



THE HOMILIES ON THE
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The Homilies On The Epistle To The Hebrews

St. Chrysostom

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John Chrysostom - A Biography

John Chrysostom, a bishop, doctor, and saint of the eastern church, born in Antioch, according to the best authorities,

Jan. 14, 347, died Sept. 14, 407. His name was only John, the appellation Chrysostom (Greek for "the golden-mouthed"), by which he is usually known, not having been given to him until the 7th century. His father, Secundus, who was *magister militum Orientis*, died while John was still in his infancy. Arethusa, his mother, left a widow in her 20th year, resolved to remain single in order to devote her whole life to her boy. Intending him to follow the legal profession, she sought for him the best school of eloquence, and placed him with the renowned Libanins, then teaching at Antioch. Libanius, who had formerly had among his pupils the great Basil of Csesarea, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and his bosom friend Gregory Nazianzen, had also been the master of the emperor Julian, and his most ardent auxiliary in his endeavor to put down Christianity and restore the worship of the old gods. He welcomed John, soon discovered his genius, labored to develop it, and predicted the preeminence which his favorite pupil afterward attained. At the age of 18 he was practising at the bar, where even then more than one great success laid the foundation of his fame.

This, as well as his social position and the virtues of his mother, drew on him the eyes of Meletius, bishop of Antioch, who wished to secure as a member of his clergy one so full of promise. He instructed and baptized him, gave him his first lessons in ecclesiastical science, ordained him lector or reader, and assigned him a residence beneath his own roof. This was not what his mother had designed for him; she had set her heart on seeing him foremost in the race for worldly honors, and resisted with all her might his entrance on a career so different. She represented to him that for love of him she had in youth renounced all earthly joys, and that he must not think of forsaking her now when old age and its infirmities were fast approaching. It was all in vain. The same wave of ascetic fervor which

was carrying away into solitude and the austerities of monastic life the very elite of Christian youth, bore John into the mountains which surrounded his native city. For six years, two of which were spent in a hermitage, he gave himself up to a life divided between the study of the Scriptures and prayer, mortifying his body meanwhile with such rigor that his limbs were nearly paralyzed.

The urgent solicitations of his friends at length drew him back to Antioch, where the pallor of his countenance and his extreme emaciation touched all beholders with pity or veneration. Several years passed before he was ordained deacon. In 381 Meletius died. A rival Christian faction, with Paulinus as its bishop, had divided the church at Antioch. John, while yet a deacon, strove in vain to heal the schism. Flavian, successor to Meletius, appreciated his learning, eloquence, and disinterestedness. So great, indeed, was the esteem in which he was held throughout Asia Minor, that even before his elevation to the priesthood the neighboring bishops sought to raise him to the episcopal office. He shrank from the honor and responsibility, but induced his friend Basil to accept the proffered rank. In 386 John became a priest, and commenced his course as a preacher. He was justly considered even then as the shining light of the eastern church. In 397 the see of Constantinople became vacant by the death of Nectarius. For three months rival candidates and contending factions sought to no purpose to fill the coveted see.

The eunuch Eutropius, then all-powerful at court, and who had heard John's preaching, submitted his name to the emperor Arcadius. The latter approved of the choice; and forthwith a messenger was sent to Asterius, prefect of the East, who resided at Antioch, bidding him to secure by some stratagem the person of the presbyter John, and send him to Constantinople. John was invited by Asterius to

accompany him on a visit to a new church just erected outside of Antioch, and his chariot was driven amid an armed escort toward the Bosphorus. After the first emotion of surprise and anger, John thought he saw in all this the hand of an overruling Providence, and submitted passively. The episcopal chair of Constantinople, in which John now found himself, had a few years before been adorned by Gregory Nazianzen. Nectarius, whom Theodosius chose as his successor, had not even been baptized when, to his dismay, he, in the midst of the second general council, saw himself raised to such an exalted rank. But he discharged his episcopal functions with a careful piety, charming Theodosius and his court by his majestic presence and graceful manners, and dispensing in the patriarchal residence a princely hospitality to the many churchmen whom business drew to the capital.

Chrysostom brought a new spirit to these halls. He resolved to make his household a model for every household of churchman and layman within his jurisdiction, and his own life a mirror in which every bishop and priest should see what they must be themselves in order to be true shepherds in Christ's flock. He made a monastic frugality preside over his table and all his domestic expenses. The rich furniture of his predecessors and their abundant wardrobe of silks and cloth of gold were sold at auction, and the proceeds given to the poor. Nectarius had purposed erecting a magnificent basilica, and collected a large quantity of precious marbles and other rare building material. John did not hesitate to sell them for the benefit of the needy classes. The very sacred vessels which he judged too costly for the altar were similarly disposed of. This displeased the clergy, while the people were taught to attribute these reforms to parsimony or avarice. But when the poorly clad archbishop appeared in the pulpit of St. Sophia, his hearers forgot everything but that they

possessed a man of God in their midst. It is impossible to study his works without being impressed with his deep devotion to the people.

