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JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AND  
THE HERMENEUTICS OF EXEMPLAR PORTRAITS

PAK-WAH LAI

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGION  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

2010

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## ABSTRACT

One of the most prevalent features in John Chrysostom's writings is his numerous portrayals of exemplar figures. In this thesis, we will argue that these exemplar portraits are largely determined by the literary strategies and analytical frameworks propounded by two major traditions: the Greco-Roman tradition of *paideia*, philosophical ethics, biography and rhetoric, and the Christian tradition. When due attention is paid to the strategies of exemplar discourse in both traditions, a hermeneutics of exemplar portraits may be developed. Such a hermeneutical approach will not only elucidate Chrysostom's pedagogical and ideological objectives for these portraits, but, more importantly, deepen our understanding of his ethics and theology as a whole. As our analysis of his portrayals of King David, the apostle Paul, Christian ascetics and martyrs show us, Chrysostom's ethical framework is greatly indebted to the Greco-Roman tradition of virtue ethics. Furthermore, the approaches that Chrysostom adopts to present his exemplars also rely heavily on the narrative strategies and rhetorical techniques bequeathed to him by the Late Antique biographical and rhetorical traditions. Having said this, the forms that his exemplar portraits take are also distinctively Christian because they declare powerfully Chrysostom's soteriological convictions, namely, that Christian salvation is nothing less than the transcendence of one's human limitations by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that one can participate in Christ's deified life in the human body and live a life that is not dissimilar to the angels. In the case of his martyr portraits, the articulation of this soteriological and ethical vision would compel Chrysostom to introduce two innovations to his rhetorical approach, namely, the reconception of the martyr as an icon of God's grace and power, and a new emphasis on his audiences' identification, imitation and veneration of the martyr.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professors Andrew Louth and Carol Harrison, for their wise guidance and encouraging support during the course of my doctoral studies. I am also grateful for Professor James Houston, whose teachings first catalyzed my love for the church fathers and whose friendship and encouragement spurred me on this journey in Patristic studies. My appreciation goes also to Vincent Ooi, Derek and Carolyn Rochester, Leo and Miranda Li, and the many friends of our weekly Chinese Bible Study group, whose friendships have made our stay in Durham a memorable experience. My deepest gratitude goes to members of my family: my mother and sister, Chen Woon, whose sacrificial support enabled me to pursue this dream in the first place; my wife, Rina, whose love, patience and continual support made this academic sojourn more than a delight; and my children, Fide and Isaiah, whose joyful companionship never ceases to remind me that spiritual knowledge only *becomes* wisdom when it is worked out in the laughter, humour, tears and demands of our everyday lives.

To Rina, Fide and Isaiah

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### *Abbreviations of Ancient Works Cited*

	<i>1En.</i>	<i>1Enoch</i>
	<i>Epis. Diog.</i>	<i>epistula ad Diognetum</i>
	<i>Act. Eupli</i>	<i>acta Eupli</i>
	<i>mart. Apoll.</i>	<i>acta et martyrium Apollonii</i>
	<i>hist. monach.</i>	<i>historia monachorum in Aegypto</i>
	<i>mart. Ag. Ir. Ch.</i>	<i>martyrium Agapae, Irenae, Chionae et sodalium</i>
	<i>mart. Das.</i>	<i>martyrium Dasii</i>
	<i>mart. Pion.</i>	<i>martyrium Pionii presbyteri et sodalium</i>
	<i>mart. Poly.</i>	<i>martyrium Polycarpi</i>
	<i>Pass. Perpet.</i>	<i>Passio Perpetuae et Felicitatis</i>
Anaximenes	<i>Rh. Al.</i>	<i>Rhetorica ad Alexandrum</i>
Aphthonius	<i>prog.</i>	<i>progymnasmata</i>
Aristotle	<i>Eth. Nic.</i>	<i>Ethica nicomachea</i>
	<i>Rh.</i>	<i>Rhetorica</i>
Athanasius	<i>CA</i>	<i>contra Arianos</i>
	<i>CG</i>	<i>contra Gentes</i>
	<i>De Inc.</i>	<i>de incarnatione</i>
	<i>Ep. Serap.</i>	<i>epistula Serapion</i>
	<i>hist. Arian.</i>	<i>Historia Arianorum</i>
	<i>V. Ant.</i>	<i>Vita Antonii</i>
Augustine	<i>Conf.</i>	<i>Confessions</i>
Basil of Caesarea	<i>ad adul.</i>	<i>ad adulescentes</i>
	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
	<i>hom. indiv.</i>	<i>homilia de individua</i>
	<i>hom. Ps.</i>	<i>homiliae super Psalmos</i>
	<i>De Sp. S</i>	<i>de spiritu sancto</i>
Cicero	<i>Acad.</i>	<i>Academica</i>
	<i>DF</i>	<i>de finibus</i>
	<i>TD</i>	<i>tusculanae disputationes</i>
Clement of Rome	<i>1Clem.</i>	<i>1Clement</i>
Clement of Alexandria	<i>Protr.</i>	<i>Protrepticus</i>
Diogenes Laertius	<i>Vit. Phil.</i>	<i>Vitae philosophorum</i>
Eusebius of Caesarea	<i>hist.</i>	<i>historia ecclesiastica</i>
George of Alexandria	<i>vita Joh. Chrys.</i>	<i>de vita sancti Joannis Chrysostomi</i>
Gregory of Nazianzus	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
	<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
Gregory of Nyssa	<i>C. Eunom.</i>	<i>Contra Eunomium</i>
	<i>Or. Cat.</i>	<i>Oratio Catechetica Magna</i>
	<i>virg.</i>	<i>De Virginitate</i>
	<i>s. Thdr.</i>	<i>de sancto Theodoro</i>
Herodotus	<i>Herod.</i>	
Homer	<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
	<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssea</i>
Iamblichus	<i>VP</i>	<i>Vita Pythagorae</i>

