

# Homily 9 on the Acts of the Apostles

by St. John Chrysostom

*Peter emphasizes the importance of faith in Jesus' name and encourages repentance so that the listeners' sins may be blotted out and they may experience the times of refreshing.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 20:7, Leviticus 19:12, Psalm 15:4, Proverbs 12:22, Isaiah 48:1, Matthew 5:34, Ephesians 4:29, Colossians 3:8, James 5:12

**Topics:** "Christian Integrity", "Reverence For God"

## Description

John Chrysostom preaches about the importance of refraining from swearing oaths, highlighting the seriousness of invoking God as a witness in trivial matters and the need to show reverence for God's name. He emphasizes the detrimental effects of swearing on one's soul and the need to imitate Christ's forgiveness and mercy towards those who wrong us. Chrysostom urges the congregation to uphold a standard of integrity and honesty by avoiding oaths and trusting in God's providence for all things.

## Transcript

Acts III. 12

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, You men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we have made this man to walk?

There is greater freedom of speech in this harangue, than in the former. Not that he was afraid on the former occasion, but the persons whom he addressed there, being jesters and scoffers, would not have borne it. Hence in the beginning of that address he also bespeaks their attention by his preamble; Be this known unto you, and hearken to my words. Acts 2:14 But here there is no need of this management. (κατασκευ■ς.) For his hearers were not in a state of indifference. The miracle had aroused them all; they were even full of fear and amazement. Wherefore also there was no need of beginning at that point, but rather with a different topic; by which, in fact, he powerfully conciliated them, namely, by rejecting the glory which was to be had from them. For nothing is so advantageous, and so likely to pacify the hearers, as to say nothing about one's self of an honorable nature, but, on the contrary, to obviate all surmise of wishing to do so. And, in truth, much more did they increase their glory by despising glory, and showing that what had just taken place was no human act, but a Divine work; and that it was their part to join with the beholders in admiration, rather than to receive it from them. Do you see how clear of all ambition he is, and how he repels the honor paid to him? In the same manner also did the ancient fathers; for instance, Daniel said, Not for any wisdom that is in me. Daniel 2:30 And again Joseph, Do not interpretations belong

to God? Genesis 11:8 And David, When the lion and the bear came, in the name of the Lord I rent them with my hands. 1 Samuel 17:34 And so likewise here the Apostles, Why do you look so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? Acts 3:13 Nay, not even this; for not by our own merit did we draw down the Divine influence. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers. See how assiduously he thrusts himself (ε■σωθει) upon the fathers of old, lest he should appear to be introducing a new doctrine. In the former address he appealed to the patriarch David, here he appeals to Abraham and the rest. Hath glorified His Servant Jesus. Again a lowly expression, like as in the opening address.

But at this point he proceeds to enlarge upon the outrage, and exalts the heinousness of the deed, no longer, as before, throwing a veil over it. This he does, wishing to work upon them more powerfully. For the more he proved them accountable, the better his purpose were effected. Hath glorified, he says, His Servant Jesus, Whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. The charge is twofold: Pilate was desirous to let Him go; you would not, when he was willing. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince (or Author) of Life: Whom God has raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. (v. 14-15.) You desired a robber instead of Him. He shows the great aggravation of the act. As he has them under his hand, he now strikes hard. The Prince of Life, he says. In these words he establishes the doctrine of the Resurrection. Whom God has raised from the dead. Acts 2:26 Whence does this appear? He no longer refers to the Prophets, but to himself, inasmuch as now he has a right to be believed. Before, when he affirmed that He was risen, he adduced the testimony of David; now, having said it, he alleges the College of Apostles. Whereof we are witnesses, he says.

And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Seeking to declare the matter (ζητ■ν τ■ πρ■γμα ε■πε■ν), he straightway brings forward the sign: In the presence, he says, of you all. As he had borne hard upon them, and had shown that He Whom they crucified had risen, again he relaxes, by giving them the power of repentance; And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance you did it, as did also your rulers.

Acts 3:17 This is one ground of excuse. The second is of a different kind. As Joseph speaks to his brethren, God did send me before you Genesis 45:5; what in the former speech he had briefly said, in the words, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken,-- this he here enlarges upon: But what God before had showed by the mouth of all His Prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has so fulfilled. Acts 3:18 At the same time showing, that it was not of their doing, if this be proved, that it took place after God's counsel.