Hence, in Constantinople as at Antioch, whenever he preached the largest edifices could not contain the crowds who flocked to hear him. They surrounded him in the streets, pouring blessings on his head as he passed along; and when his liberty or his life was threatened at a later period, they watched night and day around his dwelling. "I love you," he one day exclaimed to the worshipping throng "I love you as you love me. What should I be without you? You are to me father, mother, brothers, and children; you are all the world to me. I know no joy, no sorrow, which is not yours." This popularity constituted one great source of his power, and he used it in his vain attempt at reform both in court and church. Eutropius, who had been mainly instrumental in his elevation, did not find favor with the archbishop, who denounced his tyranny and the corruption which he encouraged in every branch of the administration. He retaliated by having a law passed which repealed or abridged ecclesiastical immunities, and in particular limited the right of asylum granted to churches. John inveighed against the extravagance and licentiousness of the court.

Arcadius dreaded the remonstrances which tended to rouse him from his unmanly love of ease, and the empress Eudoxia hated the man who dared to reprove openly her illicit amours. The courtiers and ministers of state shared their master's enmity, and only waited for an opportunity to make the archbishop feel the weight of their resentment. Eutropius fell into disgrace and fled for his life to the church of St. Sophia, where Chrysostom gave him a shelter, and protected him against the united rage of the courtiers, the military, and the populace. But it was only for a time.

Eutropius was induced to leave his asylum, and perished by the hands of Eudoxia's satellites. She now ruled with absolute sway both the emperor and the empire. Her avarice was equal to her ambition, and she went so far as to take open possession of a vineyard which the owner would neither sell nor give up to her. Chrysostom denounced her from the pulpit as a second Jezebel. This brought matters to a crisis. Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, who had himself aspired to the succession of Nectarius, found new matter of complaint as well as of hatred against Chrysostom in the toleration which the latter extended to some monks expelled from Egypt and excommunicated on account of their attachment to Origen and his doctrines.

This caused the accusation of heresy to be made against the archbishop, although at that time no council had condemned the opinions attributed to Origen. Chrysostom summoned before himself every member of his clergy in order to examine into the scandalous reports about their relations with deaconesses and other women. He reformed or rebuked wherever he found just cause; and thus there was wide-spread discontent among the clergy. It had been reported to him that the episcopal office was bought and sold in the provinces dependent on his patriarchate. In the midst of winter he set out, visiting every diocese, and before; he returned to Constantinople deposed 13 bishops convicted of simony and immorality. He even extended his visitation into provinces which owed him no obedience, and there exercised the same rigor against the guilty. This raised a great outcry against him, and gave the advantage to his enemies. Eudoxia and Theophilus joined hands; and in 403 a council of 36 bishops assembled at Chalcedon, a suburb of Constantinople. There Chrysostom was accused, among other crimes, of pride, oppression of the clergy,

inhospitality, avarice, gluttony, undue familiarity with women, and high treason.

He refused to appear before his self-constituted judges until their president, Theophilus, and three other bishops, his declared enemies, had been excluded. Meanwhile he continued to give his usual homilies in the cathedral, and the people watched unceasingly his coming and going lest any evil should befall him. He was found guilty and deposed from his see, and a new bishop was appointed by the council and approved by the emperor. At length his house was surrounded in the night by soldiers, and himself borne off into exile at Nicaea. The people on hearing this rose and besieged the imperial palace, demanding his instant recall. An earthquake happened at this very moment, and seemed even to Eudoxia a manifest sign of the divine displeasure. She rushed into the presence of Arcadius and besought him to lose not one moment in bringing back the exiled archbishop. But his return did not cause the court to mend its morals, nor the city to lay aside its love of the most costly pleasures. The connection of the empress with the count John was now a subject of comment in every household, while the courtiers tried to cloak over the scandal by showing new honor to Eudoxia, and she endeavored to divert the attention of the populace by inventing for them new games in the circus.

The erection of a silver statue to her in the square adjoining the church of St. Sophia was made the occasion of the most extravagant festivities, at a time when the people were suffering from want. The archbishop publicly reproved the people for their love of dissipation, and as openly blamed those whose vanity had caused this display. The empress took mortal offence, and threatened a second exile. The courtiers, too, replied to the archbishop's denunciation by inaugurating a new feast, in which the

honors paid to the statue verged on idolatry. Chrysostom was not to be intimidated. On appearing in the pulpit, he alluded in his commentary on the gospel to Herodias dancing, and demanding as a reward the head of John. The allusion was too transparent. This time the court resolved to take no half-way measures. A second assembly of bishops was summoned, more numerous than the first; and, although 42 among the number were faithful to Chrysostom, he was condemned. In 404, six years after he had been forcibly borne off from his native Antioch to assume the spiritual government of the capital, when every appeal to the Roman pontiff had only increased the rage of his enemies, and the efforts made to assemble a full council had proved abortive, he was compelled to set out for a second exile.

