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**THE ELEMENTS OF CHRYSOSTOM'S POWER AS  
A PREACHER**

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## THE ELEMENTS OF CHRYSOSTOM'S POWER AS A PREACHER

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THE name Chrysostom, "mouth of gold," was not given to this prince of Greek preachers till a full century after his death. During his life he was simply called John, and at Constantinople the members of his church and congregation were spoken of as Johnites. But the name that has so completely displaced that of John is the crystallized judgment of all who have read his eloquent discourses, and since as a preacher he has scarcely had a peer throughout the whole Christian era, it is vastly important for all preachers and students of preaching to apprehend clearly the elements of his pulpit power.

In setting them forth it is our purpose to discard, so far as possible, the dry, didactic method, and to present this eminent preacher as he appeared in real life. We wish to make his fascinating history reveal to us the secret of his wonderful and far-reaching influence. To do this we must notice the training that he received for his great vocation. To apprehend the full significance of this training it is necessary to go back to his birth, in Antioch of Syria, in 345 or 347.

He had the good fortune to be of one of the best families of his city.<sup>1</sup> His father, Secundus, was a general of high rank in the Syrian army; his mother, Anthusa, was a gifted woman, deeply pious, and a Christian. The father died when John was an infant. His mother was then only twenty years of age, and, being an unusually attractive woman, had abundant opportunities to contract a second marriage; but this she absolutely refused, feeling that she was called of God to expend her time and strength in training her son and shielding him from the contaminating influences of luxurious and pagan Antioch.<sup>2</sup>

Although we know but little concerning his early education, we should carefully note the fact that his mother was a Greek, and taught her son to speak and write in its purity the peerless Greek tongue. Early in his youth he became a pupil of the distinguished pagan rhetorician, Libanius,<sup>3</sup> and was conducted by him through the literature and philosophy of Greece. No education could have better fitted him for future public speaking and for the popular exposition of the Greek Scriptures.

But his mother, although pious, was nevertheless ambitious that the son to whom she had devoted her life should become eminent in the state. She therefore encouraged him to study law, and he became, while the dew of youth was still on him, a legal advocate.<sup>4</sup> Some of his speeches in the courts elicited general admiration, and were a prophecy of that matchless eloquence by which in the future he was to sway admiring

<sup>1</sup> SOCRATES, VI, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *De Sacerdot.*, I, 5.

<sup>3</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 2; SOCRATES, VI, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *De Sacerdot.*, I, 1, 4.

multitudes. But the chicanery which then marked the profession of law, and the frauds of business men, disgusted him, while the Bible, constantly read in his home, allured him to a higher and nobler calling.

We must notice here an intimate friendship which sprang up between him and a young man by the name of Basil. They were Damon and Pythias. Chrysostom, in his treatise *On the Priesthood*, has portrayed this friendship. "I had," he says, "many genuine and true friends, men who understood and strictly observed the laws of friendship; but one there was out of the many who exceeded them all in attachment to me, and strove to leave them all behind in the race, even as much as they themselves surpassed ordinary acquaintances. He was one of those who accompanied me at all times; we engaged in the same studies, and were instructed by the same teachers; in our zeal and interest for the subjects on which we worked, we were one. As we went to our lectures or returned from them, we were accustomed to take counsel together on the line of life it would be best to adopt, and here, too, we appeared to be of one mind."

This intimate friend was a Christian; but, like most earnest Christians of that period, he was an ascetic; and, though Chrysostom had become a lawyer, Basil tried to persuade him to quit his secular profession and with him to become a monastic. The old friendship which had sprung up in school days had not lost its charm and power, and Chrysostom would gladly have yielded to his friend's earnest solicitation. But his mother needed the income which flowed from his profession as an advocate, and, above all, needed his companionship in the home, and he could not follow his friend into solitude. Still, the example of Basil had deeply impressed him. This was probably the time of his conversion to Christ; or, if he had been converted before, he was now led to a more thorough consecration to God. He began to study his Bible with unusual diligence. He became a catechumen, and after three years, when he was twenty-three or twenty-five years old, was baptized by Meletius, Catholic bishop of Antioch. Meletius, now wishing to introduce him into the official service of the church, ordained him reader.<sup>5</sup>

