

1 Corinthians 2:6-7

by St. John Chrysostom

St. John Chrysostom's sermon explores the profound contrast between worldly wisdom and the divine wisdom revealed through the Gospel, emphasizing its mystery and significance for believers.

Scripture: Matthew 10:38, Matthew 12:36, Matthew 16:18, John 15:15, Acts 3:24, Romans 11:1, 1 Corinthians 2:6, Ephesians 5:4, Colossians 3:4

Topics: "Divine Wisdom", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the divine wisdom of God's teachings, contrasting it with the wisdom of the world that leads to folly. He emphasizes the power of God's wisdom in revealing mysteries hidden from the rulers of this world, showing the superiority of spiritual wisdom over human understanding. Chrysostom highlights the challenges faced by the Apostles in preaching the Gospel, overcoming deep-rooted customs, dangers, and attracting believers with promises of eternal rewards. He marvels at the divine grace that enabled the Apostles to persuade diverse individuals, including slaves and women, to embrace a life of virtue and faith in the crucified Christ, despite facing persecution and hardships.

Transcript

Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect, yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, which are coming to naught; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that has been hidden, which God fore-ordained before the worlds unto our glory.

Darkness seems to be more suitable than light to those that are diseased in their eyesight: wherefore they betake themselves by preference to some room that is thoroughly shaded over. This also is the case with the wisdom which is spiritual. As the wisdom which is of God seemed to be foolishness unto those without: so their own wisdom, being foolishness indeed, was accounted by them wisdom. The result has been just as if a man having skill in navigation were to promise that without a ship or sails he would pass over a boundless tract of sea, and then endeavor by reasonings to prove that the thing is possible; but some other person, ignorant of it all, committing himself to a ship and a steersman and sailors, were thus to sail in safety. For the seeming ignorance of this man is wiser than the wisdom of the other. For excellent is the art of managing a ship; but when it makes too great professions it is a kind of folly. And so is every art which is not contented with its own proper limits. Just so the wisdom which is without [were wisdom indeed] if it had had the benefit of the spirit. But since it trusted all to itself and supposed that it wanted none of that help, it became foolishness, although it seemed to be wisdom. Wherefore having first exposed it by

the facts, then and not till then he calls it foolishness; and having first called the wisdom of God folly, according to their reckoning, then and not till then he shows it to be wisdom. (For after our proofs, not before, we are best able to abash the gainsayers.)

His words then are, Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect: for when I, accounted foolish and a preacher of follies, get the better of the wise, I overcome wisdom, not by foolishness but by a more perfect wisdom; a wisdom, too, so ample and so much greater, that the other appears foolishness. Wherefore having before called it by a name such as they named it at that time, and having both proved his victory from the facts, and shown the extreme foolishness of the other side: he thenceforth bestows upon it its right name, saying, Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect. Wisdom is the name he gives to the Gospel, to the method of salvation, the being saved by the Cross. The perfect, are those who believe. For indeed they are perfect, who know all human things to be utterly helpless, and who overlook them from the conviction that by such they are profited nothing: such were the true believers.

But not a wisdom of this world. For where is the use of the wisdom which is without, terminating here and proceeding no further, and not even here able to profit its possessors?

Now by the rulers of the world, here, he means not certain demons, as some suspect, but those in authority, those in power, those who esteem the thing worth contending about, philosophers, rhetoricians and writers of speeches (λογογράφους). For these were the dominant sort and often became leaders of the people.

Rulers of the world he calls them, because beyond the present world their dominion extends not. Wherefore, he adds further, which are coming to nought; disparaging it both on its own account, and from those who wield it. For having shown that it is false, that it is foolish, that it can discover nothing, that it is weak, he shows moreover that it is but of short duration.

2. But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery. What mystery? For surely Christ says, Matthew 10:27. ηκοσατε rec. text ηκοετε What you have heard in the ear, proclaim upon the housetops. How then does he call it a mystery? Because that neither angel nor archangel, nor any other created power knew of it before it actually took place. Wherefore he says, Ephesians 3:10 That now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. And this has God done in honor to us, so that they not without us should hear the mysteries. For we, too, ourselves, whomsoever we make our friends, use to speak of this as a sure proof of friendship towards them, that we tell our secrets to no one in preference to them. Let those hear who expose to shame the secrets of the Gospel, and unto all indiscriminately display the pearls and the doctrine, and who cast the holy things unto dogs, and swine, and useless reasonings. For the Mystery wants no argumentation; but just what it is, that only is to be declared. Since it will not be a mystery, divine and whole in all its parts, when you add any thing to it of yourself also.

