The six homilies on Isaiah – on the opening verses of chapter 6, in fact, stopping short even before the prophet’s vocation – seem to have attracted little interest. The lexicons and manuals evidently find the contents and usage of these homilies outside their compass; Quasten is content to cite the Migne edition alone and raises no doubt about their authenticity. It is true that from a doctrinal viewpoint, and in particular from the viewpoint of considered theorising on the inspired Word of God, these homilies are no richer and are perhaps less rich than one would expect of a pastor’s handling of a portion of the Bible. To a degree, then, one can comprehend the lack of interest and concur in Bardy’s verdict on the saint’s homilies:

“Il est avant tout un prédicateur, soucieux de tirer des Ecritures des leçons de morale à l’usage de ses auditeurs; et s’il a commenté, au cours de son ministère pastoral, un bon nombre de livres de la Bible, il n’a jamais cherché à définir ses règles d’interprétation. Il retient surtout, dans les Livres saints, les passages les plus susceptibles d’applications pratiques et, sans insister sur les difficultés des textes, il passe tout de suite à leur application aux circonstances actuelles.”

After all, the titles now standing at the head of the homilies admit as much (except that one could object that a pastor could find other passages of Holy Writ “plus susceptibles d’applications pratiques” than these fairly obscure verses); only the second suggests deliberate attention to the doctrine of the inspired Word:


“On the same context from the prophet Isaiah, with particular reference to the verse, ‘It was in the year of King Uzziah’s death that I saw the Lord seated on a throne raised up on high.’ Also, on the need to let no item of the Holy Scriptures, such as time, go unnoticed.”

Admitting as much about the six homilies, which comes as no great surprise when one remembers the Fathers’ practice of rooting any sermon at all in some Scriptural soil, one has also to vindicate Chrysostom in the face of Beryl Smalley’s charge that for all the popularity of his homilies in the West he “could teach his readers least about Antiochene exegesis”; the concentrated exegesis of a few verses throughout the courses of a half dozen lengthy homilies will be seen to be conspicuously faithful to the principles of interpretation favoured at Antioch. Better still, incidental remarks and occasional more lengthy asides do enable one to fill out fairly completely Chrysostom’s ideas on the fact of the inspired Word of God and on the way this fact can be analysed and its effects demonstrated.

I. CHRYSOSTOM’S WAY OF CONCEIVING OF THE WORD OF GOD

With an insight and a terminology characteristic of him and not con-

9 The other homilies are headed:
1. “In praise of those present in the church, and on the subject of propriety in the divine praises. Also, in comment on the verse, ‘I saw the Lord seated on a throne raised up on high’ (6,1).”
2. “On those words of the second book of Chronicles, ‘The heart of Uzziah was lifted up.’ Also, on the subject of humility, on the need of the virtuous to avoid presumption, and on the gravity of the sin of arrogance.”
3. “On the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘It was in the year of King Uzziah’s death that I saw the Lord seated on a throne raised up on high.’ Also, in praise of the city of Antioch, and for an inspired refutation of the opponents of marriage.”
4. “On the verse from the prophet Isaiah, ‘It was in the year of King Uzziah’s death that I saw the Lord.’ Also, in proof of the justice of the penalty of leprosy imposed on Uzziah for his improper attempt at burning incense, which is the right not of kings but of priests.”
5. “On the Seraphim.”
7 To an extent that gives rise at times to uncertainty in the reader, Chrysostom speaks of homilies on the Word of God as sharing the characteristics of the Word itself. This is true of the vocabulary he uses for his homilies; beyond the ambiguous λόγος, there occurs of λόγοι πνευματικοί, τό του Θεοῦ λόγων, ή Θεία διδασκαλία (see below for his vocabulary for the Word). He also sees inspiration at work in the delivery and audition of his scriptural homilies, expressing himself in the beautifully