Ignatius of Antioch	<i>Rom.</i>	<i>ad Romanos</i>
	<i>Sym.</i>	<i>ad Smyrnaeos</i>
Irenaeus	<i>AH</i>	<i>adversus haereses</i>
Isidore of Pelusium	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>epistolarum libri quinque</i>
Isocrates	<i>Anti.</i>	<i>Antidosis</i>
	<i>Or.</i>	<i>orationes</i>
John Chrysostom	<i>Bab. Jul. et gen.</i>	<i>De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles</i>
	<i>Barl. mart.</i>	<i>in sanctum Barlaam martyrem</i>
	<i>Ber. et Pros.</i>	<i>de sanctis Bernice et Prodoce</i>
	<i>comp.</i>	<i>comparatio regis et monachi</i>
	<i>comm. Job</i>	<i>commentarius in Job</i>
	<i>compunct. 1</i>	<i>ad Demetrium de compunctione (lib. 1)</i>
	<i>compunct. 2</i>	<i>ad Stelechium de compunctione (lib. 2)</i>
	<i>Dav. et Sau.</i>	<i>de Davide et Saule</i>
	<i>Dros. mart.</i>	<i>de sancta Droside martyre</i>
	<i>Eus. Ant.</i>	<i>in sanctum Eustathium Antiochenum</i>
	<i>Elez. sep. puer.</i>	<i>de Eleazaro et septem pueris</i>
	<i>exp. Ps.</i>	<i>expositiones in Psalmos</i>
	<i>hier. Bab.</i>	<i>de sancto hieromartyre Babyla</i>
	<i>s. hier. Phoca</i>	<i>de sancto hieromartyre Phoca</i>
	<i>hom. in 1 Cor.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam primam ad Corinthios (hom. 1-44)</i>
	<i>hom. in 2 Cor.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam secundam ad Corinthios (hom. 1-30)</i>
	<i>hom. in 1 Tim.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam primam ad Timotheum (hom. 1-18)</i>
	<i>hom. in Col.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam ad Colossenses</i>
	<i>hom. in Eph.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam ad Ephesios (hom. 1-24)</i>
	<i>hom. in Heb.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam ad Hebraeos (hom. 1-34)</i>
	<i>hom. in Phil.</i>	<i>homiliae in epistulam ad Philippenses (hom. 1-15)</i>
	<i>hom. in Rom.</i>	<i>in epistulam ad Romanos (homiliae 1-32)</i>
	<i>Ignat. mart</i>	<i>in sanctum Ignatium martyrem</i>
	<i>inani glor.</i>	<i>de inani Gloria et de educandis liberis</i>
	<i>incomp.</i>	<i>de incomprehensibili dei natura</i>
	<i>adv. Iud.</i>	<i>adversus Iudaeos (or. 1-8)</i>
	<i>Jul. mart.</i>	<i>in sanctum Julianum martyrem</i>
	<i>Juv. Max. mart.</i>	<i>in Juventinum et Maximum martyres</i>
	<i>lau. Paul.</i>	<i>laudibus sanctus Pauli</i>
	<i>Luc. mart.</i>	<i>in sanctum Lucianum martyrem</i>
	<i>Macc.</i>	<i>de Maccabeis</i>
	<i>mart. Aeg.</i>	<i>in martyres Aegyptios</i>
	<i>mart. Cap. Pa. Ag.</i>	<i>martyrium sanctorum Carpi, Papyli et Agathonicae</i>
	<i>s. martyr.</i>	<i>de sanctis martyribus</i>
	<i>Ignat. mart.</i>	<i>in sanctum Ignatium martyrem</i>
	<i>Mel.</i>	<i>de sancto Meletio Antiocheno</i>
	<i>oppug.</i>	<i>Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae (lib. 1-3)</i>
	<i>Pel. vir. mart.</i>	<i>de sancta Pelagia virgine et martyre</i>
	<i>pop. Ant.</i>	<i>ad populum Antiochenum</i>
	<i>Romanum</i>	<i>in sanctum Romanum</i>

	<i>sac.</i>	<i>de sacerdatio</i>
	<i>Thdr.</i>	<i>adhortationes ad Theodorum lapsum</i>
	<i>ad vid.</i>	<i>ad viduam juniorem</i>
	<i>virg.</i>	<i>de virginitate</i>
Jerome	<i>C. vig.</i>	<i>Contra Vigilantium</i>
	<i>de vir.</i>	<i>de viris illustribus</i>
Josephus	<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquitates Judaicae</i>
	<i>Ap. Fuga</i>	<i>Apologia de Fuga</i>
Justin Martyr	<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogus cum Tryphone</i>
Libanius	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
	<i>Or.</i>	<i>Orationes</i>
Menander Rhetor	<i>Men. Rhet.</i>	
Palladius	<i>dial.</i>	<i>Dialogus de vita Joannis Chrysostomi</i>
	<i>hist. Lau.</i>	<i>Historia Lausiaca</i>
Philo	<i>Abr.</i>	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
	<i>Fug.</i>	<i>De Fuga et Inventione</i>
	<i>LA</i>	<i>Legum Allegoriarum</i>
	<i>Mig.</i>	<i>De Migratione Abrahami</i>
	<i>Mos.</i>	<i>De Vita Mosis</i>
	<i>Op.</i>	<i>De Opificio Mundi</i>
	<i>QG</i>	<i>Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim</i>
	<i>sacr.</i>	<i>De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
	<i>virt.</i>	<i>De Virtutibus</i>
Philostratus	<i>VA</i>	<i>Vita Apollonii</i>
Plato	<i>Ap.</i>	<i>Apologia</i>
	<i>Char.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>
	<i>Cri.</i>	<i>Crito</i>
	<i>Euthyd.</i>	<i>Euthydemus</i>
	<i>Eu.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>
	<i>Lac.</i>	<i>Laches</i>
	<i>Laws</i>	<i>Laws</i>
	<i>M.</i>	<i>Meno</i>
	<i>Pr.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
	<i>Phd.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republica</i>
	<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
Plotinus	<i>Enn.</i>	<i>Enneades</i>
Plutarch	<i>Aem.</i>	<i>Aemilius Paulus</i>
	<i>Alex.</i>	<i>Alexander</i>
	<i>Arat.</i>	<i>Aratus</i>
	<i>Cim.</i>	<i>Cimon</i>
	<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Demosthenes</i>
	<i>Nic.</i>	<i>Nicias</i>
	<i>Per.</i>	<i>Pericles</i>
	<i>Sull.</i>	<i>Sulla</i>
	<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timoleon</i>
	<i>virt. mor.</i>	<i>De virtute morali</i>
Ps-Plutarch	<i>lib. edu.</i>	<i>De liberis educandis</i>
Quintilian	<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institution oratoria</i>

Socrates	<i>hist.</i>	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
Solon	<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
Sophocles	<i>Anti.</i>	<i>Antigone</i>
Sozomen	<i>hist.</i>	<i>historia ecclesiastica</i>
Theodoret of Cyrrihus	<i>hist.</i>	<i>historia ecclesiastica</i>
Theognis	<i>Theog.</i>	
Xenophon	<i>Mem.</i>	<i>Memorabilia</i>
	<i>Ages.</i>	<i>Agesilaus</i>