And in another sense, too, a mystery is so called; because we do not behold the things which we see, but some things we see and others we believe. For such is the nature of our Mysteries. I, for instance, feel differently upon these subjects from an unbeliever. I hear, Christ was crucified; and immediately I admire His loving-kindness unto men: the other hears, and esteems it weakness. I hear, He became a servant; and I wonder at his care for us: the other hears, and counts it dishonor. I hear, He died; and am astonished at His might, that being in death He was not holden, but even broke the bands of death: the other hears, and surmises it to be helplessness. He hearing of the resurrection, says, the thing is a legend;

I, aware of the facts which demonstrate it, fall down and worship the dispensation of God. He hearing of a laver, counts it merely as water: but I behold not simply the thing which is seen, but the purification of the soul which is by the Spirit. He considers only that my body has been washed; but I have believed that the soul also has become both pure and holy; and I count it the sepulchre, the resurrection, the sanctification, the righteousness, the redemption, the adoption, the inheritance, the kingdom of heaven, the plenary effusion (χόρηγαν) of the Spirit. For not by the sight do I judge of the things that appear, but by the eyes of the mind. I hear of the Body of Christ: in one sense I understand the expression, in another sense the unbeliever.

And just as children, looking on their books, know not the meaning of the letters, neither know what they see; yea more, if even a grown man be unskilful in letters, the same thing will befall him; but the skilful will find much meaning stored up in the letters, even complete lives and histories: and an epistle in the hands of one that is unskilful will be accounted but paper and ink; but he that knows how to read will both hear a voice, and hold converse with the absent, and will reply whatsoever he chooses by means of writing: so it is also in regard of the Mystery. Unbelievers albeit they hear, seem not to hear: but the faithful, having the skill which is by the Spirit, behold the meaning of the things stored therein. For instance, it is this very thing that Paul signified, when he said that even now the word preached is hidden: for unto them that perish, he says, it is hidden. 2 Corinthians 4:3

In another point of view, the word indicates also the Gospel's being contrary to all expectation. By no other name is Scripture wont to call what happens beyond all hope and above all thought of men. Wherefore also in another place, My mystery is for Me, and for Mine. And Paul again, 2 Corinthians 15:51 Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.

3. And though it be everywhere preached, still is it a mystery; for as we have been commanded, what things we have heard in the ear, to speak upon the house tops, so have we been also charged, not to give the holy things unto dogs nor yet to cast our pearls before swine. Matthew 7:9 For some are carnal and do not understand: others have a veil upon their hearts and do not see: wherefore that is above all things a mystery, which everywhere is preached, but is not known of those who have not a right mind; and is revealed not by wisdom but by the Holy Ghost, so far as is possible for us to receive it. And for this cause a man would not err, who in this respect also should entitle it a mystery, the utterance whereof is forbidden. (μυστήριον) For not even unto us, the faithful, has been committed entire certainty and exactness. Wherefore Paul also said, 1 Corinthians 13:9 We know in part, and we prophesy in part: for now we see in a mirror darkly; but then face to face.

4. For this cause he says, We speak wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God fore-ordained before the worlds unto our glory. Hidden: that is, that no one of the powers above has learned it before us; neither do the many know it now.

Which he fore-ordained unto our glory and yet, elsewhere he says, unto his own glory, for he considers our salvation to be His own glory: even as also He calls it His own riches, vid. Ephesians 3:8 though He be Himself rich in good and need nothing in order that He may be rich.

Fore-ordained, he says, pointing out the care had of us. For so those are accounted most both to honor and to love us, whosoever shall have laid themselves out to do us good from the very beginning: which indeed is what fathers do in the case of children. For although they give not their goods until afterwards, yet at first and from the beginning they had predetermined this. And this is what Paul is earnest to point

out now; that God always loved us even from the beginning and when as yet we were not. For unless He had loved us, He would not have fore-ordained our riches. Consider not then the enmity which has come between; for more ancient than that was the friendship.

As to the words, before the worlds, (πρὶν ἀρχῶν) they mean eternal. For in another place also He says thus, Who is before the worlds. The Son also, if you mark it, will be found to be eternal in the same sense. For concerning Him he says, Hebrews 1:2 By Him He made the worlds; which is equivalent to subsistence before the worlds; for it is plain that the maker is before the things which are made.

1 Corinthians 2:8

5. Which none of the rulers of this world knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

Now if they knew not, how said He unto them, John 7:28 You both know Me, and you know whence I am? Indeed, concerning Pilate the Scripture says, he knew not. see John 19:9 It is likely also that neither did Herod know. These, one might say, are called rulers of this world: but if a man were to say that this is spoken concerning the Jews also and the Priests, he would not err. For to these also He says, John 8:19 You know neither Me nor My Father. How then says He a little before, You both know Me, and you know whence I am? However, the manner of this way of knowledge and of that has already been declared in the Gospel; (Hom. 49. on St. John,) and, not to be continually handling the same topic, there do we refer our readers.

What then? Was their sin in the matter of the Cross forgiven them? For He surely did say, Forgive them. Luke 23:34 If they repented, it was forgiven. For even he who set countless assailants on Stephen and persecuted the Church, even Paul, became the champion of the Church. Just so then, those others also who chose to repent, had forgiveness: and this indeed Paul himself meant, when he exclaims, Romans 11:1-2. I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. I say then, has God cast away His people whom He foreknew? God forbid. Then, to show that their repentance was not precluded, he brought forward as a decisive proof his own conversion, saying, For I also am an Israelite.