Feeble in body, but unbroken in spirit, the high-souled old man traversed Asia Minor, and took up his abode in Cucusus, a town of the Armenian Taurus. Again the indignant populace arose to demand his recall; but, although in their fury they burned to the ground the senate house and the metropolitan church, the emperor firmly withstood all their clamor. The devoted adherents of the exiled archbishop would not acknowledge while he lived the jurisdiction of any other, and, under the name of "Johannites," they worshipped apart until his remains were brought to Constantinople in 438. For about 18 months Chrysostom resided in Cucusus, when an attack of the Isaurians compelled him to take refuge in the distant stronghold of Arabissus. In the latter place, as in the former, he continued to be the light and life of the Asiatic church. At length a new decree banished him to the remote desert of Pityus. On foot, bareheaded, beneath a burning sun, he was driven pitilessly along by his military escort, until he broke down on reaching Comana in Cappadocia. He felt that the end was at hand; and putting on a white

robe, he dragged himself feebly a few miles further to the tomb of St. Basiliscus, where he laid himself down to rest for ever.

The surrounding country flocked to his obsequies, and honored his remains as those of a man of God. Thirty years later the entire population of Constantinople, headed by Theodosius II., welcomed the relics back with solemn pomp and rejoicing. Chrysostom was a voluminous writer. The best edition of his works is that of the Benedictines, in Greek, with a Latin translation (13 vols, folio, Paris, 1718-'38; reprinted in Venice, 1734-'41; in Paris, 1834-'39; and in Migne's Patrologia, 1859-'60). A translation into English of his homilies is contained in the "Library of the Fathers " (Oxford, 1842-'53). Most of his works are homilies and commentaries on the Bible. A minute analysis of his writings is contained in Butler's " Lives of the Saints." His biography has been written, among others, by Neander (2 vols., Berlin, 1821-'2; 3d ed., 1848), Perthes (English translation, Boston, 1854), Rochet (Paris, 1866), and Stephens (" St. Chrysostom, his Life and Times," London, 1872).

Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews

Argument, and Summary of the Epistle.

[1.] THE blessed Paul, writing to the Romans, says, "Inasmuch then as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office: if by any means I may provoke to emulation them that are my flesh": and again, in another place, "For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the

apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles." If therefore he were the Apostle of the Gentiles, (for also in the Acts, God said to him, "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles,") what had he to do with the Hebrews? and why did he also write an Epistle to them?

And especially as besides, they were ill-disposed towards him, and this is to be seen from many places. For hear what James says to him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe ... and these all have been informed of thee that thou teachest men to forsake the law." And oftentimes he had many disputings concerning this.

Why therefore, one might ask, as he was so learned in the law (for he was instructed in the law at the feet of Gamaliel, and had great zeal in the matter, and was especially able to confound them in this respect)—why did not God send him to the Jews? Because on this very account they were more vehement in their enmity against him. "For they will not endure thee," God says unto him; "But depart far hence to the Gentiles, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Whereupon he says, "Yea, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee; and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him."

And this he says is a sign and proof of their not believing him. For thus it is: when a man goes away from any people, if he be one of the least and of those who are nothing worth, he does not much vex those from whom he went; but if he be among the distinguished and earnest partisans and

those who care for these things, he exceedingly grieves and vexes them beyond measure, in that he especially overthrows their system with the multitude.

And besides this, there was something else. What now might this be? That they who were about Peter were also with Christ, and saw signs and wonders; but he [Paul] having had the benefit of none of these, but being with Jews, suddenly deserted and became one of them. This especially promoted our cause. For while they indeed, seemed to testify even from gratitude, and one might have said that they bore witness to those things in love for their Master; he, on the other hand, who testifies to the resurrection, this man was rather one who heard a voice only. For this cause thou seest them waging war passionately with him, and doing all things for this purpose, that they might slay him, and raising seditions

The unbelievers, then, were hostile to him for this reason; but why were the believers? Because in preaching to the Gentiles he was constrained to preach Christianity purely; and if haply even in Judaea he were found [doing so], he cared not. For Peter and they that were with him, because they preached in Jerusalem, when there was great fierceness, of necessity enjoined the observance of the law; but this man was quite at liberty. The [converts] too from the Gentiles were more than the Jews because they were without. And this enfeebled the law, and they had no such great reverence for it, although he preached all things purely. Doubtless in this matter they think to shame him by numbers, saying, "Thou seest, brother, how many ten thousands of Jews there are which are come together." On this account they hated him and turned away from him, because "They are informed of thee, he says, that thou teachest men to forsake the law."