*Abbreviations of Periodicals, Reference Works and Series*

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AV	Analekta Vlatadon
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CP	Classical Philology
ESV	English Standard Version
FC	Fathers of the Church
ITQ	The Irish Theological Quarterly
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
NPNF	Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Graece (J.P. Migne, ed.)
SC	Sources chrétiennes
VC	Vigiliae Christianae
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde des Urchristentums (und der älteren Kirche)</i>

## INTRODUCTION

### St. John Chrysostom: The Man and His Legacy

St. John Chrysostom (c. 349-407): monk, preacher and bishop - a man whose life and writings have won him much acclaim and not a few critics, since his day until the present age. Barely a decade after his ordination, he was already listed in Jerome's *Live of Illustrious Men* (c.392) as an author of many books, including the *De Sacerdotio*.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, he was whisked off to Constantinople (c.397), where he was appointed as the new bishop of the prestigious see – a decision that was undoubtedly influenced by his accolades as a preacher *par excellence*.<sup>2</sup> As a bishop, his ecclesiastical reforms were admirable to many, and yet also earned him several enemies in the imperial city.<sup>3</sup> The latter, in particular, were to conspire against him and, ultimately, had him exiled to Cucusos and, later, to the remote eastern shores of the Black sea, where he would perish en-route to the city of Pityus.<sup>4</sup> Three decades later, he was reinstated and his relics welcomed into the Church of the Holy Apostles by a host of his supporters and a repentant emperor.<sup>5</sup> In the centuries to come, both the Eastern and Western Churches would esteem him as not only the 'Golden-Mouth' preacher, but also one of their most

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<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *de vir.* 129.

<sup>2</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 104-5; Palladius, *dial.* 5.

<sup>3</sup> For Palladius, "because of all these reforms [by Chrysostom] the church was flourishing more excellently from day to day. The very colour of the city was changed to piety; everyone looked bright and fresh with soberness and Psalm-singing." Sozomen, on the other hand, notes that Chrysostom's various reforms "incurred the hatred of the clergy, and of many of the monks, who called him a hard, passionate, morose, and arrogant man." Kelly, 118-27, 250-51; Palladius, *dial.* 5 (Translated by Meyer, ACW 45, 40); Sozomen, *hist.* 8.9 (Translated by NPNF II.2, 405).

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, 282-85.

<sup>5</sup> Socrates, *hist.* 7.45, Theodoret, *hist.* 5.36.1-2.

renowned teachers. In the East, he is regarded as the most accurate interpreter of the Pauline epistles, or, as Isidore of Pelusium (d. 449) puts it, a St. Paul speaking in the Attic tongue.<sup>6</sup> In the West, he is well-read and respected by figures as diverse as Aquinas (c.1225-1274), Erasmus (d.1536) and Calvin (1509-1564), and eventually recognized as one of the 'Doctors of the Eastern Church' in 1568.<sup>7</sup>

In modern times, the 'Golden-Mouth' preacher has proven to be no less fascinating for scholars.<sup>8</sup> Over the last two hundred years, more than seven biographies have been written about his life and ministry.<sup>9</sup> Despite the skepticism of A.H.M. Jones, recent

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<sup>6</sup> Isidore remarks that "if the divine Paul had taken up the Attic tongue to interpret himself, he would not have done it differently than this renowned man has done." This epithet would be reinforced in subsequent Byzantine hagiography, as is the case of the eighth century *Vita* by George of Alexandria. In his biography, George would have Chrysostom's secretary, Proclus, witness the apostle whispering into the ears of the bishop as he composed his homilies. Eastern Orthodoxy's esteem for John as Pauline exegete *par excellence* would persist even until the twentieth century, as may be seen in Theodore Zese's appraisal of the bishop in 1982. Isidore, *Ep.* 5.32 [Translation quoted from Margaret Mary Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation*, Hermeneutische Untersuchungen Zur Theologie (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 31]; George of Alexandria, *vita Joh. Chrys.* 27 [François Halkin, "Douze récits byzantins sur saint Jean Chrysostome," in *Studia hagiographica* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1977), 142-148]; Theodore N. Zese, "ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΣ," *Kleronomia* 14 (1982): 313-23.

<sup>7</sup> Aquinas is reputed for being willing to give Paris for a copy of Chrysostom's Gospel of Matthew. For Erasmus' esteem for Chrysostom, see Robert D. Sider, "Searching the Scriptures': John Chrysostom in the New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus," in *Within the Perfection of Christ. Essays on Peace and the Nature of the Church in Honor of Martin H. Schrag*, ed. T.L. Brensunger and E.M. Sider (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Press, 1990), 83-105. As for Calvin, he actually attempted a translation of Chrysostom's homilies. Unfortunately, this project did not materialise. Nevertheless, he did complete a *Preface* for this project, where he praised Chrysostom's exegetical skills, as well as criticized him for his over-emphasis on the role of human free will in soteriology. John H. McIndoe, "John Calvin: Preface to the Homilies of Chrysostom," *Hartford Quarterly* 5 (1965): 19-26.

<sup>8</sup> Even in as early as 1970, Robert Carter would caution that Chrysostom studies have become so extensive that, apart from some form of "structured co-operation," the enterprise "could result in a vast heap of unrelated studies which fail to converge into a meaningful structure and which often overlap needlessly." Robert E. Carter, "The Future of Chrysostom Studies: Theology and Nachleben," *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970), 14.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, W. R. W. Stephens, *St. John Chrysostom: His Life and Times* (London: John Murray, 1880); Aimé Puech, *St. Jean Chrysostome et les mœurs de son temps* (Paris: Librairie Hachette,

scholars, most notably, Mayer and Allen, have also found Chrysostom's homilies to be a rich source of information for both his life and those of Late Antique Christians.<sup>10</sup>

Significant attention has also been paid to the extent to which Chrysostom's preaching is influenced by the Greek rhetorical tradition that he is trained in. Reflecting an attitude common in the late nineteenth century, Puech denies any form of pagan influence upon Chrysostom's homilies in general – a sentiment that is reaffirmed, though to a lesser extent, by Simonetti in the mid 1950s, and more recently, by Piédagnel and Kennedy, in their evaluation of Chrysostom's use of the *enkōmion* paradigm.<sup>11</sup> Contrary to this are the more convincing arguments by Delehaye, Ameringer and others, whose research clearly shows the pervasive influence of Greek rhetoric upon Chrysostom's homiletics, particularly his panegyrics.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, it is this latter appraisal that has taken

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1891); Chrysostomus Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, 2 vols. (London: Sands, 1959); Donald Attwater, *St John Chrysostom: Pastor and Preacher* (London: Harvill Press, 1959); J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London: Duckworth, 1995); J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); Pauline Allen and Wendy Mayer, *John Chrysostom, The Early Church Fathers*. (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> For Jones, what can be gathered from Late Antique sermons about life in that period may be likened to finding a few wheat in the midst of an overwhelming quantity of chaff (that is, Scriptural exegesis or generalized moralization) - the effort is simply not worthwhile. Mayer and Allen, however, have argued otherwise, asserting that Chrysostom's homilies, in particular, are rich minefields of information about Late Antique society. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey: Volume 1* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), vi-vii; Pauline Allen, "Homilies as Source for Social History," *Studia Patristica* 24 (1991): 1-5; Pauline Allen, "John Chrysostom's Homilies on 1 & 2 Thessalonians: The Preacher and His Audience," *Studia Patristica* 31 (1995): 3-21; Allen and Mayer, *John Chrysostom*, 34-40.