As to the words, They knew not; they seem to me to be said here not concerning Christ's Person, but only concerning the dispensation hidden in that event: (περὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ προφητείας τῆς οὐκονομίας) as if he had said, what meant the death, and the Cross, they knew not. For in that passage also He said not, They know not Me, but, They know not what they do; that is, the dispensation which is being accomplished, and the mystery, they are ignorant of. For they knew not that the Cross is to shine forth so brightly; that it is made the salvation of the world, and the reconciliation of God unto men; that their city should be taken; and that they should suffer the extreme of wretchedness.

By the name of wisdom, he calls both Christ, and the Cross and the Gospel. Opportunely also he called Him, The Lord of glory. For seeing that the Cross is counted a matter of ignominy, he signifies that the Cross was great glory: but that there was need of great wisdom in order not only to know God but also to learn this dispensation of God: and the wisdom which was without turned out an obstacle, not to the former only, but to the latter also.

1 Corinthians 2:9-13

6. But as it is written, Things which eye saw not and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him.

Where are these words written? Why, it is said to have been written, then also, when it is set down, not in words, but in actual events, as in the historical books ; or when the same meaning is expressed, but not in the very same words, as in this place: for the words, They to whom it was not told about Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand, Isaiah 52:15; Septuagint. Comp. Romans 15:21; Isaiah 64:4 are the same with the things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard. Either then this is his meaning, or probably it was actually written in some books, and the copies have perished. For indeed many books were destroyed, and few were preserved entire even in the first captivity. And this is plain, in those which remain to us. For the Apostle says Acts 3:24 From Samuel and the Prophets which follow after they have all spoken concerning Him: and these their words are not entirely extant. Paul, however, as being learned in the law and speaking by the Spirit, would of course know all with accuracy. And why speak I of the captivity? Even before the captivity many books had disappeared; the Jews having rushed headlong to the last degree of impiety: and this is plain from the end of the fourth book of Kings, 2 Kings 22:8; 2 Chronicles 34:14 for the book of Deuteronomy could hardly be found, having been buried somewhere in a dunghill.

And besides, there are in many places double prophecies, easy to be apprehended by the wiser sort; from which we may find out many of the things which are obscure.

7. What then, has eye not seen what God prepared? No. For who among men saw the things which were about to be dispensed? Neither then has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man. How is this? For if the Prophets spoke of it, how says he, Ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man? It did not enter; for not of himself alone is he speaking, but of the whole human race. What then? The Prophets, did not they hear? Yes, they heard; but the prophetic ear was not the ear of man: for not as men heard they, but as Prophets. Wherefore he said, Isaiah 50:4. Septuagint He has added unto me an ear to hear, meaning by addition that which was from the Spirit. From whence it was plain that before hearing it had not entered into the heart of man. For after the gift of the Spirit the heart of the Prophets was not the heart of man, but a spiritual heart; as also he says himself, We have the mind of Christ 1 Corinthians 2:16 as if he would say, Before we had the blessing of the Spirit and learned the things which no man can speak, no one of us nor yet of the Prophets conceived them in his mind. How should we? Since not even angels know them. For what need is there to speak, says he, concerning 'the rulers of this world,' seeing that no man knew them, nor yet the powers above?

What kind of things then are these? That by what is esteemed to be the foolishness of preaching He shall overcome the world, and the nations shall be brought in, and there shall be reconciliation of God with men, and so great blessings shall come upon us! How then have we known? Unto us, he says, God has revealed them by His Spirit; not by the wisdom which is without; for this like some dishonored handmaid has not been permitted to enter in, and stoop down and look into see John 20:5 the mysteries pertaining to the Lord. Do you see how great is the difference between this wisdom and that? The things which angels knew not, these are what she has taught us: but she that is without, has done the contrary. Not only has she failed to instruct, but she hindered and obstructed, and after the event sought to obscure His doings, making the Cross of none effect. Not then simply by our receiving the knowledge, does he describe the honor vouchsafed to us, nor by our receiving it with angels, but, what is more, by His Spirit conveying it to us.

7. Then to show its greatness, he says, If the Spirit which knows the secret things of God had not revealed them, we should not have learned them. Such an object of care was this whole subject to God, as to be among His secrets. Wherefore we needed also that Teacher who knows these things perfectly; for the Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:10-12 says he, searches all things, even the deep things of God. For the word to search is here indicative not of ignorance, but of accurate knowledge: it is the very same mode of speaking which he used even of God, saying, He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit. Romans 8:27 Then having spoken with exactness concerning the knowledge of the Spirit, and having pointed out that it is as fully equal to God's knowledge, as the knowledge of a man itself to itself; and also, that we have learned all things from it and necessarily from it; he added, which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. Do you see to what point he exalted us because of the Teacher's dignity? For so much are we wiser than they as there is difference between Plato and the Holy Spirit; they having for masters the heathen rhetoricians but we, the Holy Spirit.