[2.] Why, then, not being a teacher of the Jews, does he send an Epistle to them? And where were those to whom he sent it? It seems to me in Jerusalem and Palestine. How then does he send them an Epistle? Just as he baptized, though he was not commanded to baptize. For, he says, "I was not sent to baptize": not, however, that he was forbidden, but he does it as a subordinate matter. And how could he fail to write to those, for whom he was willing even to become accursed? Accordingly he said, "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."

For as yet he was not arrested. Two years then he passed bound, in Rome; then he was set free; then, having gone into Spain, he saw Jews also in like manner; and then he returned to Rome, where also he was slain by Nero. The Epistle to Timothy then was later than this Epistle. For there he says, "For I am now ready to be offered" ; there also he says, "In my first answer no man stood with me." In many places they [the Hebrew Christians] had to contend with persecution, as also he says, writing to the Thessalonians, "Ye became followers of the churches of Judaea": and writing to these very persons he says, "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods." Dost thou see them contending? And if men had thus treated the Apostles, not only in Judaea, but also wherever they were among the Gentiles, what would they not have done to the believers? On this account, thou seest, he was very careful for them. For when he says, "I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints"; and again, when he exhorts the Corinthians to beneficence, and says that the Macedonians had already made their contribution, and says, "If it be meet that I go also," —he means this. And when he says, "Only that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do," —he declares this. And when he says, "They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of

fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision,” —he declares this.

But this was not for the sake of the poor who were there, but that by this we might be partakers in the beneficence. For not as the preaching did we apportion the care for the poor to each other (we indeed to the Gentiles, but they to the circumcision). And everywhere thou seest him using great care for them: as was reasonable.

Among the other nations indeed, when there were both Jews and Greeks, such was not the case; but then, while they still seemed to have authority and independence and to order many things by their own laws, the government not being yet established nor brought perfectly under the Romans, they naturally exercised great tyranny. For if in other cities, as in Corinth, they beat the Ruler of the synagogue before the Deputy’s judgment seat, and Gallio “cared for none of these things,” but it was not so in Judaea. Thou seest indeed, that while in other cities they bring them to the magistrates, and need help from them. and from the Gentiles, here they took no thought of this, but assemble a Sanhedrim themselves and slay whom they please. Thus in fact they put Stephen to death, thus they beat the Apostles, not taking them before rulers. Thus also they were about to put Paul to death, had not the chief captain thrown himself [upon them]. For this took place while the priests, while the temple, while the ritual, the sacrifices were yet standing. Look indeed at Paul himself being tried before the High Priest, and saying, “ I wist not that he was the High Priest,” and this in the presence of the Ruler. For they had then great power. Consider then what things they were likely to suffer who dwelt in Jerusalem and Judaea.

[3.] He then who prays to become accursed for those who were not yet believers, and who so ministers to the faithful, as to journey himself, if need be, and who everywhere took great care of them;—let us not wonder if he encourage and comfort them by letters also, and if he set them upright when tottering and fallen. For in a word, they were worn down and despairing on account of their manifold afflictions. And this he shows near the end, saying, “Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees”; and again, “Yet a little while, he that shall come will come, and will not tarry”; and again, “If ye be without chastisement, ... then are ye bastards and not sons.”

For since they were Jews and learned from the fathers that they must expect both their good and their evil immediately and must live accordingly, but then [when the Gospel came] the opposite was [taught]—their good things being in hope and after death, their evils in hand, though they had patiently endured much, it was likely that many would be fainthearted;—hereon he discourses.

But we will unfold these things at a fit opportunity. At present: he of necessity wrote to those for whom he cared so greatly. For while the reason why he was not sent to them is plain, yet he was not forbidden to write. And that they were becoming fainthearted he shows when he says, “Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths” and again, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and love.” For the soul overtaken by many trials, was turned aside even from the faith. Therefore he exhorts them to “Give heed to the things which they have heard, and that there should not be an evil heart of unbelief.” On this account also, in this Epistle, especially, he argues at length concerning faith, and after much [reasoning] shows at the end that to them [of old]

also He promised good things in hand, and yet gave nothing.

And besides these things, he establishes two points that they might not think themselves forsaken: the one, that they should bear nobly whatever befalls them; the other, that they should look assuredly for their recompense. For truly He will not overlook those with Abel and the line of unrewarded righteous following him.