He alludes to those words with which they had reviled Him on the Cross, namely Let Him deliver Him, if He will have Him; for He said, I am the Son of God. If He trust in God, let Him now come down from the cross. Matthew 27:42-43 O foolish men, were these idle words? It must needs so come to pass, and the prophets bear witness thereunto. Therefore if He descended not, it was for no weakness of His own that He did not come down, but for very power. And Peter puts this by way of apology for the Jews, hoping that they may also close with what he says.

He has so fulfilled, he says. Do you see now how he refers everything to that source? Repent ye therefore, he says, and be converted. He does not add, from your sins; but, that your sins, may be blotted out, means the same thing. And then he adds the gain: So shall the times of refreshing come from the

presence of the Lord. Acts 3:19 This betokens them in a sad state, brought low by many wars. For it is to the case of one on fire, and craving comfort, that the expression applies.

And see now how he advances. In his first sermon, he but slightly hinted at the resurrection, and Christ's sitting in heaven; but here he also speaks of His visible advent. And He shall send Jesus the Christ ordained (for you), Whom the heaven must (i.e. must of necessity) receive, until the times of the restitution of all things. The reason why He does not now come is clear. Which God has spoken, he continues, by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like me; him shall you hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Before, he had spoken of David, here he speaks of Moses. Of all things, he says, which He has spoken. But he does not say, which Christ, but, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. (v. 20-21.) Then he betakes him to the ground of credibility, saying, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like me; Him shall you hear in all things. And then the greatness of the punishment: And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

Yea, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those that follow, after, as many as have spoken have likewise foretold of these days. (v. 23-24.) He has done well to set the distinction here. For whenever he says anything great, he appeals to them of old. And he found a text which contained both truths; just as in the other discourse he said, Until He put His foes under His feet. Acts 2:35 The remarkable circumstance is, that the two things stand together; that is, subjection and disobedience, and the punishment.

Like unto me, he says. Then why are you alarmed? You are the children of the prophets Acts 3:25: so that to you they spoke, and for your sakes have all these things come to pass. For as they deemed that through their outrage they had become alienated (and indeed there is no parity of reason, that He Who now is crucified, should now cherish them as His own), he proves to them that both the one and the other are in accordance with prophecy. You are the children, he says, of the Prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, 'And in your seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.'

Unto you first, he continues, God having raised up His Son (τὸν Παῖδα) sent Him. To others indeed also, but to you first who crucified Him. To bless you, he adds, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities. Acts 3:26

Now let us consider again more minutely what has been read out. (Recapitulation.) In the first place, he establishes the point that the miracle was performed by them ; saying, Why marvel ye? And he will not let the assertion be disbelieved: and to give it more weight, he anticipates their judgment. Why look ye, he says, so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? Acts 3:12 If this troubles and confounds you, learn Who was the Doer, and be not amazed.

And observe how on all occasions when he refers to God, and says that all things are from Him, then he fearlessly chides them: as above where he said, A man approved of God among you. Acts 2:22 And on all occasions he reminds them of the outrage they had committed, in order that the fact of the Resurrection may be established. But here he also subjoins something else; for he no more says, of Nazareth, but what? The God of our fathers has glorified His Servant Jesus. Acts 3:13 Observe also the modesty.

He reproached them not, neither did he say at once, Believe then now: behold, a man that has been forty years lame, has been raised up through the name of Jesus Christ. This he did not say, for it would have excited opposition. On the contrary, he begins by commending them for admiring the deed, and again calls them after their ancestor: You men of Israel. Moreover, he does not say, It was Jesus that healed him: but, The God of our fathers has glorified, etc. But then, lest they should say, How can this stand to reason -- that God should glorify the transgressor?

Therefore he reminds them of the judgment before Pilate, showing that, would they but consider, He was no transgressor; else Pilate had not wished to release Him. And he does not say, when Pilate was desirous, but, was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One, etc. (v. 13-14.) Him who had killed others, you asked to be released; Him Who quickens them that are killed, you did not wish to have! And that they might not ask again, How should it be that God now glorifies Him, when before He gave no assistance?