8. But what is this, comparing spiritual things with spiritual? When a thing is spiritual and of dubious meaning, we adduce testimonies from the things which are spiritual. For instance, I say, Christ rose again -- was born of a Virgin; I adduce testimonies and types and demonstrations; the abode of Jonah in the whale and his deliverance afterwards; the child-bearing of the barren, Sarah, Rebecca, and the rest; the springing up of the trees which took place in paradise Genesis 2:5 when there had been no seeds sown, no rains sent down, no furrow drawn along. For the things to come were fashioned out and figured forth, as in shadow, by the former things, that these which are now might be believed when they came in. And again we show, how of the earth was man, and how of man alone the woman; and this without any intercourse whatever; how the earth itself of nothing, the power of the Great Artificer being every where sufficient for all things. Thus with spiritual things do I compare spiritual, and in no instance have I need of the Wisdom which is without -- neither its reasonings nor its embellishments. For such persons do but agitate the weak understanding and confuse it; and are not able to demonstrate clearly any one of the things which they affirm, but even have the contrary effect. They rather disturb the mind and fill it with darkness and much perplexity. Wherefore he says, with spiritual things comparing spiritual. Do you see how superfluous he shows it to be? And not only superfluous, but even hostile and injurious: for this is meant by the expressions, lest the Cross of Christ be made of none effect, and, that our ('your faith,' rec. text) faith should not stand in the wisdom of men. And he points out here, that it is impossible for those who confidently entrust every thing to it, to learn any useful thing: for

1 Corinthians 2:14-16

9. The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit.

It is necessary then to lay it aside first. What then, some man will say; is the wisdom from without stigmatized? And yet it is the work of God. How is this clear? Since He made it not, but it was an invention of yours. For in this place he calls by the term wisdom curious research and superfluous elegance of words. But should any one say that he means the human understanding; even in this sense the fault is yours. For you bring a bad name upon it, who makest a bad use of it; who to the injury and thwarting of God demandest from it things which indeed it never had. Since then you boast therein and fightest with God, He has exposed its weakness. For strength of body also is an excellent thing, but when Cain used it not as he ought, God disabled him and made him tremble Genesis 4:12-14. Septuagint. sighing and trembling, rec. ver. fugitive and vagabond. Wine also is a good thing; but because the Jews indulged in it immoderately, God prohibited the priests entirely from the use of the fruit. And since thou also hast abused

wisdom unto the rejecting of God, and hast demanded of it more than it can do of its own strength; in order to withdraw you from human hope, he has showed you its weakness.

For (to proceed) he is a natural man, who attributes every thing to reasonings of the mind and considers not that he needs help from above; which is a mark of sheer folly. For God bestowed it that it might learn and receive help from Him, not that it should consider itself sufficient unto itself. For eyes are beautiful and useful, but should they choose to see without light, their beauty profits them nothing; nor yet their natural force, but even does harm. So if you mark it, any soul also, if it choose to see without the Spirit, becomes even an impediment unto itself.

How then, before this, it will be said, did she see all things of herself? Never at any time did she this of herself but she had creation for a book set before her in open view. But when men having left off to walk in the way which God commanded them, and by the beauty of visible objects to know the Great Artificer, had entrusted to disputations the leading-staff of knowledge; they became weak and sank in a sea of ungodliness; for they presently brought in that which was the abyss of all evil, asserting that nothing was produced from things which were not, but from uncreated matter; and from this source they became the parents of ten thousand heresies.

Moreover, in their extreme absurdities they agreed; but in those things wherein they seemed to dream out something wholesome, though it were only as in shadows, they fell out with one another; that on both sides they might be laughed to scorn. For that out of things which are not nothing is produced, nearly all with one accord have asserted and written; and this with great zeal. In these absurdities then they were urged on by the Devil. But in their profitable sayings, wherein they seemed, though it were but darkly, (ἐν ἀνύμῳ) to find some part of what they sought, in these they waged war with one another: for instance, that the soul is immortal; that virtue needs nothing external; and that the being good or the contrary is not of necessity nor of fate.

Do you see the craft of the Devil? If any where he saw men speaking any thing corrupt, he made all to be of one mind; but if any where speaking any thing sound, he raised up others against them; so that the absurdities did not fail, being confirmed by the general consent, and the profitable parts died away, being variously understood. Observe how in every respect the soul is unstrung, (ἀτονός) and is not sufficient unto herself. And this fell out as one might expect. For if, being such as she is, she aspire to have need of nothing and withdraw herself from God; suppose her not fallen into that condition, and into what extreme madness would she not have insensibly sunk? If, endowed with a mortal body, she expected greater things from the false promise of the Devil-- for, You shall be, said he, as gods Genesis 3:4-- to what extent would she not have cast herself away, had she received her body also, from the beginning, immortal. For, even after that, she asserted herself to be unbegotten and of the essence of God, through the corrupt mouth of the Manicheans, and it was this distemperature which gave occasion to her invention of the Grecian gods. On this account, as it seems to me, God made virtue laborious, with a view to bow down the soul and to bring it to moderation. And that you may convince yourself that this is true, (as far as from trifles ones may guess at any thing great,) let us learn it from the Israelites. They, it is well known, when they led not a life of toil but indulged in relaxation, not being able to bear prosperity, fell away into ungodliness. What then did God upon this? He laid upon them a multitude of laws with a view to restrain their licence. And to convince you that these laws contribute not to any virtue, but were given to them as a sort of curb, providing them with an occasion of perpetual labor; hear what says the prophet concerning them; I gave them statutes which were not good. Ezek. xx. 25. What means, not good? Such as did not much contribute towards virtue. Wherefore he adds also, and ordinances whereby they shall not live.