He soon became, not a fanatical, but an enthusiastic, ascetic. We should not be surprised at this, since asceticism at that time was very prevalent in the Eastern or Greek churches. He now was thoroughly bent on following his friend Basil into a retreat, but was dissuaded from taking the step by the entreaties and tears of his mother.<sup>6</sup> However, to satisfy his conscience, he became an ascetic at home. He kept vigils, fasted, slept on the bare ground, and refused to talk with friends, in order that he might not utter any slanderous or uncharitable words.<sup>7</sup> In this bodily mortification, Basil, and two other young men, Maximus, afterward bishop of Seleucia in Isauria, and Theodore, who became bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia, joined him. These four young men finally determined to put themselves under the direction of Diodorus, president of a monastery near Antioch.<sup>8</sup> This event in the career of Chrysostom calls for special

<sup>5</sup> SOCRATES, VI, 3.

<sup>6</sup> *De Sacerdot.*, I, 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, VI, 12.

<sup>8</sup> SOCRATES, VI, 3.



attention. As his friendship for Basil proved to be a turning-point in his religious experience, so the instruction of Diodorus shaped for all the future his method of interpreting the Scriptures. Diodorus believed, in opposition to Origen, in the historical and literal interpretation of the Bible. This so commended itself to Chrysostom that he heartily adopted it, and in that manner interpreted the Word of God as long as he lived. Preaching in an age noted for allegorical interpretation, in none of his expository homilies did he even once indulge in it.

Chrysostom soon began to write. The occasion of his beginning was this. One of this group of ascetics, Theodore, for a time turned back to his old manner of life. He fell into no open sin, but did fall in love with a beautiful girl, and naturally wished to marry her. This called forth two long letters to him from Chrysostom, in which he set forth the principles and blessings of asceticism.<sup>9</sup> To marry, after consecrating one's self to a monastic life, was, in his judgment, equivalent to committing adultery. His persuasive words won Theodore to repentance, and saved him from the awful sin of marrying a pure and charming girl. But such notions were the fault of Chrysostom's time rather than of Chrysostom himself. The important point is that he now began to write, and from this time to the end of his days his pen was always busy.

Soon after these events, in the incessant strife between the Catholic party and the Arians, the bishop, Meletius, was for the second time banished from Antioch by Valens. The people now wished to elevate Basil and Chrysostom to the bishopric. These young men feared lest they might be forced against their will into this responsible position, and agreed to act together, both either to accept or reject the proffered honor. But Chrysostom had no intention of keeping this agreement. His friend was older than he, and he believed him well qualified for the bishopric, while he considered himself utterly unfit for it. He thought that the church ought not to be deprived of the services of Basil on his account; so, when he knew that some of the emissaries of the church had come to carry them away by force and compel them to be ordained, he effectually hid himself and left Basil to his fate. Afterward Basil sternly reproached him for his deception, but he boldly defended his act as a pious fraud. He argued that deceit for a good end, as practiced by generals and physicians, was right. While the morals both of his act and of its justification are condemnable, the circumstance was the occasion of his writing his treatise *On the Priesthood*, in which he set forth in glowing rhetoric the duties, dangers, and grave responsibilities of the preacher and pastor. It was written to prove that a man of his own capacity was quite unfit for so responsible a position. When he beheld the mingled distress and displeasure of his friend, he could not refrain from laughing for joy<sup>10</sup> and thanking God for the successful issue of his plan. But he and his hoodwinked friend, Basil, were reconciled; they met and embraced; Basil went to his bishopric, Chrysostom gave himself to an ascetic life.

On the mountains to the South and East of Antioch was a community of monks,

<sup>9</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *De Sacerdot.*, I, 3.

ascetics. Chrysostom now joined this community. Its occupations were gardening, study of the Scriptures, writing, prayer, praise, fastings, and vigils. Chrysostom subjected himself to the severest discipline. His food was chiefly bread and water; his bed, the earth and a little straw.

Here again we find that his pen was active. He wrote three treatises. In two of them he castigated the deplorable corruptions of the city, the worldliness and avarice of Christians, and eulogized the ascetic life. The third treatise was elicited by a decree of Valens, in 373, against monasticism. The emperor in this decree ordered the monks to be dragged from their retreats, put into the army, or be compelled to toil in the ordinary occupations of life. These books, in spite of their unscriptural asceticism, are full of the noblest sentiment, inculcate the purest morals, are elegant in style and cogent in argument.

