



Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew (I - XLV)

St. John Chrysostom

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The Homilies of St. Chrysostom on St. Matthew were undoubtedly delivered at Antioch (see Hom. vii. p. 43) and probably in the latter part of the time during which he preached as a Presbyter. Montfaucon considers his little mention of the sin of swearing a sign of his having accomplished some reformation on that point by his previous exertions. In the Homilies delivered from 386 to 388, it is a constant topic; and the Homilies known to belong to that date are so numerous, as scarcely leave room for such a series as the present. These, however, contain very little to mark the period to which they belong. The argument from his reference to dissensions some time gone by, possibly those between St. Meletius and Paulinus and Evagrius, in commenting on St. Matt. xxiii. 6. is not very conclusive. A modern reader must sometimes be struck with finding in St. Chrysostom a kind of criticism, which we are apt to think belongs only to later times. His main object, however, is moral, and he searches out with diligence both the meaning and the applications of particular passages, usually concluding with an eloquent exhortation to some special virtue. Some of the most remarkable of these exhortations are on the subject of Alms-giving, which he seems to have pressed with some success at laSt. His calculation in Hom. lxvi. as to what might be done, is somewhat curious. In the end of Hom. lxxxviii. he demands a reformation as the condition of his entering on the controversy with Infidels. In the next Homily he discusses the evidence of the Resurrection with nearly the same arguments as would still be used against an objector. The Theatres are the theme of his frequent reprobation, and the Monks of the mountains near Antioch of his praise. In Hom. lxix. and lxx. he describes their mode of life as an edifying example to all. He frequently attacks the Anomoean or extreme Arian Heresy, and sometimes also the Manichaeism. It is perhaps worth while to recollect the nearly contemporaneous prevalence of Manichaeism in the West, as it appears in the early history of St. Augustine. In Hom. lxxxvi. there are some remarks on the device of Satan by which evil is introduced by little and little, which are worthy of consideration as applicable to the growth of erroneous doctrine and practice within the Church.

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