<sup>11</sup> Puech, *Jean Chrysostome*, 121; M. Simonetti, "Sulla struttura dei panegirici di S. Giovanni Crisostomo," *Rendiconti istituto Lombardo di Scienze e lettere* (series 3/17) 86, (1953): 179; George Alexander Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric under Christian Emperors* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983), 249, n. 107; Auguste Piédagnel, "Le genre littéraire," in *Panegyriques de S. Paul*, ed. Auguste Piédagnel, SC, vol. 300 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1982), 21-38.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Edward Ameringer, *The Stylistic Influence of the Second Sophistic on the Panegyric Sermons of St. John Chrysostom: A Study in Greek Rhetoric* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1921); Hippolyte Delehaye, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Bruxelles:

root in recent scholarship, so much so that Wilken, Hunter and Mitchell can take it for granted that Greek rhetorical techniques, like the *psogos*, *synkrisis*, *enkōmion* and the *ekphrasis*, play a significant role in the ideological discourse of Chrysostom's writings.<sup>13</sup>

With regard to Chrysostom's theology, scholarly discussion can only be livelier, for a figure whose exegesis is highly respected by *all* the major Christian traditions. Having said this, the general consensus, until the mid twentieth century, at least in the West, has been less than fair to the Antiochene theologian. For those looking for a systematic defence or the exposition of orthodox dogma, Chrysostom's writings come across more as the work of a Christian moralist and pastor, rather than that a serious theologian – a consensus that is well-summarized in Campenhausen's popular *Fathers of the Church*:

Questions of dogma played scarcely any part in his life. [... he] did not contribute to the dogmatic elaboration of Christological theory nor take much interest in the academic disputes of the day in this field.<sup>14</sup>

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Bureaux de la Société des Bollandistes, 1921), 202; Harry M. Hubbell, "Chrysostom and Rhetoric," *Classical Philology* 19 (1924): 261-276; Mary Albania Burns, *Saint John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Statues: A Study of the Rhetorical Qualities and Form* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1930).

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell's research will be discussed more extensively in the latter part of this Introduction. Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century*, Transformation of the Classical Heritage (Berkeley, CA; London: University of California Press, 1983); David G. Hunter, "John Chrysostom's "Adversus Oppugnatores Vitae Monasticae": Ethics and Apologetics in the Late Fourth Century" (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame, 1986); Mitchell, 94-380.

<sup>14</sup> For a similar criticism, see also Wallace-Hadrill and Rashdall. Yet, as Malingrey and Schatkin point out, this is a mistaken assessment, since ethics is always a natural outworking of Chrysostom's theology, as is also the case for many of his contemporaries. Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Church*, trans. L.A Garrard (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1998), 140, 144; D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 164; H. Rashdall, *The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology, Being the Bampton Lectures for 1915* (London: MacMillan, 1919), 92; John Chrysostom, *Sur la sacerdoce* trans. Anne Marie Malingrey, Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 261 n.2; Margaret Schatkin, "John Chrysostom as Apologist," *Analekta Vlatadon* (1987): 20.

Such disdain for Chrysostom's theology, for the most part, may be attributed to the Western theologians' inclination to benchmark Chrysostom's teachings with the tenets of the Magisterial Reformers, or, to be more specific, their presumption that "grace and justification... [is] the unquestioned centre of Pauline theology."<sup>15</sup> This criticism remains valid even for those who are more sympathetic to John's theology. Kenny, for example, while anxious to acquit Chrysostom of the charges of Semi-Pelagianism, has, nevertheless, lapsed into a similar tendency by considering such a charge in the first place.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately, such theological sentiments have improved significantly over the last two decades. Increasingly, scholars are more willing to study Chrysostom's theology on its own terms and merits, that is, paying due attention to his historical and theological context, and also to the occasional nature of his writings. What emerges thus far is very encouraging and clearly confirms the theological stature that has been ascribed to him by his pre-modern readers.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The earliest proponent of this approach is most certainly Calvin, who, in his *Preface to Homilies of Chrysostom*, would criticize Chrysostom for his overemphasising the role of human agency in divine soteriology. For criticism of this approach, see Mitchell and Young. McIndoe, 19-26; Mitchell, 11; Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background* (London: SCM, 1983), 150.

<sup>16</sup> It is noteworthy that 'Semi-Pelagianism' is a Protestant term that originated from the late sixteenth century. A similar tendency is also evident in the assessments of Hoffmann-Aleith, Merzagora and Krupp. For a detailed discussion of this problem, see Margaret Mitchell's *Heavenly Trumpet*, 28-33. Augusta Merzagora, "Giovanni Crisostomo commentatore di S. Paolo: Osservazioni su l'esegesi filosofica (I)," in *Studi dedicati alla memoria di Paolo Ubaldi*, Serie Quinta: Scienze Storiche. (Milan: Società editrice "vita e pensiero", 1937): 205-46; Eva Hoffmann-Aleith, "Das Paulusverständnis Des Johannes Chrysostomus," *ZNW* 38 (1939): 181-88; Arthur Kenny, "Was Saint John Chrysostom a Semi-Pelagian?," *ITQ* 27 (1960): 29; Robert Allen Krupp, *Shepherding the Flock of God: The Pastoral Theology of John Chrysostom* (New York: P. Lang, 1991), 86.