During the last two years of Chrysostom's retreat he dwelt alone in a rocky cave and subjected himself to such extreme austerities<sup>11</sup> that his health gave way and he was compelled to return to his home in Antioch. But the six years of his retirement had been chiefly spent in the study of the Bible, and its whole contents from Genesis to the Revelation had become part and parcel of his thinking. This was the school which admirably fitted him for the brilliant public services which were soon to follow.

The last act of the bishop Meletius, when, in 381, he left Antioch to attend the council at Constantinople, where he died, was to ordain Chrysostom deacon.<sup>12</sup> A part of Chrysostom's work as deacon was to spread the communion table, to administer the cup to the laity, and sometimes to baptize. Also, during worship, he called the attention of the worshipers to the transitions in the services; but his chief duty was to search out the poor and distribute alms to meet their necessities. There were two hundred thousand people in Antioch, and one hundred thousand of them were reckoned as Christians, and three thousand of these stood in need of charity. To this work Chrysostom, now thirty-five or thirty-seven years old, gave himself with love and enthusiasm. This was an added and admirable preparation for preaching the gospel to the people.

But let us not overlook the fact that during this period of five years, in addition to his diaconal service, he wrote at least three treatises: one *On Virginity*, a letter to a young widow on the glory of widowhood, and a book on the martyr, Babylas. His pen was never still.

He is at last ready to preach. He is about forty years old. Review now the elements which enter into his preparation for the work. His training at home was the purest and best; under the lead of the most distinguished rhetorician of his day he had been made familiar with Greek literature and philosophy; he had studied law and had won applause as an advocate; the Bible had been the book most read in his home, and then for six years it had been his all-absorbing study in his monastic

<sup>11</sup> PALLAD., p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

retreat; in searching out its meaning he was guided by the principles of historical interpretation which he had learned from Diodorus; he had carefully composed at least eight treatises, some of which were extended and elaborate, so that he had the power of expression which comes from painstaking composition; and, to crown all, for five years, with a heart full of love and sympathy, he had ministered personally to the poor and afflicted in the capital of Syria. This was the splendid training for the ministry of a man endowed with great natural powers. Though still putting a very humble estimate on his own ability, he is willing now, and eager, to enter on his larger work.

In 386 he was ordained presbyter by Flavian, bishop of Antioch, and was often directed by him to preach in "the great church" where the bishop himself preached. And now, for ten years or more, the gorgeous capital of Syria felt the power of his unusual eloquence. Most of his works which have come down to us were discourses, which, during this period, he poured forth from a full mind and heart. Christianity was then exposed to hideous moral corruption on the one hand and to manifold heresies on the other. Chrysostom, with great boldness, attacked both. During the first year of his ministry, with a vehemence born of intensest conviction, he waged war against Arians, pagans, Jews, and Judaizing Christians. He spent no time in preaching against the sins of past ages, but shot his barbed arrows into those sinners who, through his irresistible eloquence, were gathered immediately before him.

His great power over his audiences was in part due to his method of preaching. His homilies were popular, but accurate, expositions of the Scriptures. He came to his great congregations with God's Word and spoke with the authority which that Word gives to the ambassador that proclaims it. Take his homilies at random, and we find that each one is an exposition of from two to twenty verses of Scripture. To this there are very few exceptions. Occasionally his discourse approaches the character of a modern topical sermon. We have an example of this in his homily on *Excessive Grief at the Death of Friends*, founded on 1 Thess. 4:13. But his homilies on more extended passages were by no means destitute of unity, that prime attribute of effective oratorical discourse, and many of them realized it in very large measure. He sometimes in a single week expounded to his congregation a whole book or epistle. When he did this, at the beginning of his discourses he often carefully restated the main points presented in the preceding homily, so as intelligently to prepare the way for the one about to be delivered. And sometimes, while delivering an expository sermon, when he came to the second point he would reiterate the first; when he reached the third point he would restate the first and second; and so to the end of his discourse he skilfully kept all of its chief thoughts before the minds of his hearers. The truth which he thus brought out was always thoroughly applied so as to meet the real needs of his congregation.

But he delivered one memorable series of homilies, when he made an event instead of texts the foundation of his discourses. The event was unexpected, peculiar, alarming.

