

**SAINT PAUL AND THE JEWS ACCORDING TO SAINT JOHN
CHRYSOSTOM'S COMMENTARY ON ROMANS 9-11**

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Abstract. The prominent doctor of the Church who was St John Chrysostom is many times accused of anti-Judaism most of all because of his eight sermons *Adversus Judaeos* which, as a priest in Antioch, he delivered in 387. But there is also another perspective in his homilies. It is the biblical perspective on the role and the place of Israel in God's economy of the salvation. This perspective clearly appears in St John Chrysostom's commentary on Rom 9-11, this wonderful Pauline text on the role of Israel and on its final salvation. We see in the homilies 16th-19th which cover the commentary on Romans 9-11 a language of St John Chrysostom that is sensibly different of that in his sermons *Against the Jews*, even if the great Antiochean still accuses the lack of faith in Christ of the Jews and insists that their final salvation – the 'mystery' that St Paul reveals (Rom 11,25) – cannot be realized than by their coming to faith.

Keywords: Romans 9-11; St Paul and the Jews; homilies on Romans 9-11; St John Chrysostom and the Jews; anti-Judaism in St John Chrysostom; salvation of Israel.

Saint John Chrysostom is known not only as the greatest preacher in a Christian pulpit¹, and the most prominent doctor of the Orthodox Church, but also as the preacher of the eight sermons *Adversus Judaeos*. These discourses were delivered in Antioch in 387, when Chrysostom was a priest². In them Chrysostom accumulates against the Jews bitterness, sneers and jibes. Yet, it clearly appears that Chrysostom

¹ His surname 'Chrysostom' occurs for the first time in the 'Constitution' of pope Vigilius in the year 553 (cf. Migne, PL 60, 217).

² Very probably in the beginning of 381 the bishop Meletius made him deacon, just before his own departure to Constantinople, where he died as president of the Second Ecumenical Council. In the year 386 Chrysostom was ordained priest by Flavian, the successor of Meletius, and from that dates his real importance in ecclesiastical history. His chief task during the next twelve years was that of preaching, which he had to exercise either instead of or with Bishop Flavian. The earliest notable occasion which showed his power of speaking and his great authority was the Lent of 387, when he delivered his sermons *On the Statues* (PG, XLVIII). But the usual preaching of Chrysostom consisted in consecutive explanations of Holy Scripture. To that custom we owe his famous and magnificent commentaries, which offer us such an inexhaustible treasure of dogmatic, moral, and historical knowledge of the transition from the fourth to the fifth century. These years, 386-98, were the period of the greatest theological productivity of Chrysostom, a period which alone would have assured him for ever a place among the first Doctors of the Church. A sign of this may be seen in the fact that in the year 392 St Jerome already accorded to the preacher of Antioch a place among his *Viri illustres* ('De Viris illustribus', 129, in PL, XXIII, 754), referring expressly to the great and successful activity of Chrysostom as a theological writer. From this same fact we may infer that during this time his fame had spread far beyond the limits of Antioch, and that he was well known in the Byzantine Empire.