the Apostles
124. John Chrysostom, Homily 68 on St. Matthew's Gospel.

CONCLUSION

Attwater says, "it is as a fighter on behalf of what is now called `social justice' that St. John Chrysostom as a moralist calls forth the most enthusiasm today."[1] Chrysostom's teachings concerning the use and misuse of wealth still sound progressive, although about 1,600 years have gone by since he delivered them. Probably the most important aspect of his ideas is the stress on the individual as "steward" rather than owner of possessions. As Charles Avila writes, "John went `back to basics' and emphasized that all wealth, primarily and essentially, belongs to God, the One Lord."[2] This truth is extremely important today in a culture marked by extreme poverty and wealth. The "haves" emphasize their "right to ownership" to such a degree that they no longer have any concept of stewardship. The Genesis account of the creation of all things, including humanity, establishes God's claim to ownership. By the same token, however, people were given stewardship of the earth by God. Chrysostom stands on firm theological footing when he emphasizes God's ownership and people's responsibility as stewards. He provides a good deterrent to the excessive "pride of ownership" that encourages people to refuse to give up any of their possessions for the sake of others. As stewards, people must employ wealth in ways required by the owner, God. Possessions are to be used, Chrysostom points out above, and not hoarded for their own sakes.

Chrysostom's stress on individual responsibility for properly using one's wealth speaks a significant word for today's society. Often, community responsibility for responding to the needs of the poor is stressed so much that individuals forget or ignore any personal responsibility. Chrysostom puts the ball back into the court of the individual Christian. He rightly appeals to the Christian's relationship to God through Jesus Christ as the motivating factor: "He (Jesus) reconciled us when

we were His enemies, let us, now that we have become friends, remain so . . . Let us at least love Him being our friend."[3] Christ's love and sacrifice for humanity should spark people's response to Him. These responses, according to Chrysostom, are best exhibited by helping others. Modern Christians, it seems, sometimes seem so preoccupied with an introverted faith that they fail to consider the world around them. Chrysostom calls each Christian to action on behalf of others.

Another aspect of Chrysostom's message that is still valid and, indeed, much needed today concerns the misuse of wealth. With great insight, he identifies the "love of mammon" as a force that takes control of people's lives. Such people find themselves controlled by the desire to "get ahead in the world" and such people today see the climb to the top of the corporate or social ladder as the ultimate goal of life. Chrysostom burst this bubble when he says that such people will never be content. They will always be driven further by their desire for more wealth and prestige. Also, people's unnatural love of wealth serves to blind them to the great need existing around them. Many wealthy Christians go through life ignorant of the multitudes of homeless, hungry, sick people living on the margins of society. By his eloquent remonstrances, Chrysostom endeavoured to stir the selfish and cold-hearted into loving their fellow-men, to excite them to social service and to alms-giving. To this great doctor the strongest argument for charity was always the identity of the poor with Christ. Christ is in the poor man who, by the same right as the rich man, belongs to the Body of Christ. Chrysostom correctly observes that the love of money excludes the love of others. This, in turn, removes the opportunity to express love for Christ by caring for others.

A final observation concerning Chrysostom's teachings on wealth must be made. The concept of "least eligibility"

is thoroughly rejected in Chrysostom's words concerning alms giving. Evidently, in Chrysostom's day there were people that required the poor to give an account of their lives for the purpose of establishing eligibility to receive alms. Chrysostom says that people become judges when they do this. As a result, God will judge them by harsher criteria. Chrysostom makes a theologically based judgement: since Christians receive grace freely from God, they are required to give freely to the poor. Worthiness can never by a requirement in giving or receiving alms since no one was worthy of Christ's sacrifice.

Overall, Chrysostom's teachings concerning the use and misuse of wealth are still instructive to the Church today. He faithfully expounded God's will concerning these issues in the face of great opposition by the powerful ones of his day. In the end, he was martyred for his faithfulness. Today's Christians would do well to adopt such faithfulness and boldly proclaim God's teachings on wealth to the affluent society around them, no matter how great the resistance is to the message.

FOOTNOTES.

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