He brings forward the prophets, testifying that so it behooved to be. But those things which God before had showed, etc., infra Acts 3:18 Then, lest they should suppose that God's dispensation was their own apology, first he reproveth them. Moreover, that the denying Him to Pilate's face, was no ordinary thing; seeing that he wished to release Him. And that you cannot deny this, the man who was asked in preference to Him is witness against you. This also is part of a deep dispensation.

Here it shows their shamelessness and effrontery; that a Gentile, one who saw Him for the first time, should have discharged Him, though he had heard nothing striking; while they who had been brought up among His miracles, have done the very opposite! For, as he has said, When he (Pilate) had determined to let Him go, that it may not be imagined that he did this of favor, we read, And he said, It is a custom with you to release one prisoner: will you therefore that I release unto you this man?

Matthew 27:15 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just. Mark 15:6 He does not say, You delivered up; but everywhere, You denied. For, said they, We have no king but Cæsar. John 19:15 And he does not say only, You did not beg off the innocent, and, You denied Him but, You slew Him. While they were hardened, he refrained from such language; but when their minds are most moved, then he strikes home, now that they are in a condition to feel it. For just as when men are drunk we say nothing to them, but when they are sober, and are recovered from their intoxication then we chide them; thus did Peter: when they were able to understand his words, then he also sharpened his tongue, alleging against them many charges; that, Whom God had glorified, they had delivered up; Whom Pilate would have acquitted they denied to his face; that they preferred the robber before Him.

Observe again how he speaks covertly concerning Christ's power, showing that He raised Himself: just as in his first discourse he had said, Because it was not possible that He should be holden of it Acts 2:24, so here he says, And killed the Prince of Life. Acts 3:15 It follows that the Life He had was not from another. The prince (or author) of evil would be he that first brought forth evil; the prince or author of murder, he who first originated murder; so also the Prince (or Author) of Life must be He Who has Life from Himself.

Whom God raised up, he continues: and now that he has uttered this, he adds, And his name, upon faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know; yea, the faith which is by Him has given Him this perfect soundness. [The faith which is by Him ■ δι■ α■το■ π■στις .] And yet it was ■ ε■ς α■τ■ν πιστις, the faith which is in Him (as its object) that did all. For the Apostles did not say, By the name, but, In the name, and it was in Him (ε■ς α■τ■ν) that the man believed.

But they did not yet make bold to use the expression, The faith which is in Him. For, that the phrase By Him should not be too low, observe that after saying, Upon the faith of His name, he adds, His name has made him strong, and then it is that he says, Yea, the faith which is by Him has given him this perfect soundness. Observe how he implies, that in the  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \kappa\epsilon\iota\ \nu\omicron$  former expression also Whom God raised up, he did but condescend to their low attainments. For that Person needed not Another's help for His rising again, Whose Name raised up a lame man, being all one as dead.

Mark how on all occasions he adduces their own testimony. Thus above, he said, As ye yourselves also know; and, In the midst of you: and here again, Whom ye see and know: in the presence of you all. Acts 2:22 And yet that it was, In His name, they knew not: but they did know that the man was lame, that he stands there whole. They that had wrought the deed themselves confessed, that it was not by their own power, but by that of Christ. And had this assertion been unfounded, had they not been truly persuaded themselves that Christ had risen again, they would not have sought to establish the honor of a dead man instead of their own, especially while the eyes of the multitude were upon them.

Then, when their minds were alarmed, immediately he encourages them, by the appellation of Brethren, And now, brethren, I know, etc. For in the former discourse he foretold nothing, but only says concerning Christ, Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly: here he adds an admonition. There he waited till the people spoke: here, he knew how much they had already effected, and that the present assembly was better disposed toward them. That through ignorance you did it.

And yet the circumstances mentioned above were not to be put to the score of ignorance. To choose the robber, to reject Him Who had been adjudged to be acquitted, to desire even to destroy Him -- how should this be referred to ignorance? Nevertheless, he gives them liberty to deny it, and to change their mind about what had happened. Now this indeed, that you put to death the innocent, you knew: but that you were killing the Prince of Life, this, belike, you did not know. And he exculpated not them alone, but also the chief contrivers of the evil, ye and your rulers: for doubtless it would have roused their opposition, had he gone off into accusation.