And he draws comfort in three ways: first, from the things which Christ suffered: as He Himself says, "The servant is not greater than his Lord." Next, from the good things laid up for the believers. Thirdly, from the evils; and this point he enforces not only from the things to come (which would be less persuasive), but also from the past and from what had befallen their fathers. Christ also does the same, at one time saying, "The servant is not greater than his Lord"; and again, "There are many mansions with the Father"; and He denounces innumerable woes on the unbelievers.

But he speaks much of both the New and the Old Covenant; for this was useful to him for the proof of the Resurrection. Lest they should disbelieve that [Christ] rose on account of the things which He suffered, he confirms it from the Prophets, and shows that not the Jewish, but ours are the sacred [institutions]. For the temple yet stood and the sacrificial rites; therefore he says, "Let us go forth therefore without, bearing His reproach." But this also was made an argument against him: "If these things are a shadow, if these things are an image, how is it that they have not passed away or given place when the truth was manifested, but these things still flourish?" This also he quietly intimates shall happen, and that at a time close at hand.

Moreover, he makes it plain that they had been a long time in the faith and in afflictions, saying, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers," and, "Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief," and ye became "Followers of them who through patience inherit the promises."

Homily I.

Hebrews i. 1, 2.—"God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath at the end of the days spoken unto us by His Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."

[1.] TRULY, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom. v. 20.) This at least the blessed Paul intimates here also, in the very beginning of his Epistle to the Hebrews. For since as it was likely that afflicted, worn out by evils, and judging of things thereby, they would think themselves worse off than all other men,—he shows that herein they had rather been made partakers of greater, even very exceeding, grace; arousing the hearer at the very opening of his discourse. Wherefore he says, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, hath at the end of the days spoken unto us by His Son."

Why did he [Paul] not oppose "himself" to "the prophets"? Certainly, he was much greater than they, inasmuch as a greater trust was committed to him. Yet he doth not so. Why? First, to avoid speaking great things concerning himself. Secondly, because his hearers were not yet perfect. And thirdly, because he rather wished to exalt them, and to show that their superiority was great. As if he had said, What so great matter is it that He sent prophets to our

fathers? For to us [He has sent] His own only-begotten Son Himself.

And well did he begin thus, "At sundry times and in divers manners," for he points out that not even the prophets themselves saw God; nevertheless, the Son saw Him. For the expressions, "at sundry times and in divers manners" are the same as "in different ways." "For I" (saith He) "have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the ministry of the Prophets." (Hos. xii. 10.) Wherefore the excellency consists not in this alone, that to them indeed prophets were sent, but to us the Son; but that none of them saw God, but the Only-begotten Son saw Him. He doth not indeed at once assert this, but by what he says afterwards he establishes it, when he speaks concerning His human nature; "For to which of the Angels said He, Thou art My Son," (ver. 5), and, "Sit thou on My right hand"? (Ver. 13.)

And look on his great wisdom. First he shows the superiority from the prophets. Then having established this as acknowledged, he declares that to them indeed He spake by the prophets, but to us by the Only-begotten. Then [He spake] to them by Angels, and this again he establishes, with good reason (for angels also held converse with the Jews): yet even herein we have the superiority, inasmuch as the Master [spake] to us, but to them servants, and prophets, fellow-servants.

[2.] Well also said he, "at the end of the days," for by this he both stirs them up and encourages them desponding of the future. For as he says also in another place, "The Lord is at hand, be careful for nothing" (Phil. iv. 5, Phil. iv. 6), and again, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11): so also here. What then is it which he says? That whoever is spent in the conflict, when he hears of the end thereof, recovers his breath a little,

knowing that it is the end indeed of his labors, but the beginning of his rest.

“Hath in the end of the days spoken unto us in [His] Son.” Behold again he uses the saying, “in [His] Son,” for “through the Son,” against those who assert that this phrase is proper to the Spirit. Dost thou see that the [word] “in” is “through”?

And the expression, “In times past,” and this, “In the end of the days,” shadows forth some other meaning:—that when a long time had intervened, when we were on the edge of punishment, when the Gifts had failed, when there was no expectation of deliverance, when we were expecting to have less than all—then we have had more.

And see how considerately he hath spoken it. For he’ said not, “Christ spake” (albeit it was He who did speak), but inasmuch as their souls were weak, and they were not yet able to hear the things concerning Christ, he says, “God hath spoken by Him.” What meanest thou? did God speak through the Son? Yes. What then? Is it thus thou showest the superiority? for here thou hast but pointed out that both the New and the Old [Covenants] are of One and the same: and that this superiority is not great. Wherefore he henceforth follows on upon this argument, saying, “He spake unto us by [His] Son.”