The emperor, Theodosius, was nearing the tenth anniversary of his reign; it was also the fifth year of the reign of his son, Arcadius, whom he had associated with himself in the government. He proposed a joint celebration of the two events. At such festivals it was customary to give to each soldier of the imperial army five gold pieces. This alone would have been a severe drain on the royal treasury. But, in addition to this, the Goths menaced the Danubian frontier, which made it necessary to mass troops in that region; this required a still greater outlay of money. To meet these exigencies, the emperor determined to lay a special tax on the largest and most wealthy eastern cities. This tax was resisted at Alexandria in Egypt, but there the resolute prefect, Cynegius, quickly suppressed the incipient rebellion, punished the leaders of it, and collected the tax. But Antioch was not so fortunate. The decree of the tax provoked a mob, which gutted some of the public baths, broke into the palace of the governor, and, not finding him, overturned the statue of the emperor and those of his wife and father, and with ropes dragged the statues along the streets amid the shouts of the frenzied multitudes. In three hours their work was done, and the whole city was in silence and terror, trembling in apprehension of the emperor's wrath. The repentant multitude besought Flavian, the bishop, to visit the emperor at Constantinople and entreat him to pardon the insult which they had offered him. Old as Flavian was, he undertook the journey of eight hundred miles, in winter, that he might plead with Theodosius to spare the guilty city. In Antioch business was nearly suspended; the baths and theaters were deserted; but the great church, where Chrysostom preached, was daily thronged by Christians, Jews, and pagans. In his sermons he castigated the follies and immoralities of the city, marshaled the proofs of the truth of Christianity, won a multitude of souls from the worship of false gods to Jesus Christ, and reclaimed to duty many Christians who, through the temptations and seductions of the Syrian capital, had lapsed into utter worldliness. These discourses, from the incident that elicited them, are called the *Homilies of the Statues*. And, while the preacher made the startling event that had filled his city with consternation the occasion of his utterances, and selected no passages of Scripture for exposition, yet during the progress of his discourse he often quoted Scripture to enforce his declarations, and what he quoted he carefully expounded. The power of his own words was thus intensified by the Word of God.

Flavian was successful at Constantinople, and returned to a forgiven and rejoicing city; but Chrysostom, by his incessant labor in the pulpit, had brought on a fit of sickness which precluded his participation in the general festivity.

Still another element of his power is found in his method of delivering his homilies. He evidently prepared them with great care. This is clear from the fact that in his homilies he revealed to his hearers the innermost meaning of the most important words of Scripture and presented in their vital relations the thoughts of the passages that he expounded. But, while his homilies were thus thoroughly premeditated, he delivered them neither from manuscript nor from memory. No preacher in that

early day ever read his discourses; and that Chrysostom did not recite his from memory is clear from the fact that while speaking he often took advantage of unexpected incidents to enforce his thought. Thus, while he was delivering his fourth homily on Genesis, at the time of the evening twilight, the attention of his audience was for a moment diverted by the lamp-lighter. Seizing upon the incident, he said: "At the very time when I am setting before you the Scriptures, you are turning your eyes away from me and fixing them upon the lamps and upon the man who is lighting the lamps. O! of what a sluggish soul is this the mark, to leave the preacher, and turn to him! I, too, am kindling the fire of the Scriptures, and upon my tongue there is a burning taper—the taper of sound doctrine. Greater is this light and better than the light that is yonder."

Also, at the close of his fourth homily on 1 Corinthians, he made instant use of the applause of his congregation. "Ye have given me," he exclaimed, "vehement applause and acclamation: but with all your applause have a care lest you be among those of whom these things are said."

These extemporaneous homilies were taken down by fast writers, *ταχυγράφοι*, and he edited most of them; but his homilies on the Acts were evidently never revised by him, so that they are presented to us just as they fell from his lips. In them above all others we are enabled to see the great preacher looking into the faces of his hearers and directly speaking to them out of a full mind and a sympathetic heart; his eyes and every movement of his body adding to the force of his apt and glowing words.

His power was also reinforced by a luminous style. Both his words and sentences were simple, and his whole thought was illumined by many fitting and striking metaphors. He seemed intent, not only upon being understood by all, but also upon being so transparently clear that the dullest could not fail to apprehend him; and his style took on added brilliancy and power from his abundant and pertinent illustrations, which were drawn from the Bible, profane history, nature, the varied occupations of men, and the customs of society. From the illustrations in his homilies delivered at Antioch one could write a fair history of the condition and everyday life of that interesting city at that time. He had the rare talent, like Beecher, of discovering analogies to the truth in all objects around about him, and the ability to use them with effect.