<sup>17</sup> Both Ayers and Pierson, for example, have drawn attention to the occasional nature of Chrysostom's writings. Consequently, his ideas are never systematically organized and much care must be taken in one's analysis before he can arrive at a proper understanding of Chrysostom's theology. For recent theses on Chrysostom's theology see, for example, Panayiotis E. Papageorgiou,

In the case of Chrysostom's ethics and pastoral ministry, scholars have been far more unanimous in their agreement that the bishop is one of the greatest pastors and moralists of his time, or indeed, of the whole Church.<sup>18</sup> "Practical and moral problems," as Campenhausen observes, "were paramount in his interpretation and application of the Biblical texts. His sermons contain a great deal of exhortation and moralizing."<sup>19</sup> Such pastoral exhortations frequently present themselves as emphases on the cultivation of spiritual disciplines, such as repentance, prayer, almsgiving, fasting and the reading of Scriptures.<sup>20</sup> On occasions, they are also expressed in terms of rhetorical attacks on the pagan habits found among Christians, e.g., the patronizing of theatres, the use of amulets, divinations and incantations, or even Judaizing behaviour.<sup>21</sup>

Chrysostom's ethical discourse, as Young has demonstrated, is grounded largely in the exegesis of Scripture, so much so that his biblical interpretation may well be regarded

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"A Theological Analysis of Selected Themes in the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans" (Ph.D., The Catholic University of America, 1995); James Bennett Ayers, "John Chrysostom's Doctrine of Conversion" (Ph.D., Boston College, 2001), 3-4; Maria-Fotini Poidoulis Kapsalis, "Image as Authority in the Writings of John Chrysostom" (University of St. Michael's College 2001); Lloyd G. Pierson, "An Analysis of John Chrysostom's Underlying Theory of Christ's Redemption in the Letters of St. Paul" (Ph.D., Saint Louis University, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Neil, *Chrysostom and His Message: A Selection from the Sermons of St. John Chrysostom of Antioch and Constantinople* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 14; Wallace-Hadrill, 164.

<sup>19</sup> Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Greek Church*, trans. S. Godman (New York: Pantheon, 1959), 134.

<sup>20</sup> Krupp, 110-11, 141-46; Susan Donegan, "St John Chrysostom: An Argument for a Greater Appreciation of His Theology of Salvation," *Diakonia* 23, no. 1 (1990): 21-42; Iain Torrance, "God the Physician: Ecclesiology, Sin and Forgiveness in the Preaching of St. John Chrysostom," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 44, no. 1-4 (1999): 163-73.

<sup>21</sup> Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, vol. 1, 82; Wilken, 116-27; *hom. in 1 Tim.* 10 (NPNF I.13, 440); *adv. Iud.* 1.3 (FC 68, 10-14).

as parnetic in nature.<sup>22</sup> This is corroborated by Osborn, who, in one of the more substantial treatments of the subject, argues similarly that Chrysostom's ethics is predominantly motivated by a high regard for God's righteousness, fellowship with Christ and the centrality of Christian faith and love – tenets, which, of course, find their origins in the Scriptures.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, he also recognizes, along with Whittaker and others, that Chrysostom's ethical ideals operate, by and large, within the framework dictated by the Greek ethical traditions, especially the Platonic tradition of virtue ethics.<sup>24</sup> What emerges from this is clearly a creative interweaving of Greco-Roman and Christian ethical ideals, with the net result being a distinctive Christian vision of ethics.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 235, 248-64.

<sup>23</sup> Osborn's study is an attempt to elucidate the early church fathers' ethics from a thematic perspective, that is, to examine their views on righteousness, discipleship, faith, freedom and love. Such an approach, however, imposes *a priori* categories upon Chrysostom's writings and helps little to further, if not hinder, our understanding of the ethical structure underlying Chrysostom's exhortations. Eric Francis Osborn, *Ethical Patterns in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 114-42.

<sup>24</sup> At the conclusion of his study, Osborn even suggests, perhaps unfairly, that Chrysostom, towards the end of life and exile, had become more Stoic-Platonic than Christian in his ethical outlook. Osborn, *Ethical Patterns*, 121; Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, vol. 1, 308; John Whittaker, "Christianity and Morality in the Roman Empire," *Vigiliae Christianae* 33 (1979): 214, 219-221; Joseph Woodill, "The Fellowship of Life: Virtue Ethics and Orthodox Christianity" (P.h.Diss., Fordham University, 1996), 52-70.

<sup>25</sup> Papageorgious, for example, has drawn attention to Chrysostom's ready adoption of Stoic psychology and his creative development of distinctively *Christian* virtues in his ascetic discourse. This is also corroborated in Clark's earlier study of the relationship between Chrysostom's ascetic ideals and his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7. See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of Chrysostom's ethical vision. Panayiotis E. Papageorgious, "A Theological Analysis of Selected Themes in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans" (P.h.D, Catholic University of America, 1995); Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 259-329.

One of the most concrete ways in which this ethical vision has worked out is in terms of Chrysostom's continual attempts, throughout the two decades of his ministry, to forge a distinct Christian identity that would differentiate his congregations from the Greeks and the Jews.<sup>26</sup> This includes his repeated efforts to recast the ideals of gender for his listeners, so that their lives may better conform to, what he understands as, the standards of biblical teaching.<sup>27</sup> Complementing this is Chrysostom's frequent practice of presenting biblical and Christian figures as exemplars of his ethical ideals.<sup>28</sup> In his hands, these Christian saints take on a variety of pedagogical roles. The Christian monk is a good example. Hunter, for example, notes that, against the critics of monasticism, Chrysostom would argue that the monk, when fully trained, would be able to minister to the laity and

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<sup>26</sup> For a survey of the various methods that Chrysostom employs to construct the Christian identity of his listeners, see Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*, Greek Culture in the Roman World. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 63-90, 125-53.

<sup>27</sup> One of the earliest proponents of this view is Peter Brown. In his *Body and Society*, Brown argues that Chrysostom's ascetic sexual ethics is aimed at severing the Christians' ties with the Late Antique city. This is because an ascetic view of sexuality would inevitably undermine not only the sexual licentiousness of Late Antique culture, but also its esteem for procreation and familial posterity. Having said this, Brown also highlights that Chrysostom's sexual asceticism has a more charitable agenda, namely, to accentuate the Christians' awareness of their body and, through that, help them recognise the importance of alleviating the sufferings of the poor in the *polis*. Elsewhere, Hartney has also shown that an important way by which these new gender notions are defined is in terms of how Chrysostom associates specific types of sins to each gender and then prescribes the relevant remedies for such sins. These remedies, when practised, would be able to help each Christian attain the desired standards for their gender. Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 20th anniversary ed., Columbia Classics in Religion. (New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2008), 305-322; Aileen M. Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 85-182.