10. But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit.

For as with these eyes no man could learn the things in the heavens; so neither the soul unaided the things of the Spirit. And why speak I of the things in heaven? It receives not even those in earth, all of them. For beholding afar off a square tower, we think it to be round; but such an opinion is mere deception of the eyes: so also we may be sure, when a man by means of his understanding alone examines the things which are afar off much ridicule will ensue. For not only will he not see them such as indeed they are, but will even account them the contraries of what they are. Wherefore he added, for they are foolishness unto him. But this comes not of the nature of the things, but of his infirmity, unable as he is to attain to their greatness through the eyes of his soul.

11. Next, pursuing his contrast, he states the cause of this, saying, he knows not because they are spiritually discerned: i.e. the things asserted require faith, and to apprehend them by reasonings is not possible, for their magnitude exceeds by a great deal the meanness of our understanding. Wherefore he says, but he that is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For he that has sight, beholds himself all things that appertain to the man that has no sight; but no sightless person discerns what the other is about. So also in the case before us, our own matters and those of unbelievers, all of them we for our part know; but theirs, they know not henceforth any more. We know what is the nature of things present, what the dignity of things to come; and what some day shall become of the world when this state of things shall be no more, and what sinners shall suffer, and the righteous shall enjoy. And that things present are nothing worth, we both know, and their meanness we expose; (for to discern is also to expose;) (■νακρ■νειν, ■λ■γγειν) and that the things to come are immortal and immoveable. All these things are known to the spiritual man; and what the natural man shall suffer when he is departed into that world; and what the faithful shall enjoy when he has fulfilled his journey from this: none of which are known to the natural man.

12. Wherefore also, subjoining a plain demonstration of what had been affirmed, he says, For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. That is to say, the things which are in the mind of Christ, these we know, even the very things which He wills and has revealed. For since he had said, the Spirit had revealed them; lest any one should set aside the Son, he subjoins that Christ also showed us these things. Not meaning this, that all the things which He knows, we know; but that all the things which we know are not human so as to be open to suspicion, but of His mind and spiritual.

For the mind which we have about these things we have of Christ; that is, the knowledge which we have concerning the things of the faith is spiritual; so that with reason we are judged of no man. For it is not possible that a natural man should know divine things. Wherefore also he said, For who has known the mind of the Lord? implying that our own mind which we have about these things, is His mind. And this, that he may instruct Him, he has not added without reason, but with reference to what he had just now said, the spiritual man no one discerns. For if no man is able to know the mind of God, much less can he teach and correct it. For this is the meaning of, that he may instruct Him.

Do you see how from every quarter he repels the wisdom which is without, and shows that the spiritual man knows more things and greater? For seeing that those reasons, That no flesh should glory; and, For this cause has He chosen the foolish things, that He might confound the wise men; and, Lest the Cross of Christ should be made void: seemed not to the unbelievers greatly worthy of credit, nor yet attractive, or necessary, or useful, he finishes by laying down the principal reason; because in this way we most easily

see from Whom we may have the means of learning even high things, and things secret, and things which are above us. For reason was absolutely made of none effect by our inability to apprehend through Gentile wisdom the things above us.

You may observe, too, that it was more advantageous to learn in this way from the Spirit. For that is the easiest and clearest of all teaching.

But we have the mind of Christ. That is, spiritual, divine, that which has nothing human. For it is not of Plato, nor of Pythagoras, but it is Christ Himself, putting His own things into our mind.

This then, if naught else, let us revere, O beloved, and let our life shine forth as most excellent; since He also Himself makes this a sure proof of great friendship, viz. the revealing His secrets unto us: where He says, John 15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants, for all you are My friends; for all things which I have heard from My Father I have told unto you: that is, I have had confidence towards you. Now if this by itself is a proof of friendship, namely, to have confidence: when it appears that He has not only confided to us the mysteries conveyed by words, (τὰ δὲ κρυπτὰ μυστήρια) but also imparted to us the same conveyed by works, (δὲ τὰ ἔργα, i.e. sacramental actions) consider how vast the love of which this is the fruit. This, if nothing else, let us revere; even though we will not make any such great account of hell, yet let it be more fearful than hell to be thankless and ungrateful to such a friend and benefactor. And not as hired servants, but as sons and freemen, let us do all things for the love of our Father; and let us at last cease from adhering to the world that we may put the Greeks also to shame. For even now desiring to put out my strength against them, I shrink from so doing, lest haply, surpass them as we may by our arguments and the truth of what we teach, we bring upon ourselves much derision from the comparison of our way of life; seeing that they indeed, cleaving unto error and having no such conviction, abide by philosophy, but we do just the contrary. However, I will say it. For it may be, it may be that in practising how to contend against them, we shall long as rivals to become better than they in our mode of life also.