For the evil-doer, when you accuse him of some wickedness that he has done, in his endeavor to exonerate himself, grows more vehement. And he no longer says, You crucified, You killed, but, You did it; leading them to seek for pardon. If those rulers did it through ignorance, much more did these present. But these things which God before had showed, etc. Acts 3:18 But it is remarkable, that both in the first and in the second discourse, speaking to the same effect, that is, in the former, By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; and in this, God before had showed that Christ should suffer; in neither does he adduce any particular text in proof.

The fact is, that each one of such passages is accompanied with many accusations, and with mention of the punishment in store for them [as]; I will deliver up, says one, the wicked in requital for His grave, and the rich in return for His death. Isaiah 53:9 And again, \* \* \* Those things, he says, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He has so fulfilled. It shows the greatness of that counsel, in that all spoke of it, and not one only.

It does not follow, because the event was through ignorance, that it took place irrespectively of God's ordinance. See how great is the Wisdom of God, when it uses the wickedness of others to bring about that which must be. He has fulfilled, he says: that they may not imagine that anything at all is wanting; for whatsoever Christ must needs suffer, has been fulfilled. But do not think, that, because the Prophets said

this, and because you did it through ignorance, this suffices to your exculpation.

However, he does not express himself thus, but in milder terms says, Repent ye therefore. Acts 3:19 Why? For either it was through ignorance, or by the dispensation of God. That your sins may be blotted out. I do not mean the crimes committed at the Crucifixion; perhaps they were through ignorance; but so that your other sins may be blotted out: this only. So shall the times of refreshing come unto you. Here he speaks of the Resurrection, obscurely. For those are indeed times of refreshing, which Paul also looked for, when he said, We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened. 2 Corinthians 5:4 Then to prove that Christ is the cause of the days of refreshing, he says, And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was for you ordained.

Acts 3:20 He said not, That your sin may be blotted out, but, your sins; for he hints at that sin also. He shall send. And whence? Whom the heaven must receive. Acts 3:21 Still [must] receive? And why not simply, Whom the heaven has received? This, as if discoursing of old times: so, he says, it is divinely ordered, so it is settled: not a word yet of His eternal subsistence.-- For Moses indeed said to the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord raise up for you: Him shall you hear in all things that He shall speak unto you: and having said, All things which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets, Acts 3:22 now indeed he brings in Christ Himself.

For, if He predicted many things and it is necessary to hear Him, one would not be wrong in saying that the Prophets have spoken these things. But, besides, he wishes to show that the Prophets did predict the same things. And, if any one will look closely into the matter, he will find these things spoken in the Old Testament, obscurely indeed, but nevertheless spoken. Who was purposely designed, says he: in Whom there is nothing novel. Here he also alarms them, by the thought that much remains to be fulfilled.

But if so, how says he, Hath fulfilled? Acts 3:18 The things which it was necessary that Christ should suffer, are fulfilled: the things which must come to pass, not yet. A prophet shall the Lord God raise up for you from among your brethren, like me. This would most conciliate them. Do you observe the sprinkling of low matters and high, side by side -- that He Who was to go up into the heavens should be like Moses? And yet it was a great thing too. For in fact He was not simply like Moses, if so be that every soul which will not hear shall be destroyed.

And one might mention numberless other things which show that He was not like Moses; so that it is a mighty text that he has handled. God shall raise Him up unto you, says Moses, from among your brethren, etc.: consequently Moses himself threatens those that should not hear. Yea, and all the prophets, etc.: all this is calculated to attract Yea, and all the prophets, says the Apostle, from Samuel. He refrains from enumerating them singly, not to make his discourse too long; but having alleged that decisive testimony of Moses, he passes by the rest.

You, he says, are the children of the Prophets, and of the covenant which God made. Acts 3:25 Children of the covenant; that is, heirs. For lest they should think that they received this offer from the favor of Peter, he shows, that of old it was due to them, in order that they may the rather believe that such also is the will of God. Unto you first, he continues, God having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him. Acts 3:26 He does not say simply, Unto you He sent His Son, but also, after the resurrection, and when He had been crucified.