(Note, how Paul makes common cause, and puts himself on a level with the disciples, saying, He spake “to us”: and yet He did not speak to him, but to the Apostles, and through them to the many. But he lifts them [the Hebrews] up, and declares that He spake also to them. And as yet he doth not at all reflect on the Jews. For almost all to whom the prophets spake, were a kind of evil and polluted persons.

But as yet the discourse is not of these: but, hitherto of the gifts derived from God.)

“Whom He appointed,” saith he, “heir of all.” What is “whom He appointed heir of all”? He speaks here of the flesh [the human nature]. As He also says in the second Psalm, “Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance.” (Ps. ii. 8.) For no longer is “Jacob the portion of the Lord” nor “Israel His inheritance” (Deut. xxxii. 9), but all men: that is to say, He hath made Him Lord of all: which Peter also said in the Acts, “God hath made Him both Lord and Christ.” (Acts ii. 36.) But he has used the name “Heir,” declaring two things: His proper sonship and His indefeasible sovereignty. “Heir of all,” that is, of all the world.

[3.] Then again he brings back his discourse to its former point. “By whom also He made the worlds [the ages].” Where are those who say, There was [a time] when He was not?

Then, using degrees of ascent, he uttered that which is far greater than all this, saying,

Ver. 3, 4. “Who, (being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power,) when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the Angels as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

O! the wisdom of the Apostle! or rather, not the wisdom of Paul, but the grace of the Spirit is the thing to wonder at. For surely he uttered not these things of his own mind, nor in that way did he find his wisdom. (For whence could it be? From the knife, and the skins, or the workshop?) But it

was from the working of God. For his own understanding did not give birth to these thoughts, which was then so mean and slender as in nowise to surpass the baser sort; (for how could it, seeing it spent itself wholly on bargains and skins?) but the grace of the Spirit shows forth its strength by whomsoever it will.

For just as one, wishing to lead up a little child to some lofty place, reaching up even to the top of Heaven, does this gently and by degrees, leading him upwards by the steps from below,—then when he has set him on high, and bidden him to gaze downwards, and sees him turning giddy and confused, and dizzy, taking hold of him, he leads him down to the lower stand, allowing him to take breath; then when he hath recovered it, leads him up again, and again brings him down;—just so did the blessed Paul likewise, both with the Hebrews and everywhere, having learnt it from his Master. For even He also did so; sometimes He led His hearers up on high, and sometimes He brought them down, not allowing them to remain very long.

See him, then, even here—by how many steps he led them up, and placed them near the very summit of religion, and then or ever they grow giddy, and are seized with dizziness, how he leads them again lower down, and allowing them to take breath, says, “He spake unto us by [His] Son,” “whom He appointed Heir of all things.” For the name of Son is so far common. For where a true [Son] it is understood of, He is above all: but however that may be, for the present he proves that He is from above.

And see how he says it: “Whom He appointed,” saith he, “heir of all things.” The phrase, “He appointed Heir,” is humble. Then he placed them on the higher step, adding, “by whom also He made the worlds.” Then on a higher still, and after which there is no other, “who being the

brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." Truly he has led them to unapproachable light, to the very brightness itself. And before they are blinded see how he gently leads them down again, saying, "and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty." He does not simply say, "He sat down," but "after the purifying, He sat down," for he hath touched on the Incarnation, and his utterance is again lowly.

Then again having said a little by the way (for he says, "on the right hand of the Majesty on high"), [he turns] again to what is lowly; "being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Henceforward then he treats here of that which is according to the flesh, since the phrase "being made better" doth not express His essence according to the Spirit, (for that was not "made" but "begotten,") but according to the flesh: for this was "made." Nevertheless the discourse here is not about being called into existence. But just as John says, "He that cometh after me, is preferred before me" (John i. 15, John i. 30), that is, higher in honor and esteem; so also here, "being made so much better than the angels"—that is, higher in esteem and better and more glorious, "by how much He hath obtained by inheritance a more excellent name than they." Seest thou that he is speaking of that which is according to the flesh? For this Name, God the Word ever had; He did not afterwards "obtain it by inheritance"; nor did He afterwards become "better than the Angels, when He had purged our sins"; but He was always "better," and better without all comparison. For this is spoken of Him according to the flesh.

So truly it is our way also, when we talk of man, to speak things both high and low. Thus, when we say, "Man is

nothing," "Man is earth," "Man is ashes," we call the whole by the worse part. But when we say, "Man is an immortal animal," and "Man is rational, and of kin to those on high," we call again the whole by the better part. So also, in the case of Christ, sometimes Paul discourseth from the less and sometimes from the better; wishing both to establish the economy, and also to teach about the incorruptible nature.