14. I was saying not long ago, that it would not have entered the Apostles' thoughts to preach what they did preach, had they not enjoyed Divine Grace; and that so far from succeeding, they would not even have devised such a thing. Well then, let us also today prosecute the same subject in our discourse; and let us show that it was a thing impossible so much as to be chosen or thought of by them, if they had not had Christ among them: not because they were arrayed, the weak against the strong, not because few against many, not because poor against rich, not because unlearned against wise, but because the strength of their prejudice, too, was great. For you know that nothing is so strong with men as the tyranny of ancient custom. So that although they had not been twelve only, and not so contemptible, and such as they really were, but another world as large as this, and with an equivalent number arrayed on their side, or even much greater; even in this case the result would have been hard to achieve. For the other party had custom on their side, but to these their novelty was an obstacle. For nothing so much disturbs the mind, though it be done for some beneficial purpose, as to innovate and introduce strange things, and most of all when this is done in matters relating to divine worship and the glory of God. And how great force there is in this circumstance I will now make plain; first having made the following statement that there was added also another difficulty with regard to the Jews. For in the case of the Greeks, they destroyed both their gods and their doctrines altogether; but not so did they dispute with the Jews, but many of their doctrines they abolished, while the God who had enacted the same they bade them worship. And affirming that men should honor the legislator, they said, obey not in all respects the law which is of Him; for instance, in the keeping the Sabbath, or observing circumcision, or offering sacrifices, or doing any other like thing. So that not only was custom an impediment, but also the fact, that when they bade men worship God, they bade

them break many of His laws.

15. But in the case of the Greeks great was the tyranny of custom. For if it had been a custom of ten years only, I say not of such a length of time, and if it had preoccupied but a few men, I say not the whole world, when these persons made their approaches; even in this case the revolution would have been hard to effect. But now sophists, and orators, and fathers, and grandfathers, and many more ancient than all these, had been preoccupied by the error: the very earth and sea, and mountains and groves, and all nations of Barbarians, and all tribes of the Greeks, and wise men and ignorant, rulers and subjects, women and men, young and old, masters and slaves, artificers and husbandmen, dwellers in cities and in the country; all of them. And those who were instructed would naturally say, What in the world is this? Have all that dwell in the world been deceived? Both sophists and orators, philosophers and historians, the present generation and they who were before this, Pythagoreans, Platonists, generals, consuls, kings, they who in all cities from the beginning were citizens and colonists, both Barbarians and Greeks? And are the twelve fishermen and tent-makers and publicans wiser than all these? Why, who could endure such a statement? However, they spoke not so, nor had it in their mind, but did endure them, and owned that they were wiser than all. Wherefore they overcame even all. And custom was no impediment to this, though accounted invincible when she has acquired her full swing by course of time.

And that you may learn how great is the strength of custom, it has oftentimes prevailed over the commands of God. And why do I say, commands? Even over very blessings. For so the Jews when they had manna, required garlic; enjoying liberty they were mindful of their slavery; and they were continually longing for Egypt, because they were accustomed to it. Such a tyrannical thing is custom.

If you desire to hear of it from the heathens also; it is said that Plato, although well aware that all about the gods was a sort of imposture, condescended to all the feasts and all the rest of it, as being unable to contend with custom; and as having in fact learned this from his master. For he, too, being suspected of some such innovation, was so far from succeeding in what he desired that he even lost his life; and this, too, after making his defense. And how many men do we see now by prejudice held in idolatry, and having nothing plausible to say, when they are charged with being Greeks, but alleging the fathers, and grandfathers, and great grandfathers. For no other reason did some of the heathens call custom, second nature. But when doctrines are the subject-matter of the custom, it becomes yet more deeply rooted. For a man would change all things more easily than those pertaining to religion. The feeling of shame, too, coupled with custom, was enough to raise an obstacle; and the seeming to learn a new lesson in extreme old age, and that of those who were not so intelligent. And why wonder, should this happen in regard of the soul, seeing that even in the body custom has great force?

16. In the Apostles' case, however, there was yet another obstacle, more powerful than these; it was not merely changing custom so ancient and primitive, but there were perils also under which the change was effected. For they were not simply drawing men from one custom to another, but from a custom, wherein was no fear to an undertaking which held out threats of danger. For the believer must immediately incur confiscation, persecution, exile from his country; must suffer the worst ills, be hated of all men, be a common enemy both to his own people and to strangers. So that even if they had invited men to a customary thing out of novelty, even in this case it would have been a difficult matter. But when it was from a custom to an innovation, and with all these terrors to boot, consider how vast was the obstacle!