For that they may not suppose that he himself granted them this favor, and not the Father, he says, To bless you. For if He is your Brother, and blesses you, the affair is a promise. Unto you first. That is, so far

are you from having no share in these blessings, that He would have you become moreover promoters and authors of them to others. For you are not to feel like castaways. Having raised up: again, the Resurrection. In turning away, he says, every one of you from his iniquities.

In this way He blesses you: not in a general way. And what kind of blessing is this? A great one. For of course not the turning a man away from his iniquities is itself sufficient to remit them also. And if it is not sufficient to remit, how should it be to confer a blessing? For it is not to be supposed that the transgressor becomes immediately also blessed; he is simply released from his sins. But this, Like unto me, would no wise apply. Hear ye Him, he says; and not this alone, but he adds, And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

When he has shown them that they had sinned, and has imparted forgiveness to them, and promised good things, then indeed, then he says, Moses also says the same thing. What sort of connection is this: Until the times of the restitution; and then to introduce Moses, saying, that all that Christ said shall come to pass? Then also, on the other hand, he says, as matter of encomium (so that for this reason also ye ought to obey): You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant: i.e. heirs.

Then why do you stand affected towards that which is your own, as if it were another's? True, you have done deeds worthy of condemnation; still you may yet obtain pardon. Having said this, with reason he is now able to say, Unto you God sent his Son Jesus to bless you. He says not, To save you, but what is greater; that the crucified Jesus blessed His crucifiers.

Let us then also imitate Him. Let us cast out that spirit of murder and enmity. It is not enough not to retaliate (for even in the Old Dispensation this was exemplified); but let us do all as we would for bosom-friends, as we would for ourselves so for those who have injured us. We are followers of Him, we are His disciples, who after being crucified, sets everything in action in behalf of his murderers, and sends out His Apostles to this end. And yet we have often suffered justly; but those acted not only unjustly, but impiously; for He was their Benefactor, He had done no evil, and they crucified Him. And for what reason? For the sake of their reputation. But He Himself made them objects of reverence. The scribes and the pharisees sit in Moses' seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that do ye, but after their works do ye not. Matthew 23:2 And again in another place, Go your way, show yourself to the priest. Matthew 8:4 Besides, when He might have destroyed them, He saves them. Let us then imitate Him, and let no one be an enemy, no one a foe, except to the devil.

Not a little does the habit of not swearing contribute to this end: I mean to the not giving way to wrath: and by not giving way to wrath, we shall not have an enemy either. Lop off the oaths of a man, and you have clipt the wings of his anger, you have smothered all his passion. Swearing, it is said, is as the wind to wrath. Lower the sails; no need of sails, when there is no wind. If then we do not clamor, and do not swear, we have cut the sinews of passion. And if you doubt this, just put it to experiment. Impose it as a law upon the passionate man that he shall never swear, and you will have no necessity of preaching moderation to him. So the whole business is finished. For even though you do not forswear yourselves [yet], by swearing at all, do you not know in what absurd consequences you involve yourselves -- binding yourselves to an absolute necessity and as with a cord, and putting yourselves to all manner of shifts, as men studying how to rescue their soul from an evil which there is no escaping, or, failing of that, obliged [by that self-imposed necessity] to spend your life thenceforth in vexation, in quarrels, and to curse your wrath? But all is in vain, and to no purpose. Threaten, be peremptory (δυναμις), do all, whatever it be, without swearing; [so]: it is in your power to reverse (ναλιστα) both what you have said and what you

have done if you have the mind. Thus on the present day I must needs speak more gently to you. For since you have heard me, and the greater part of the reformation is achieved by you, now then let us see for what purpose the taking of oaths was introduced, and why allowed to be. In relating to you their first origin, and when they were conceived, and how, and by whom we shall give you this account in requital for your obedience. For it is fit that he who has made his practice right, should be taught the philosophy of the matter, but he who is not yet doing the right, is not worthy to be told the history.

They made many covenants in Abraham's time, and slew victims, and offered sacrifices, and as yet oaths were not. Whence then did they come in? When evil increased, when all was confusion, upside down, when men had turned aside to idolatry: then it was, then, when men appeared no longer worthy to be believed, that they called God as witness, as if thereby giving an adequate surety for what they said. Such in fact is the Oath: it is a security where men's principles cannot be trusted.