<sup>28</sup> The range of exemplars that he appeals to is diverse, including Old Testament figures, like the Patriarchs, Abraham and Jacob, King David, Daniel and his three friends; New Testament characters, like Jesus, the Twelve Apostles, Apostle Paul, Aquila and the beggar, Lazarus; early Christian martyrs, like Ignatius of Antioch, Lucian and Pelegia; and bishops, like St. Meletius and Flavian. *hom. in Matt.* 4.18 (NPNF I.10, 28-9); *Ignat. mart.* (PG 50:587-596); *Pel. vir. mart.* (PG 50.579-84); *Luc. mart.* (PG 50.515-20), *Mel.* (PG 50.519-26); *pop. Ant.* 21.2 (PG 49.213); Woodill, 58-59, 65-66.

benefit them greatly. Indeed, he can even become a philosopher-king, who is more than capable of leading his people with loving-kindness.<sup>29</sup> Yet, as Pleasants rightly point out, these ascetic figures, in other less polemical contexts, are recast simply as the embodiments of the spiritual ideals of Christianity and worthy exemplars for the laity.<sup>30</sup>

### Exemplar Portraits and the Interpretation of Chrysostom

It is Mitchell, however, who draws attention to the significant role that such exemplar portraits might play in the elucidation of not only Chrysostom's ethics, but also his exegesis and theology.<sup>31</sup> In her *Heavenly Trumpet*, Mitchell points out that Chrysostom's exegesis of the Pauline letters is often accompanied by a myriad of Pauline portraits, ranging from epithets to large scale portrayals of his soul, body and external circumstances.<sup>32</sup> Contrary to popular opinion, argues Mitchell, these "are not sideshows to the 'main event' of the interpretation of the apostle's letters, but are themselves central to his [Chrysostom's] exegetical art."<sup>33</sup> Indeed, when reconstructed and examined together

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<sup>29</sup> For a discussion of the polemical portrayals of the monk, see Hunter's introductory chapters to his translations of Chrysostom's monastic treatises, the *Comparatio* and *Adversus oppugnatores*. John Chrysostom, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/ against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, trans. David G. Hunter, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, vol. 13 (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen 1988), 25-35, 44-52.

<sup>30</sup> Phyllis Rodgers Pleasants, "Making Antioch Christian: The City in the Pastoral Vision of John Chrysostom" (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 93.

<sup>31</sup> Mitchell's thesis, as Bockmuehl points out, represents one of the many recent attempts at pursuing an effective history of interpretation, in this case, Chrysostom's interpretation of Paul. Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, *Studies in Theological Interpretation*. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2006), 67 n.55.

<sup>32</sup> Mitchell, 69-377.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 384.

with Chrysostom's interpretations of Paul, these rhetorical portraits clearly operate as embodiments of Chrysostom's exegetical work and are, therefore, crucial for our understanding of his ideological discourse.<sup>34</sup> A good case in point is Chrysostom's interpretation of Paul's soteriology. While Mitchell concurs with most scholars that Chrysostom adopts a synergistic reading of Paul's soteriology, she also recognizes that Chrysostom, by consistently exalting Paul as the "supreme example of humanity's boundless capacity for virtue," has inadvertently "dallied on the theological boundary to Pelagianism." In other words, she sees an implicit contradiction between Chrysostom's portrayal of Paul as an "archetype of virtue" and his didactic and more synergistic teachings on Pauline soteriology.<sup>35</sup>

Mitchell's thesis certainly sets a milestone in terms of challenging the "traditional ways of mapping the terrain of patristic exegesis."<sup>36</sup> Chrysostom's portraits of Paul, as she puts it:

both illustrate the inadequacy of the traditional model, and point towards some new directions to be pursued further in the emerging new typologies of "figurative" patristic exegesis: the construction of authors and other biblical personalities as part of exegetical practice.<sup>37</sup>

This call must be taken seriously, especially in the case of Chrysostom, since his biblical exegesis, be it in his monastic treatises or his homilies, is frequently conducted in tandem

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 381-2.

<sup>35</sup> "This is why," suggests Mitchell, "Chrysostom's *laudibus sancti Pauli* were so popular among the Pelagians, who began translating them into Latin within decades of his death. For scholarly consensus on Chrysostom's synergistic soteriology, see footnote 16 earlier. For a criticism of Mitchell's assessment of Chrysostom's soteriology, see Chapter 3. Ibid. 400.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 385.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 388.

with rhetorical constructions of a variety of exemplar portraits. For this reason, this thesis will pursue the “new directions” that Mitchell has set out by developing a comprehensive hermeneutical toolkit for the reading and analysis of Chrysostom’s exemplar portraits. Such a hermeneutical framework should take into proper account his distinctive ethical, theological and pastoral ideals, in addition to the narrative and rhetorical strategies that he would have acquired in the course of his education. Once this framework and its reading strategies are identified, they will then be applied to a variety of Chrysostom’s exemplary constructions and teachings so that the interpretative potential of his exemplar portraits may be demonstrated and better appreciated.

### **Thesis Outline**

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first two chapters are devoted to the construction of a preliminary hermeneutics of exemplar portraits. Here, we will examine the educational, ethical, biographical and rhetorical traditions of Greco-Roman exemplar discourse and consider how Chrysostom appropriates these traditions to construct the exemplar portraits found in his writings. The primary goal of this exercise is to develop the analytical framework and strategies needed to explicate the ideologies implicit in Chrysostom’s exemplar discourse.

Specifically, Chapter 1 seeks to examine how *enkyklios paideia*, or the Greco-Roman system of education, institutionalizes *imitatio exemplorum* as the most important means of ideological communication and reinforcement. This is followed by a historical overview of the Greco-Roman ethical traditions and an evaluation of the legacy that they bequeath to both Christians and pagans in Late Antiquity. This then sets the stage for us to examine

Chrysostom's appropriation of this rich ethical heritage and the implications that this might have for the hermeneutical role of his exemplar portraits.

In Chapter 2, we review the Greco-Roman biographical and rhetorical traditions, with the aim of identifying the narrative and rhetorical strategies relevant to Chrysostom's construction of exemplar portraits. The reading strategies developed in both chapters will then be applied to Chrysostom's portrayals of David. By doing so, we hope not only to elucidate the ideologies implicit in these Davidic constructs, but, more importantly, to explicate the interpretative approaches and strategies involved in the hermeneutical application of Chrysostom's exemplar portraits.

The remaining three chapters that follow are essentially 'case studies', where the hermeneutical tools developed above are brought to bear upon a variety of Chrysostom's exemplar portraits. Chapter 3 is a study of his didactic conception of soteriology and how his exemplar portraits may reinforce and enrich his teachings on this subject. Chapters 4 and 5 will focus on two of Chrysostom's favourite exemplars: the Christian ascetic and martyr. In Chapter 4, our analysis will centre primarily on the diverse ideological and pedagogical functions that Chrysostom conceives for the Christian ascetic, as the exemplar is presented in Chrysostom's monastic treatises and homilies. A similar agenda is assumed in Chapter 5 for the martyr portraits. Here, we will also highlight the key aspects of Chrysostom's rhetoric of martyrdom which not only set it apart from its Greco-Roman counterparts but, indeed, defines the Christian character of his rhetoric.