And again, another thing, not less than those mentioned, was added to make the change difficult. For besides the custom and the dangers, these precepts were both more burdensome, and those from which

they withdrew men were easy and light. For their call was from fornication unto chastity; from love of life unto sundry kinds of death; from drunkenness unto fasting; from laughter unto tears and compunction; from covetousness unto utter indigence; from safety unto dangers: and throughout all they required the strictest circumspection. For, Filthiness, Ephesians 5:4 says he, and foolish talking, and jesting, let it not proceed out of your mouth. And these things they spoke unto those who knew nothing else than how to be drunken and serve their bellies; who celebrated feasts made up of nothing but of filthiness and laughter and all manner of revellings (κωμ■δ■αζ ■π■σης.) So that not only from the matter pertaining to severity of life were the doctrines burthensome, but also from their being spoken unto men who had been brought up in careless ease, and filthiness, and foolish talking, and laughter and revellings. For who among those who had lived in these things, when he heard, Matthew 10:38 If a man take not up his cross and follow Me, he is not worthy of Me; and, Matthew 10:34 I came not to send peace but a sword, and to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter at variance with her mother, would not have felt himself chilled all over (■ν■ρησε)? And who, when he heard, If a man bid not farewell to home and country and possessions, he is not worthy of Me, would not have hesitated, would not have refused? And yet there were men, who not only felt no chill, neither shrunk away when they heard these things, but ran to meet them and rushed upon the hardships, and eagerly caught at the precepts enjoined. Again, to be told, For every idle word we shall give account; Matthew 12:36 and, whosoever looks upon a woman to lust after her, has committed adultery with her as soon as seen; Matthew 5:28 and, whosoever is angry without cause shall fall into hell;-- which of the men of that day would not these things have frightened off? And yet all came running in, and many even leaped over the boundaries of the course. What then was their attraction? Was it not, plainly, the power of Him who was preached? For suppose that the case were not as it is, but just contrary, that this side was the other, and the other this; would it have been easy, let me ask, to hold fast and to drag on those who resisted? We cannot say so. So that in every way that power is proved divine which wrought so excellently. Else how, tell me, did they prevail with the frivolous and the dissolute, urging them toward the severe and rough course of life?

17. Well; such was the nature of the precepts. But let us see whether the doctrine was attractive. Nay, in this respect also there was enough to frighten away the unbelievers. For what said the preachers? That we must worship the crucified, and count Him as God, who was born of a Jewish woman. Now who would have been persuaded by these words, unless divine power had led the way? That indeed He had been crucified and buried, all men knew; but that He had risen again and ascended, no one save the Apostles had seen.

But, you will say, they excited them by promises and deceived them by an empty sound of words. Nay, this very topic most particularly shows (even apart from all that has been said) that our doctrines are no deceit. For all its hardships took place here, but its consolations they were to promise after the resurrection. This very thing then, for I repeat it, shows that our Gospel is divine. For why did no one of the believers say, I close not with this, neither do I endure it? Thou threatenest me with hardships here, and the good things you promise after the resurrection. Why, how is it plain that there will be a resurrection? Which of the departed has returned? Which of those at rest has risen again? Which of these has said what shall be after our departure hence? But none of these things entered into their minds; rather they gave up their very lives for the Crucified. So that this bare fact was more than anything a proof of great power; first, their working conviction at once, touching matters so important, in persons that had never in their lives before heard of any such thing; secondly, that they prevailed on them to take the difficulties upon trial, and to account the blessings as matter of hope. Now if they had been deceivers they would have done the contrary: their good things they would have promised as of this world ■ντε■θεν, so John 18:36; the fearful

things they would not have mentioned, whether they related to the present life or the future. For so deceivers and flatterers act. Nothing harsh, nor galling, nor burdensome, do they hold out, but altogether the contrary. For this is the nature of deceit.

18. But the folly, it will be said, of the greater part caused them to believe what they were told. How do you say? When they were under Greeks, they were not foolish; but when they came over to us, did their folly then begin? And yet they were not men of another sort nor out of another world, that the Apostles took and persuaded: they were men too who simply held the opinions of the Greeks, but ours they received with the accompaniment of dangers. So that if with better reason they had maintained the former, they would not have swerved from them, now that they had so long time been educated therein; and especially as not without danger was it possible to swerve. But when they came to know from the very nature of the things that all on that side was mockery and delusion, upon this, even under menaces of sundry deaths, they sprang off (■πεπ■δησαν) from their customary ways, and came over voluntarily unto the new; inasmuch as the latter doctrine was according to nature, but the other contrary to nature.

But the persons convinced, it is said, were slaves, and woman, and nurses, and midwives, and eunuchs. Now in the first place, not of these alone does our Church consist; and this is plain unto all. But be it of these; this is what especially makes the Gospel worthy of admiration; that such doctrines as Plato and his followers could not apprehend, the fishermen had power on a sudden to persuade the most ignorant sort of all to receive. For if they had persuaded wise men only, the result would not have been so wonderful; but in advancing slaves, and nurses, and eunuchs unto such great severity of life as to make them rivals to angels, they offered the greatest proof of their divine inspiration. Again; had they enjoined I know not what trifling matters, it were reasonable perhaps to bring forward the conviction wrought in these persons, to show the trifling nature of the things which were spoken: but if things great, and high, and almost transcending human nature, and requiring high thoughts, were the matter of their lessons of wisdom; the more foolishness you show in those who were convinced, by so much the more do you show clearly that they who wrought the conviction were wise and filled with divine grace.