So that in the indictment of the swearer the first charge is this -- that he is not to be trusted without a surety, and a great surety too: for such is the exceeding faithlessness, that they ask not man as surety, but will needs have God! Secondly, the same charge lies against him who receives the oath: that, in a question of compact, he must drag in God for warranty, and refuse to be satisfied unless he get Him. O the excessive stupidity, the insolence of such conduct! Thou, a worm, earth and dust, and ashes, and vapor, to drag in your Lord as the surety, and to compel the other to drag Him in likewise!

Tell me, if your servants were disputing with each other, and exchanging assurances with each other, and the fellow-servant should declare that for his part he would not be satisfied till he had their common master given him for surety, would he not have stripes given him without number, and be made to know that the master is for other purposes, and not to be put to any such use as this? Why do I speak of a fellow-servant? For should he choose any respectable person, would not that person consider it an affront?

But I do not wish to do this, say you. Well: then do not compel the other to do so either: since where men only are in question, this is done -- if your party says, I give such an one as my surety, you do not allow him. What then, say you, am I to lose what I have given? I am not speaking of this; but that you allow him to insult God. For which reason greater shall be the inevitable punishment to him who forces the oath upon another, than to him who takes it: the same holds with regard to him who gives an oath when no one asks him.

And what makes it worse, is, that every one is ready to swear, for one farthing, for some petty item, for his own injustice. All this may be said, when there is no perjury; but if perjury follow in the train, both he that imposes and he that takes the oath have turned everything upside down. But there are some things, you will say, which are unknown. Well take these into account, and do nothing negligently; but, if you do act negligently, take the loss to yourself as your punishment.

It is better to be the loser thus, than in a very different way. For tell me -- you force a man to take an oath, with what expectation? That he will forswear himself? But this is utter insanity; and the judgment will fall upon your own head; better you should lose your money, than he be lost. Why act thus to your own detriment, and to the insulting of God? This is the spirit of a wild beast, and of an impious man. But you do this in the expectation that he will not forswear himself?

Then trust him without the oath. Nay, there are many, you reply, who in the absence of an oath would presume to defraud; but, once the oath taken, would refrain. You deceive yourself, man. A man having

once learned to steal, and to wrong his neighbor, will presume full oft to trample upon his oath; if on the contrary he shrinks from swearing, he will much more shrink from injustice. But he is influenced against his will. Well then, he deserves pardon.

But why am I speaking of this kind of oaths, while I pass over those in the market-place? For as regards these last, you can urge none of these pleas. For ten farthings you there have swearing and forswearing. In fact, because the thunderbolt does not actually fall from heaven, because all things are not overthrown, you stand holding God in your bonds: to get a few vegetables, a pair of shoes, for a little matter of money, calling Him to witness. What is the meaning of this?

Do not let us imagine, that because we are not punished, therefore we do not sin; this comes of God's mercy; not of our merit. Let your oath be an imprecation upon your own child, upon your own self: say, Else let the hangman lash my ribs. But you dare not. Is God less valuable than your ribs? Is He less precious than your pate? Say Else let me be struck blind. But no. Christ so spares us, that He will not let us swear even by our own head; and yet we so little spare the honor of God, that on all occasions we must drag Him in!

You know not what God is, and with what sort of lips he behooves to be invoked. Why, when we speak of any man of eminent worth, we say, First wash your mouth, and then make mention of him: and yet, that precious Name which is above every name, the Name which is marvellous in all the earth, the Name which devils hear and tremble, we haul about as we list! Oh! The force of habit! Thereby has that Name become cheap. No doubt, if you impose on any one the necessity of coming into the sacred edifice to take his oath there, you feel that you have made the oath an awful one.

And yet how is it that it seems awful in this way, but because we have been in the habit of using that at random, but not this? For ought not a shudder of awe to be felt when God is but named? But now, whereas among the Jews His Name was held to be so reverend, that it was written upon plates, and none was allowed to wear the characters except the high-priest alone: we bandy about His Name like any ordinary word. If simply to name God was not allowed to all; to call Him to witness, what audacity is it! nay, what madness!