His power as a preacher was still further augmented by his unswerving faithfulness to his calling. After a ministry of marvelous success, for ten years, at Antioch, he was made archbishop of Constantinople.<sup>13</sup> He found that his ascetic notions and life were in sharp contrast with his new surroundings. He entered the palace of the archbishop, but its gorgeous trappings and luxurious furnishings had no charm for him. He wished no luxurious table nor soft bed. He sold the robes and furniture of his predecessor and bought that which was plain and cheap. He, who had labored for five years as a deacon among the destitute of Antioch, did not

<sup>13</sup> THEODORET, V, 27.

hesitate as to what should be done with the surplus which remained in his hand after this unequal exchange had been made; he gave it to the poor. Lest he might swerve from his integrity, through the blandishments of the royal court, he declared that he would never put his foot within the emperor's palace except on pressing business which pertained to the church. Wherever he went, whether to the palace or the hovel, he determined to go only on his Master's business. Responsible, by virtue of his high office, for the clergy inferior in rank to himself, with absolute firmness he insisted on their reformation.<sup>14</sup> Also, like Paul, feeling that he was a debtor to all men, he sent able preachers to Scythians<sup>15</sup> and Goths, and he himself, through an interpreter, preached to the Goths<sup>16</sup> who resided in Constantinople.

Moreover, his preaching was powerful because it was pre-eminently ethical and practical. To be sure, he faithfully proclaimed the whole round of biblical doctrine, but not in crystallized dogma; he presented it just as he found it in the words of Scripture. He never stopped to speculate upon it, but urged it upon the attention of his hearers, for practical ends. He preached morals so powerfully that he not only profoundly impressed men of his own time with the transcendent ethics of the gospel, but also has stimulated many preachers since to follow in his footsteps. In the seventeenth century there were three great preachers of morals, Barrow in England, Bourdaloue in France, and Segneri in Italy, but they all drew their inspiration, and very much of their material, from Chrysostom.

The breadth and specific character of his ethical preaching may be seen in his varied discourses both at Constantinople and Antioch. In the former city, just as he had done at the capital of Syria, he preached against Arianism; and also all the vices of a capital city in a state of degeneracy. Its population was heterogeneous, drawn from all surrounding nations. Chicago, with all its immorality, is a paradise compared with Byzantium when Chrysostom preached there. But the profligacy of the rich, their extravagance in dress, the theater, games, profane oaths—all were boldly depicted and unsparingly condemned. No vanity, no sin escaped him. In his thirty-fifth homily on the Acts he paints for us a fat glutton. One may think him coarse as he reads this passage; but he must remember that Chrysostom did not care for delicacy and elegance when he wished to pour contempt on a beastly vice; and also that the indelicacy of the passage is more marked in English than in Greek. Pope observed in reference to his translation of the *Iliad* that "it is impossible to skin a sheep with dignity in English," but Homer could accomplish that feat in Greek. But one can see from the translation how he held a glutton up to scorn. He says:

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, he has darted everywhere his brilliant rays, he has roused everyone to his work; the tiller has taken his hoe, the smith his hammer, each workman his proper tool; the woman sets

<sup>14</sup> THEODORET, V, 28.<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.



to work to spin or weave, while he, like a hog, goes forth to the occupation of filling his stomach, seeking how to provide for a costly 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.

In his forty-ninth homily on Matthew, delivered at Antioch, he inveighs against all sorts of extravagance, and even ornamenting boots with threads is ridiculed. He says :

To put silk threads into your boots, how disgraceful, how ridiculous! Ships are built, sailors hired, pilots appointed, the sails are spread, the sea crossed, wife, children, and home left behind, the country of the barbarians entered, and the life of the merchant exposed to a thousand perils, in order that, after it all, you may trick out the leather of your boots with these silken threads. What form of madness can be worse? He who ought to bend his thoughts and eyes heavenward casts them down upon his shoes instead. His chief care, as he walks delicately through the forum, is to avoid soiling his boots with mire or dust. Will you let your soul grovel in the mire while you are taking care of your boots? Boots were made to be soiled; if you cannot bear this, take them off and wear them on your head instead of on your feet. You laugh when I say these words, but I rather weep for your folly.<sup>17</sup>

To enforce moral lessons he quickly seized upon and used impressive passing events. We have a notable example of this in the fall of Eutropius, the emperor's prime minister. He was made consul, and then, through the defeat of his army and the intrigue of the empress Eudoxia, deposed. Hated by the people, he fled to the church for asylum. Chrysostom found him there, and although, through the efforts of this very prime minister, a law had been promulgated denying asylum in the church to any fleeing culprit, who had been an officer of state, Chrysostom shielded him. The soldiers came to take him, but Chrysostom stood at the door of the church and refused them entrance. Single-handed and alone he triumphed over the soldiery and the raging, vindictive populace.