By way of conclusion, we will summarize the interpretative approaches and reading strategies required for a hermeneutical application of Chrysostom's exemplar

portraits by incorporating the hermeneutical insights gathered from Chapters 3-5 into the framework developed in Chapters 1-2.

PART 1: CONSTRUCTING A HERMENEUTICS OF EXEMPLAR PORTRAITS

## CHAPTER 1

### *PAIDEIA, ARETĒ* ETHICS AND CHRYSOSTOM'S ETHICAL VISION

#### Introduction

In a letter to his younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), Basil (329-379) advises:

the great way to the finding of our duty is the attentive practice of the God-inspired Scriptures, for in these [Scriptures] we find both the practical counsel and the lives of blessed men handed down in writing, as some living icons of life according to God, for the imitation of their good works. [...] And generally, just as painters, when they are painting other pictures, constantly look at the example [and] do their best to transfer its lineaments to their own work, so also it is necessary for he who desire to make himself perfect in all branches of virtue, to look at the lives of the saints as though to some living and moving statutes and to make their good his own through imitation.<sup>1</sup>

Basil's advice is, of course, rooted in the rich Christian tradition of *imitatio sanctorum*, whose origins may be traced to as far back as the period of the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, Basil is also pre-supposing here an equally rich, if not more ancient, tradition, namely, Greco-Roman exemplar discourse, in which he and so many of the other fourth-century church fathers were brought up. Thus, we also find Basil writing on another occasion to a youth and encouraging him to learn from the virtuous behaviour

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<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 2 (c. 358) (Translation modified from NPNF2.8, 111).

<sup>2</sup> Compared to the Greek exemplary literature, the moral vision of the Old Testament is more subtly expressed through its characters. Explicit moral judgments, as Wenham notes, are seldom made. More often than not, the events are left to speak for themselves. Nevertheless, the authors do not leave the moral decision entirely to the readers, but frequently hint of their views through evaluative adjectives or verbs. For example, the Israelites are judged as having "played the harlot" (ἐξεπόρνευσαν) after Baal in Judges 8.33. If there is "a danger that the reader might misjudge the situation, an authoritative comment may be heard," as is the case of the narrator's remark in 2 Samuel 11:27 that David's treatment of Uriah had "displeased the Lord." Having said this, the influence of Greek exemplar discourse is clearly more pronounced in Second Temple Jewish literature like Sirach (Sir. 44-50) and 4 Maccabees. As to the extent of this influence upon Second Temple Jewish literature and the Christian writings that follow, these will be taken up in Chapter 2, when we examine Chrysostom's appropriation of the early Judeo-Christian Davidic traditions in his portrayals of King David. Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 14.

depicted in Greek prose and poetry, as long as he “pass over” the evil deeds that are also commonly found in such pagan literature.<sup>3</sup>

In the case of Basil’s younger contemporary, John Chrysostom, the Antiochene’s attitude towards the moral value of pagan literature and learning is far more ambivalent.<sup>4</sup> When consulted regarding the education of young children, Chrysostom would advise his reader not to allow his children to listen to pagan tales, but rather saturate their minds with the virtuous deeds of biblical exemplars like Abel, Jacob and those from the New Testament.<sup>5</sup> This disdain for pagan exemplars is only heightened by his frequent criticism of the life and teachings of the Greek philosophers, like Plato and the Stoics, the former of whom he has, on at least one occasion, dismissed as one who has “talked a deal of nonsense.”<sup>6</sup> When he does quote these philosophers with approval, it is for the sole purpose of denouncing yet another aspect of *paideia*, that is, rhetorical education. Hence in his *Adversus Oppugnatores*, Chrysostom would concur with the philosophers that rhetoric is “not appropriate for philosophers, or even grown men; rather, it is an ostentatious

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<sup>3</sup> *ad adul.* 4.

<sup>4</sup> It would not be surprising if Chrysostom is familiar with Basil’s writings, in view of the fact that his spiritual mentors, Diodore and Meletius, were personally acquainted with the Bishop of Caesarea and that his soteriological and monastic ideals are quite akin to that of Basil. This will be further addressed in Chapter 3 and 4 respectively. Basil, *Ep.* 57, 68, 99, 120, 135.

<sup>5</sup> This attitude is generally maintained in his homilies, where he frequently presents both biblical and Christian characters as exemplary figures to his listeners and rarely praises any pagan characters at all. *inani glor.* 39-52.

<sup>6</sup> *hom. in Acts* 4 (NPNF I.11, 29).

display of adolescents at play.”<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, just as one begins to conclude that Chrysostom is entirely antagonistic to Greek education and rhetorical training in general, he qualifies himself in the same chapter, declaring that he is not seeking to eliminate *paideia* per se, but is rather concerned with the corrupting influence that such training often has on its students.<sup>8</sup>

Regardless of his actual attitude towards the moral value of *paideia*, it remains a fact that Chrysostom’s understanding of *imitatio sanctorum* did not arise from his writings *de novo*. As in the case of Basil, it also owes much of its origins to Greco-Roman exemplary discourse. For this reason, our study of the hermeneutical roles of Chrysostom’s exemplar portraits must necessarily begin with the origins, functions and expressions of *imitatio exemplorum*, as understood and practised in Late Antiquity. These will be the primary foci of the first two chapters of our thesis. In this first chapter, we will examine the system of *paideia* in which Chrysostom was trained and argue that the pedagogy of *paideia*, to a great extent, is founded upon a philosophy of *imitatio exemplorum*. The consequence of this is that the *paideia* system of education would have legitimized the notion of imitation as the primary and plausible means of the transfer of knowledge and worldviews in Late Antiquity.

Among the ideologies propagated through *imitatio exemplorum*, one of the most important if not the most important is the ethical ideals of Late Antiquity. In the second part of this chapter, we will give a brief account of the historical development of Greco-

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<sup>7</sup> *ad. oppug.* 3.11. Translated by Hunter in John Chrysostom, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/ against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, trans. David G. Hunter, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 149-50.

<sup>8</sup> *ad. oppug.* 3.11 (Hunter, 148).

Roman ethics, focusing on the ethical concerns and framework that it bequeaths to the Late Antique world. Having done so, we will then consider how Chrysostom appropriates these ethical ideals for his own vision of Christian ethics. It is only when Chrysostom's ethical ideals are clarified that we can proceed to Chapter 2 and explore how he transposes *imitatio exemplorum* into *imitatio sanctorum* through a creative adoption of Greco-Roman rhetorical and narrative strategies.