For if need were (rather than this) to fling away all that you have, ought you not readily to part with all? Behold, I solemnly declare and testify; reform these oaths of the forum, these superfluous oaths, sacrificest thou thy brother?.... sacrificest him in the midst of the Church, and that, with the death to come, the death which dieth not? Was the Church made for this, that we should come there to take oaths? No, but that we should pray there. Does the Table stand there, that we should make men swear thereby?

No, it stands there that we may lose sins, not that we may bind them. But do thou, if nothing else, at least reverence the very Volume which thou holdest forth to the other to swear by: the very Gospel which thou, taking in thine hands, biddest the other make oath thereby,--open it, read what Christ there saith concerning oaths, and shudder, and desist."--Here, he forbids the sacristans to admit persons for any such purpose. "Let such be brought to me, since I must needs be the person to be troubled with these things, as if you were little children, needing to be taught such a simple matter as this."--> and bring to me all those who wish to take them.

Behold, in the presence of this assembly, I charge those who are set apart for the tending of the Houses of Prayer, I exhort and issue order to them, that no person be allowed to take such oaths at his own discretion: or rather, that none be allowed to swear in any other way, but that the person be brought to me,

whosoever he be, since even for these matters less will not serve but they must needs come before us, just as if one had to do with little children. May there be no occasion!

It is a shame in some things still to need to be taught. Do you dare to touch the Holy Table, being a person unbaptized? No, but what is still worse, you the baptized dare to lay your hand upon the Holy Table, which not even all ordained persons are allowed to touch, and so to take your oath. Now you would not go and lay your hand upon the head of your child, and yet do you touch the Table, and not shudder, not feel afraid? Bring these men to me; I will judge, and send them away rejoicing, both the one and the other.

Do what you choose; I lay it down as a law that there be no swearing at all. What hope of salvation, while we thus make all to have been done in vain? Is this the end of your bills, and your bonds, that you should sacrifice your own soul? What gain do you get so great as the loss? Has he forsworn himself? You have undone both him and yourself. But has he not? Even so still you have undone (both), by forcing him to transgress the commandment. Let us cast out this disease from the soul: at any rate let us drive it out of the forum, out of our shops, out of our other work-places; our profits will but be the greater.

Do not imagine that the success of your worldly plans is to be ensured by transgressions of the Divine laws. But he refuses to trust me, say you; and in fact I have sometimes heard this said by some: Unless I swear oaths without number, the man will not trust me. Yes, and for this you may thank yourself, because you are so off-hand with your oaths. For were it not so, but on the contrary were it clear to all men that you do not swear, take my word for it, you would be more readily believed upon your mere nod, than those are who swallow oaths by thousands.

For look now: which do you more readily believe? Me who do not swear, or those that do swear? Yes, say you, but then you are ruler and bishop. Then suppose I prove to you that it is not only for that reason? Answer me with truth, I beseech you; were I in the habit of perpetually swearing, would my office stand me in that stead? Not a whit. Do you see that it is not for this reason? And what do you gain at all? Answer me that. Paul endured hunger; do you then also choose to hunger rather than to transgress one of the commandments of God.

Why are you so unbelieving? Here are you, ready to do and suffer all things for the sake of not swearing: and shall not He reward you? Shall He, Who sustains day by day both takers and breakers of oaths, give you over to hunger, when you have obeyed Him? Let all men see, that of those who assemble in this Church not one is a swearer. By this also let us become manifest, and not by our creed alone; let us have this mark also to distinguish us both from the Gentiles and from all men.

Let us receive it as a seal from heaven, that we may everywhere be seen to be the King's own flock. By our mouth and tongue let us be known, in the first place, just as the barbarians are by theirs: even as those who speak Greek are distinguished from barbarians, so let us be known. Answer me: the birds which are said to be parrots, how are they known to be parrots? Is it not by speaking like men? Let us then be known by speaking like the Apostles; by speaking like the Angels.

If any one bid you swear tell him, Christ has spoken, and I do not swear. This is enough to make a way for all virtue to come in. It is a gate to religion, a high road leading to the philosophy of piety; a kind of training-school. These things let us observe, that we may obtain also the future blessings, through the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, to Whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost together be glory, power and honor, now and ever, world without end. Amen.

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