On the following Sunday, at an early hour, St. Sophia was packed with an eager, curious throng. Chrysostom finally took his seat on the ambo, a high reading-desk, at the side of the nave. The expectant faces of that vast concourse were turned up toward him; and now, by a preconcerted arrangement, the curtain which separated the chancel from the nave of the church was partially drawn aside, revealing the pale face and crouching, trembling form of an old man under the sacred table, clinging to one of the pillars that supported it.<sup>18</sup> When the eyes of the multitude were turned upon him, Chrysostom, stretching out his hand toward the terrified and fallen minister, began, "Vanity of vanities," and on that text he poured forth a vehement homily :

Where now are the pomp and circumstance of yonder man's consulship? Where his torchlight festivities? Where the applause which once greeted him? Where his banquets and garlands? Where is the stir that once attended his appearance in the streets, the flattering compliments addressed to him in the amphitheater? They are gone—they are all gone; one

<sup>17</sup> Translation from STEPHENS.

<sup>18</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 8; SOCRATES, VI, 5.

rude blast has scattered all the leaves, and shows us the tree stripped quite bare, and shaken to its very roots. . . . These things were but as visions of the night, which fade at dawn; or vernal flowers, which wither when the spring is past; as shadows which flitted away, as bubbles which burst, as cobwebs which rent. . . . Therefore we chant continuously this heavenly strain, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." For these are words which should be inscribed on our walls and on our garments, in the market-place, by the wayside, on our doors; but above all should they be written in the conscience and engraved upon the mind of everyone.<sup>19</sup>

Another element of his power was his boldness and persistency. No opposition could daunt him. He spoke right on, uttering his honest convictions in spite of the intrigues and menaces of ecclesiastical and civil courts. This is abundantly shown by the history of those stormy times through which he passed during the last years that he spent at Constantinople. After the fall of Eutropius the empress had no rival in the state. Up to this time Chrysostom had been popular with both her and the emperor. Called into the neighboring provinces to perform some ecclesiastical duties, Severian, who supplied his pulpit, did what he could to undermine Chrysostom in the affections of the people.<sup>20</sup> Chrysostom was naturally indignant toward so base a rival, but the empress took the part of the treacherous bishop. This was the beginning of Chrysostom's trouble with Eudoxia. In her opposition to him she found allies among the people of the city. The rich were weary of his denunciations of their extortions; the fashionable women, of his condemnation of their paint, false hair, and costly dresses; the clergy, of his censures of their pleasures in the palaces of the wealthy; and the opposition by degrees became organized and found a leader of great ability in Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria. He artfully gathered around him the immoral clergy whom Chrysostom had censured and deposed, and the rich whom he had faithfully reproved for their crimes and follies. Many charges, drawn from these suspicious sources, were made against Chrysostom. Eudoxia, falsely informed that the great preacher had, in a public discourse, compared her to Jezebel, urged on the crusade against him. He was summoned by Theophilus before the synod of The Oak,<sup>21</sup> composed of thirty-six bishops, twenty-nine of whom were Egyptians and all of whom were willing tools of Theophilus. Chrysostom refused to appear before it, because it was a synod of his avowed enemies;<sup>22</sup> he did not plead, as he probably might have done, that it had no jurisdiction over him. He was condemned for contumacy.<sup>23</sup> The emperor issued a decree of banishment. For three days the people defended his palace and church, and during that time he continued to preach. In one of his discourses he said:

Many are the billows, and terrible the storms, which threaten us; but we fear not to be overwhelmed, for we stand upon the Rock; let the billows rise, they cannot sink the vessel of Jesus Christ. Tell me, what is it we fear? Death? For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain Or exile? The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Or confiscation of goods? We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. I fear not poverty, I

<sup>19</sup> Translation from STEPHENS.

<sup>20</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 10; SOC., VI, 11.

<sup>21</sup> THEODORET, V, 34.

<sup>22</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 17.