[4.] Since then "He hath purged our sins," let us continue pure; and let us receive no stain, but preserve the beauty which He hath implanted in us, and His comeliness undefiled and pure, "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." (Eph. v. 27.) Even little sins are "a spot and a wrinkle," such a thing, I mean, as Reproach, Insult, Falsehood.

Nay, rather not even are these small, but on the contrary very great: yea so great as to deprive a man even of the kingdom of Heaven. How, and in what manner? "He that calleth his brother fool, is in danger" (He saith) "of hellfire." (Matt. v. 22.) But if it be so with him who calls a man "fool," which seems to be the slightest of all things, and rather mere children's talk; what sentence of punishment will not he incur, who calleth him malignant and crafty and envious, and casteth at him ten thousand other reproaches? What more fearful than this?

Now suffer, I beseech you, the word [of exhortation]. For if he that "doeth" [ought] to "one of the least, doeth it to Him" (Matt. xxv. 40), and he that "doeth it not to one of the least doeth it not to Him" (Matt. xxv. 45), how is it not the same also in the matter of good or evil speaking? He that reviles his brother, reviles God: and he that honors his brother, honors God. Let us train therefore our tongue to speak good words. For "refrain," it is said, "thy tongue

from evil." (Ps. xxxiv. 13.) For God gave it not that we should speak evil, that we should revile, that we should calumniate one another; but to sing hymns to God withal, to speak those things which "give grace to the hearers" (Eph. iv. 29), things for edification, things for profit.

Hast thou spoken evil of a man? What is thy gain, entangling thyself in mischief together with him? For thou hast obtained the reputation of a slanderer. For there is not any, no not any evil, which stops at him that suffers it, but it includes the doer also. As for instance, the envious person seems indeed to plot against another, but himself first reaps the fruit of his sin, wasting and wearing himself away, and being hated of all men. The cheat deprives another of his money; yea and himself too of men's good will: and causes himself to be evil spoken of by all men. Now reputation is much better than money, for the one it is not easy to wash out, whereas it is easy to gain possession of the other. Or rather, the absence of the one doth no hurt to him that wanteth it; but the absence of the other makes you reproached and ridiculed, and an object of enmity and warfare to all.

The passionate man again first punishes and tears himself in pieces, and then him with whom he is angry.

Just so the evil speaker disgraces first himself and then him who is evil-spoken of: or, it may be, even this hath proved beyond his power, and while he departs with the credit of a foul and detestable kind of person, he causes the other to be loved the more. For when a man hearing a bad name given him, doth not requite the giver in the same kind, but praises and admires, he doth not praise the other, but himself. For I before observed that, as calumnies against our neighbors first touch those who devise the mischief, so also good works done towards our neighbors, gladden first

those who do them. The parent either of good, or evil, justly reaps the fruit of it first himself. And just as water, whether it be brackish or sweet, fills the vessels of those who resort to it, but lessens not the fountain which sends it forth; so surely also, both wickedness and virtue, from whatever person they proceed, prove either his joy or his ruin.

So far as to the things of this world; but what speech may recount the things of that world, either the goods or the evils? There is none. For as to the blessings, they surpass all thought, not speech only; for their opposites are expressed indeed in terms familiar to us. For fire, it is said, is there, and darkness, and bonds, and a worm that never dieth. But this represents not only the things which are spoken of, but others more intolerable. And to convince thee, consider at once this first: if it be fire, how is it also darkness? Seest thou how that fire is more intolerable than this? For it hath no light. If it be fire, how is it forever burning? Seest thou how something more intolerable than this happens? For it is not quenched. Yea, therefore it is called unquenchable. Let us then consider how great a misery it must be, to be forever burning, and to be in darkness, and to utter unnumbered groanings, and to gnash the teeth, and not even to be heard. For if here any one of those ingeniously brought up, should he be cast into prison, speaks of the mere ill savor, and the being laid in darkness, and the being bound with murderers, as more intolerable than any death: think what it is when we are burning with the murderers of the whole world, neither seeing nor being seen, but in so vast a multitude thinking that we are alone. For the darkness and gloom doth not allow our distinguishing those who are near to us, but each will burn as if he were thus suffering alone. Moreover, if darkness of itself afflicteth and terrifieth our souls, how then will it be when together with the darkness there are likewise so great pains and burnings?

Wherefore I entreat you to be ever revolving these things with yourselves, and to submit to the pain of the words, that we may not undergo the punishment of the things. For assuredly, all these things shall be, and those whose doings have deserved those chambers of torture no man shall rescue, not father, nor mother, nor brother. "For a brother redeemeth not," He saith; "shall a man redeem?" (Ps. xlix. 7 LXX.), though he have much confidence, though he have great power with God. For it is He Himself who rewards every one according to his works, and upon these depends our salvation or punishment.