But, you will say, they prevailed on them through the excessive greatness of the promises. But tell me, is not this very thing a wonder to you, how they persuaded men to expect prizes and recompenses after death? For this, were there nothing else, is to me matter of amazement. But this, too, it will be said, came of folly. Inform me wherein is the folly of these things: that the soul is immortal; that an impartial tribunal will receive us after the present life; that we shall render an account of our deeds and words and thoughts unto God that knows all secrets; that we shall see the evil undergoing punishment, and the good with crowns on their heads. Nay, these things are not of folly, but the highest instruction of wisdom. The folly is in the contrary opinions to these.

19. Were this then the only thing, the despising of things present, the setting much by virtue, the not seeking rewards here, but advancing far beyond in hopes, and the keeping the soul so intent and faithful as by no present terror to be hindered in respect of the hope of what shall be; tell me, to what high philosophy must this belong? But would you also learn the force of the promises and predictions in themselves, and the truth of those uttered both before and after this present state of things? Behold, I show you a golden chain, woven cunningly from the beginning! He spoke some things to them about Himself, and about the churches, and about the things to come; and as He spoke, He wrought mighty works. By the fulfilment therefore of what He said, it is plain that both the wonders wrought were real, and the future and promised things also.

But that my meaning may be yet plainer, let me illustrate it from the actual case. He raised up Lazarus by a single word merely, and showed him alive. Again, He said, The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church Matthew 16:18 and, He that forsakes father or mother, shall receive an hundred-fold in this life, and shall inherit everlasting life. Matthew 19:29 The miracle then is one, the raising of Lazarus; but the predictions are two; made evident, the one here, the other in the world to come. Consider now, how they are all proved by one another. For if a man disbelieve the resurrection of Lazarus, from the prophecy uttered about the Church let him learn to believe the miracle. For the word spoken so many years before, came to pass then, and received accomplishment: for the gates of Hades prevailed not against the Church. You see that He who spoke truth in the prophecy, it is clear that he also wrought the miracle: and He who both wrought the miracle and brings to accomplishment the words which He spoke, it is clear that He speaks the truth also in the predictions of things yet to come, when He says, He who despises things present shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. For the things which have been already done and spoken, He has given as the surest pledges of those which shall hereafter come to pass.

Of all these things then, and the like to these, collecting them together out of the Gospels, let us tell them, and so stop their mouths. But if any one say, Why then was not error completely extinguished? This may be our answer: You yourselves are to blame, who rebel against your own salvation. For God has so ordered this matter (■κον■μησεν,) that not even a remnant of the old impiety need be left.

20. Now, briefly to recount what has been said: What is the natural course of things? That the weak should be overcome by the strong, or the contrary? Those who speak things easy, or things of the harsher sort? Those who attract men with dangers, or with security? innovators, or those who strengthen custom? Those who lead into a rough, or into a smooth way? Those who withdraw men from the institutions of their fathers, or those who lay down no strange laws? Those who promise all their good things after our departure from this world, or those who flatter in the present life? The few to overcome the many, or the many the few?

But you, too, says one, gave promises pertaining to this life. What then have we promised in this life? The forgiveness of sins and the laver of regeneration. Now in the first place, baptism itself has its chief part in things to come; and Paul exclaims, saying, Colossians 3:4 For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God: when your life shall be manifested, then shall you also with Him be manifested in glory. But if in this life also it has advantages, as indeed it has, this also is more than all a matter of great wonder, that they had power to persuade men who had done innumerable evil deeds, yea such as no one else had done, that they should wash themselves clean of all, and they should give account of none of their offenses. So that on this very account it were most of all meet to wonder that they persuaded Barbarians to embrace such a faith as this, and to have good hopes concerning things to come; and having thrown off the former burden of their sins, to apply themselves with the greatest zeal for the time to come to those toils which virtue requires, and not to gape after any object of sense, but rising to a height above all bodily things, to receive gifts purely spiritual: yea, that the Persian, the Sarmatian, the Moor, and the Indian should be acquainted with the purification of the soul, and the power of God, and His unspeakable mercy to men, and the severe discipline of faith, and the visitation of the Holy Spirit, and the resurrection of bodies, and the doctrines of life eternal. For in all these things, and in whatever is more than these, the fishermen, initiating by Baptism various races of Barbarians, persuaded them (φιλοσοφε■ν) to live on high principles.

Of all these things then, having observed them accurately, let us speak unto the Gentiles, and again, let us show them the evidence of our lives: that by both means we ourselves may be saved and they drawn over

by our means unto the glory of God. For unto Him be the glory forever. Amen.

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