<sup>23</sup> SOCRATES, VI, 15.



desire not wealth. I dread not death, I do not pray for life, save for the sake of your advancement. I beseech you, be of good courage; no man will be able to separate us, for that which God hath joined together no man can put asunder. If man cannot dissolve marriage, how much less the church of God! Thou, O my enemy! only renderest me more illustrious and wastest thine own strength, for it is hard to kick against the pricks. Waves do not break the rock, but are themselves dispersed into foam against it. Nothing, O man, is stronger than the church, . . . it is stronger even than heaven; for heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. What words? Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. If thou disbelievest the words, yet believe the facts. How many tyrants have attempted to overthrow the church? How often have wild beasts, and the sword, and the furnace, and the boiling caldron, been employed against it, yet have they not prevailed. Where are those who made war upon it? They have been silenced and consigned to oblivion. Where is the church? It shines above the brightness of the sun. Let none of the things that have been done disturb you. Grant me one favor only—unwavering fidelity.<sup>24</sup>

But he believed it to be his duty to bow to the decree of the emperor; so when the people who were defending him were off their guard he slipped out of a side door in the evening and gave himself up to the officers of the court. He was put on board ship, sent across the sea, and landed near the mouth of the Euxine; thence he went to Prenetus, a city in Bithynia,<sup>25</sup> and was cared for at the house of a friend.

Soon after his departure from Constantinople the city was shaken by an earthquake. Eudoxia, believing it to be an expression of God's displeasure for the banishment of Chrysostom, joined the people in demanding his recall. When he returned, in the night, throngs of boats, flashing with lights, went out to greet him, so that he said, poetically, "the sea became a city."<sup>26</sup> Restored to his church and palace amid general rejoicing, Theophilus and his party fled, under cover of night, back to Egypt. A synod of over sixty bishops was at once called, that reversed the decision of the synod of The Oak.

But for two months only he labored in peace; then the storm burst upon him with tenfold fury. The smaller forum of Constantinople was a great square. On one side stood the senate house; on the other, the Church of St. Sophia, where Chrysostom preached. In the center of the square was a stone platform, paved with various marbles, from which orators spoke to popular assemblies. On this platform Eudoxia had a porphyry column reared which was surmounted with a silver image of herself. Its erection was celebrated with pagan rites and festivities like those which attended the adoration of an emperor's image. Chrysostom, filled with holy indignation, unsparingly denounced these heathen ceremonies.<sup>27</sup> He regarded not his own comfort and safety, but thought only of the honor of God. Eudoxia was of course offended; but still the tide of biting eloquence was poured forth. The reports of his sermons carried to the empress were often exaggerated; his enemies now rallied; a new ecclesiastical council was called; this council debated long and at last broke up declaring that Chrysostom's former condemnation had never been revoked. His enemies appealed to

<sup>24</sup> Translation from STEPHENS.

<sup>25</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 18.

<sup>26</sup> THEODORET, V, 37; SOCRATES, VI, 16.

<sup>27</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 20; SOCRATES, VI, 18.

the emperor, who reluctantly shut up Chrysostom in the archbishop's palace. But we need not fully unfold this tale of injustice. The vast assembly on Easter eve; the beginning of the baptism of three thousand converts; the violent dispersion by soldiers of the candidates and those officiating at their baptism, so that the waters of the baptistry were stained with their blood; the continuance of the ceremony of baptism at the baths and the second violent dispersion of the congregation; Chrysostom's imprisonment for two months in his own palace; his banishment in June, 404, at first to Bithynia; his tender parting with his bishops and deaconesses; his flock left behind, hunted from place to place, many of them imprisoned and tortured; the burning of his church and the senate house (*curia*) on the night when he sailed away, never to return;<sup>28</sup> his own imprisonment in exile; his correspondence with his deaconesses; his banishment to Pityus on the east of the Euxine and his death at Comona in Pontus, in 407, make a chapter in ecclesiastical history of fascinating interest, and show what excruciating suffering a fearless minister of Christ endured in the fourth century for unflinchingly preaching the gospel in the capital of his nation.

But a crowning element in Chrysostom's power over men is found in his tenderness and sympathy. He touched and moved men mightily because he loved men much. He had overflowing sympathy, especially for the poor and afflicted. He labored personally among them and for them. He organized his church so that their necessities might be systematically met. Many passages in his homilies show that he was full of compassion for men even while he unsparingly denounced their sins and follies.