Let us make then to ourselves "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness" (Luke xvi. 9), that is: Let us give alms; let us exhaust our possessions upon them, that so we may exhaust that fire: that we may quench it, that we may have boldness there. For there also it is not they who receive us, but our own work: for that it is not simply their being our friends which can save us, learn from what is added. For why did He not say, "Make to yourselves friends, that they may receive you into their everlasting habitations," but added also the manner? For saying, "of the mammon of unrighteousness," He points out that we must make friends of them by means of our possessions, showing that mere friendship will not protect us, unless we have good works, unless we spend righteously the wealth unrighteously gathered.

Moreover, this our discourse, of Almsgiving I mean, fits not only the rich, but also the needy. Yea even if there be any person who supporteth himself by begging, even for him is this word. For there is no one, so poverty-stricken, however exceeding poor he may be, as not to be able to provide "two mites." (Luke xxi. 2.) It is therefore possible that a person giving a small sum from small means, should surpass those

who have large possessions and give more; as that widow did. For not by the measure of what is given, but by the means and willingness of the givers is the extent of the alms-deed estimated. In all cases the will is needed, in all, a right disposition; in all, love towards God. If with this we do all things, though having little we give little, God will not turn away His face, but will receive it as great and admirable: for He regards the will, not the gifts: and if He see that to be great, He assigneth His decrees and judges accordingly, and maketh them partakers of His everlasting benefits.

Which may God grant us all to obtain, by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father together with the Holy Ghost, be glory, power, honor, now and for ever, and world without end. Amen.

Homily II.

Hebrews i. 3.—“Who being the brightness of His Glory and the express Image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins.”

[1.] EVERYWHERE indeed a reverential mind is requisite, but especially when we say or hear anything of God: Since neither can tongue speak nor thought hear anything suitable to our God. And why speak I of tongue or thought? For not even the understanding which far excels these, will be able to comprehend anything accurately, when we desire to utter aught concerning God. For if “the peace of God surpasseth all understanding” (Phil. iv. 7), and “the things which are prepared for them that love Him have not entered into the heart of man” (1 Cor. ii. 9); much more He Himself, the God of peace, the Creator of all things, doth by

a wide measure exceed our reasoning. We ought therefore to receive all things with faith and reverence, and when our discourse fails through weakness, and is not able to set forth accurately the things which are spoken, then especially to glorify God, for that we have such a God, surpassing both our thought and our conception. For many of our conceptions about God, we are unable to express, as also many things we express, but have not strength to conceive of them. As for instance:—That God is everywhere, we know; but how, we no longer understand. That there is a certain incorporeal power the cause of all our good things, we know: but how it is, or what it is, we know not. Lo! we speak, and do not understand. I said, That He is everywhere, but I do not understand it. I said, That He is without beginning, but I do not understand it. I said, That He begat from Himself, and again I know not how I shall understand it. And some things there are which we may not even speak—as for instance, thought conceives but cannot utter.

And to show thee that even Paul is weak and doth not put out his illustrations with exactness; and to make thee tremble and refrain from searching too far, hear what he says, having called Him Son and named Him Creator, “Who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His person.”

This we must receive with reverence and clear of all incongruities. “The brightness of His glory,” saith he. But observe in what reference he understands this, and so do thou receive it:—that He is of Him: without passion: that He is neither greater, nor less; since there are some, who derive certain strange things from the illustration. For, say they, “the brightness” is not substantial, but hath its being in another. Now do not thou, O man, so receive it, neither be thou sick of the disease of Marcellus and Photinus. For

he hath a remedy for thee close at hand, that thou fall not into that imagination, nor doth he leave thee to be hurried down into that fatal malady. And what saith he? “And the express image of His person” [or “subsistence”]: that is, just as He [the Father] is personally subsisting, being in need of nothing, so also the Son. For he saith this here, showing the undeviating similitude and the peculiar image of the Prototype, that He [the Son] is in subsistence by Himself.

For he who said above, that “by Him He made all things” here assigns to Him absolute authority. For what doth he add? “And upholding all things by the word of His power”; that we might hence infer not merely His being the express image of His Person, but also His governing all things with absolute authority.

See then, how he applies to the Son that which is proper to the Father. For on this account he did not say simply, “and upholding all things,” nor did he say, “by His power,” but, “by the word of His power.” For much as just now we saw him gradually ascend and descend; so also now, as by steps, he goes up on high, then again descends, and saith, “by whom also He made the worlds.”

Behold how here also he goes on two paths, by the one leading us away from Sabellius, by the other from Arius, yea and on another, that He [Christ] should not be accounted unoriginated, which he does also throughout, nor yet alien from God. For if, even after so much, there are some who assert that He is alien, and assign to Him another father, and say that He is at variance with Him;—had [Paul] not declared these things, what would they not have uttered?