

*Orthodox Mission: Religious Diplomacy of the 4th  
century AD by St. John Chrysostom*

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**Christian Mission: Salvation Notice**

Mission is of the very nature of the Church itself, not merely as one of its functions, but as eminently the Theology of Love in practice. The fact of the commandment of the evangelization of the people by the very mouth of Jesus Christ, makes a deposit about the true Love of God-Creator towards the Creation. But it presupposes love and warmth in the heart of the true Christian, in order to warn and take care of the transmission of the joyful message of salvation to all fellow human beings. Not only for those outside a flock but also for those inside. The care of faith must never cease and fade. The great Father of our Church and his Orthodox missionary work can be seen from the perspective of the development of “International Relations” between the Eastern Roman Empire and the neighboring people, as can be seen from his surviving letters, from the members of these missions, as well as from other sources.

**Short Biography of Bishop John Chrysostom**

Saint John Chrysostom was born around 344 AD in Antioch, Syria by Greek parents. His father, who was a senior officer in the Roman army, was called Secundus and his mother Anthousa. He received his first upbringing and circular education in Antioch, where his father died prematurely. He was taught Greek grammar, rhetoric - from the famous sophist Livanios - and philosophy from the famous Andragathios<sup>[1]</sup>. To complete his circular education, he traveled to Athens to study Philosophy.

When his mother died, he was then able to become a monk and practiced asceticism in the desert of Antioch for four years. As an elder, he developed a strong literary and pastoral activity, in order to fight the heretics of the time (Arians, Eunomians), the Jews who joined the Christians, the rich and the various bodies that were responsible for the moral decline of the city. He also established charitable institutions, such as nursing homes for poor and elders, and established meal donations.

In February 398, with the consent of the clergy and the people, he was ordained Archbishop of Constantinople by Theophilus of Alexandria. From this position he develops a wide range of pastoral, social and charitable work. Abolishes all luxury in the church and gives money to works of love. Keeping the Apostolic teaching authentic, he organized missions to the lands of the Goths, Scythians, Celts, Sassanid Persians and Phoenicians. He provoked a number of reactions from those affected by his audit sermon. The culmination was the control of Empress Eudoxia. Eventually, an exile order was issued and he left the city secretly, so as not to cause bloodshed. From the hardships and diseases he will pass away on September 14th, 407 AD in Komana of Pontus.

## **Missionary Action of Bishop John Chrysostom**

After the Second Ecumenical Council (381 AD), Orthodoxy was proclaimed the official doctrine of the Empire. This change within the Empire, at the same time brought about changes in the exercise of foreign religious policy. Thus, the Christian faith spread early among the Goths, initially from the Christian captives they had taken from Cappadocia when they were still in the northern Caucasus. At the same time, the Goth soldiers who served as mercenaries in the Byzantine army were greatly influenced by Christianity. Emperor Constantine, already after his victory against the Goths and Sarmatians, became interested in their Christianization[2].

In the context of this change, the intense apostolic action developed by John Chrysostom in the last years of the 4th century is placed. In an effort to convert the Goths, who lived in Constantinople, to the Orthodox faith or to convert their Martian orthodox people to Orthodoxy, he founded the Gothic Catholic Church in the capital, which was served by the Goths, who were often presided over by elders and deacons[3]. He often taught himself with the help of an interpreter. Characteristic are excerpts from one of his speeches, during the Easter of 399 AD, on the call of nationalists and barbarians to Christianity, weaving the praises of Gothic piety[4]. These moves indicated his tireless efforts for the smooth integration of foreigners – formerly hostile tribes – as residents of Constantinople, as well as their solidarity with the people of the capital[5]. For the better development of the Mission in the Goths of

Asia, he ordained a Goth named Unilas as Bishop[6].

Chrysostom takes similar action for Phoenicia, after receiving information about their obsession with paganism. Thus, he selected missionaries based on their exemplary divine zeal to send to the Phoenicians[7]. However, they repeatedly attacked the missionaries and destroyed their temples and homes. Chrysostom did his best to strengthen the Mission with more inspired people and supplies. In August of 404, when he begins his journey of exile, he writes a letter to the elder Constantius, who had the responsibility in the Mission of Phoenicia, to strengthen him. He begs him to be informed constantly and densely about the course of his work[8]. He sends most of his supplies to them. With the help of Elder Roufinos and the financial support of Chrysostom, the Christian temples were rebuilt, and the predominance of Christianity was final in Phoenicia.

The largely unknown aspect of Chrysostom's missionary activity in Persia is also of great interest to research, as he is considered one of the pioneers of the Christianization of the people of Persia along with the bishop Maruthas of Martyropolis[9] (a city on the border of Mesopotamia and Persia). The latter had in fact taken part in the Council of the Oak[10], where he testified against John Chrysostom. The fact that Maruthas became a bishop based in Seleucia-Ctesiphon (capital of the Sassanid Persian state) a few years after the death of Chrysostom, testifies that the role of the two men was decisive in shaping the hierarchy of the Christian Church in Persia at the consultation of Seleucia in 410 AD.

There may have been political exploitation of Chrysostom's missionary activity in Persia, since during 421-422 we have a war between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Persians due to the widespread persecution of the Persian Christians, although the emperor Varamis V' stopped the persecutions and punished many high priests of Zoroastrianism[11]. Chrysostom seems to have acted as an intermediary between the two sides – Eastern Rome and Persia – at the level of ecclesiastical and religious figures. This is the legacy of St. John Chrysostom: Ascetic and ecclesiastical mind, humbleness, love for the Lord and a particularly intelligent man who advocated the ideal of honest and sincere diplomacy.

## Conclusion

The Christian faith as a regional giant - because of the Eastern Roman Empire - set its own strategy, because of its unique place in history, culture and geography. It was natural not to cling to trivial things. Existing at crossroads between East and West, passed through fire and iron not accepting the earthly limited in time clash of civilizations. It is possible for us now to look back and find ways on how to overcome these clashes, since still in our time there is great thirst for spirituality and religious faith without intolerance. The rise of fundamentalism

- then and now - has made and continues to emphasize the goal of unity between East and West.

## References

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- [4] John Chrysostom, speech VIII, PG 63, 499-510.
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