The depths of his tenderness are revealed when he was about to go into exile. He left his palace, and entering the church said to the bishops who were with him: "Come, let us pray, and say farewell to the angel of the church,"—believing that his church was guarded by a veritable angel from heaven. "At my own fate I can rejoice; I only grieve for the sorrow of the people." He then called his deaconesses into the baptistry, and said to them: "Come hither, my daughters, and hearken to me: my career, I perceive, is coming to an end; I have finished my course, and perchance ye will see my face no more. Now I exhort you to this: let not any of you break off her accustomed benevolence to the church."

In his last moments he thought of others rather than of himself. Under officers of the empire he was being conducted to Pityus, the place to which he was finally banished. He was compelled to go on foot, his bald head uncovered and blistered by the sun.<sup>29</sup> He was lodged one night in the precincts of a church about five miles beyond Comona in Pontus; he asked for white garments, distributed his own clothing among the clergy present—he was always giving to others and he was benevolent to the last—the eucharist having been administered to him, he spoke words of farewell to those around him, and just as he uttered his favorite doxology, "Glory be to God for all things, Amen," his spirit took its flight to the Christ whom he had so faithfully served.

<sup>28</sup>THEODORET, V, 34.

<sup>29</sup>"Chrysostome," *Revue des deux mondes*, 1871.

Judged by any fair standard, Chrysostom was an unusually successful preacher. Great audiences, both in Antioch<sup>30</sup> and Constantinople,<sup>31</sup> gathered to hear him. Men from all the walks of life hung with admiration upon his lips. Those who heard him were often melted to tears, and sometimes men and women were so deeply convicted of sin that they cried aloud for mercy;<sup>32</sup> sometimes, according to the custom of the day, they broke out into applause, by stamping the feet and clapping the hands, which he usually sternly checked.<sup>33</sup> But to crown all, thousands were converted under his preaching; three thousand were ready for baptism on the night when he was shut up in his palace, just before his last exile.

The secret of this marked success is certainly not found in his personal presence. He was small of stature; his body was attenuated by ascetic observances; his hair was thin and grey; his head bald; his eyes deep-set, but gleaming with the fire of his soul; his forehead high and wrinkled;—he could have said, with Paul, "My bodily presence is weak." He usually sat when he preached; partly from the custom of his day, though many then stood and preached; but he often sat because he was too feeble to stand.

His success cannot be accounted for on the ground of his philosophy. He was a Christian stoic;<sup>34</sup> and while his stoicism had been mellowed and ennobled by the gospel, the spirit of which had permeated his whole being, it practically manifested itself in a life of severe simplicity which was repulsive to a luxurious people.

Nor do we find the secret of his influence over men in any one quality of mind or heart, but in the vital combination of many excellencies. His thorough training for the pulpit; his perfect command of Greek, the most flexible and expressive of tongues, his power of exact expression, acquired by writing; his expository homilies, messages that he brought directly from God to the people; his direct talks to his audiences, talks unhindered by manuscript or memorizing; his transparent style; his thought brilliantly lighted up by hosts of analogies discovered in objects that were most familiar to his hearers; his discourses, ethical, fearless, tender—present to us a group of excellencies which, vitally united and interactive in the great personality of the preacher, account, in a large measure at least, for his unusual power.

But this group of excellencies was reinforced by a stainless character.<sup>35</sup> The utterances of his lips were enforced by his life. He was the incarnation of the truth that he proclaimed. He had many and very bitter enemies at Constantinople, who hated him on account of his righteousness. They strove to tarnish his reputation and to destroy his influence, but they were unable to say anything against his moral conduct that the people would believe. And to crown all, this stainless man walked with God and preached with an unction from the Holy One. We cease to wonder that those who heard him were first entranced and then saved, and that his influence reaches across the centuries, so that men now feel its touch and uplifting power.

<sup>30</sup> "Chrysostom," in SMITH AND WALL, *Dictionary of Biography*; Adv. Aran. de incomprehen. dei natura; Homily III, 7; Homily IV, 6.

<sup>31</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 5.

<sup>32</sup> STEPHENS, p. 427.

<sup>33</sup> SCHAFF, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. II, p. 938.

<sup>34</sup> NEANDER, *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, TORREY'S translation, Vol. II, p. 658.

<sup>35</sup> SOZOMEN, VIII, 2.

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