### *Paideia and Imitatio Exemplorum*

Despite the Romans' conquest of the Mediterranean world, most of the Hellenistic cities in this region remained Greek in character. Chrysostom's native city of Syrian Antioch, for example, continued to be ruled by a council of oligarchs, speak Greek as a common language and glory in their Greek ancestry.<sup>9</sup> Within this social matrix, the cultivation and preservation of this Hellenic identity is imperative, not merely for the practical purposes of communication, trade or even career progress in the civic administration.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, it was the way by which the elite can distinguish themselves from the non-elite or, what they perceive as, the more inferior aspects of human civilization, whether these are the barbarians, the household slaves or even the

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<sup>9</sup> Simon Swain, "Sophists and Emperors: The Case of Libanius," in *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, ed. Simon Swain and Mark Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 357; J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire: Ad 284-430* (London: Fontana, 1993), 152-53.

ordinary person on the street.<sup>11</sup> And the means for developing this Greek identity, as they unanimously recognize, is *paideia*.

Literacy had been a cherished skill among the Greeks ever since the classical period. Isocrates and Aristotle would go so far as to insist that it was the prerequisite for the learning of rhetoric. *Enkyklios paideia*, or 'common education', began to develop as a formal system of education from the Hellenistic period onwards and, by the first century, had found one of its mature and fullest expressions in Quintilian's (c. 35-100) *Institutio*.<sup>12</sup> For a student of *enkyklios paideia*, the rudiments of his education often began at home, where he was taught either by a family member, or an appointed pedagogue, or even an elementary instructor. A few years later, the student was sent to the local grammarian, where he received his secondary education in the form of further grammatical training and studies of the classical texts.<sup>13</sup>

In both forms of education, whether primary or secondary, a student learnt by imitating models, since "examples" (*exempla*), remarks Quintilian, were "more powerful than those found in the textbooks."<sup>14</sup> Thus, a student would write his first letters by

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<sup>11</sup> Writing with reference to *paideia*, Iamblichus remarks that "it is thanks to upbringing [*paideia*] that humans differ from beasts, Greeks from foreigners (barbarians), free men from household slaves, and philosophers from ordinary people." Iamblichus, *VP* 44. Translated by Whitmarsh in Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 90.

<sup>12</sup> The adjective *enkyklios* can mean 'circular', 'complete' or 'common'. In the context of education, it is usually translated as 'common', though the other meanings are not necessary excluded. Quintilian, *inst.* 1; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10-34.

<sup>13</sup> Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 47-53.

<sup>14</sup> *inst.* 10.1.15 (Translated by Russell, LCL127, 259).

imitating a model of the alphabet, before moving on to copying and memorizing selected passages from the *Iliad* that his teachers had inscribed on clay or waxed tablets.<sup>15</sup>

Learning by *imitatio exemplorum* continued into the student's teenage years, when he progressed to the schools of rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> Here, he would be constantly reminded by the *progymnasmata*, or the preliminary exercises commonly used in the schools, that whosoever aspired to be a good rhetorician must emulate the famed orators of the past – Homer, Demosthenes and so on.<sup>17</sup> The young Chrysostom, as it seems, took this advice seriously and often frequented the law-courts, most likely to listen to and imitate the orators' defence of their clients.<sup>18</sup> Having said this, the most important exemplar for these students remained their teacher of rhetoric. Often, these sophists saw themselves as father figures to their students, taking great pain to nurture them and, at the same time, expecting these students to reciprocate their affections. Libanius (c.314-c.394), for example, was so involved with his students' preliminary rhetorical training that he personally

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<sup>15</sup> Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 133-4.

<sup>16</sup> It is to be noted that not all students advanced to the learning of rhetoric in the first place. Moreover, "the study of rhetoric," as Cribiore notes, "did not generally take place in a single school. Most students gradually moved from their hometown school to one in a larger town, and often ended up in a third school in one of the top educational centres. This was not the traditional division between elementary, grammatical, and rhetorical schools, but a progression through more refined stages of the knowledge of rhetoric. Raffaella Cribiore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 82.

<sup>17</sup> Cribiore notes that it was standard practice for schools of rhetoric to prescribe readings from the historians and orators. These were to be imitated and committed to memory during the course of their rhetorical training. A former student of Libanius, Aphthonius, often illustrates the different rhetorical techniques expounded in his *progymnasmata* by using excerpts from different classical texts (e.g. Homeric epics) or oratorical speeches of famous orators. A translation of Aphthonius's preliminary exercises, or *progymnasmata*, may be found in George A Kennedy's *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric*, Series: Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 95-127. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 227.

<sup>18</sup> *sac.* 1.3 (PG 48.1.4)

corrected his students' rhetorical exercises – a task that many teachers, by his time, had delegated to their assistants.<sup>19</sup> It was, therefore, sheer delight for Libanius when a certain student, Leontius, delivered a speech that was later misunderstood as one of his teacher's. For the sophist, mistakes like this were far from embarrassment, but were rather compliments for him, in that a student had thoroughly imitated his master's craft.<sup>20</sup>

In view of the above, it is clear that *enkyklios paideia*, as a system of education, had thoroughly institutionalized its pedagogy of *imitatio exemplorum*, so much so that the notion of imitation would be taken for granted by its students, Chrysostom included, as the most natural and plausible way of communicating the ideologies and virtues of Hellenism.<sup>21</sup> For this reason, when Chrysostom was to adopt a similar method of expounding his *Christian* ideologies and ethics later on, it would be regarded as the most reasonable thing to do by his listeners.

### **The Ethics of *Aretē*: A Historical Overview**

Among the ideologies propagated by *paideia*, one of the most important, and certainly the one that the pedagogy of *imitatio exemplorum* is most suited for, is the ethical traditions of the Greco-Roman world. It is no wonder then that Ps-Plutarch would regard education (μάθησις) as one of the three crucial elements for the development of moral

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<sup>19</sup> Criboire, *School of Libanius*, 139-44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>21</sup> As Berger and Luckmann point out, all forms of knowledge tends to be objectified over time into institutional structures in order to facilitate its transmission. This is clearly the case for the pedagogy of *imitatio exempli*, which was formalized in *paideia* from a very early stage and had, since then, legitimized the plausibility of this pedagogy in the Greco-Roman world. Peter L. Berger and T. Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality* ([s.l.]: Pelican/Penguin, 1984), 70-146.

excellence (ἀρετή), the other two being nature (φύσις) and habituation (ἔθος) through constant practice.<sup>22</sup> Writing more than two hundred years later, Libanius would even declare that a student of rhetoric, by virtue of his immersion in the classical literature of Greece, would be influenced by its moral teachings and inevitably develop similar moral qualities.<sup>23</sup>

As we shall see in Chapter 2, the very forms that Late Antique *imitatio exemplorum* take would be largely dictated by the concerns, proposals and framework offered by these Greco-Roman ethical traditions. These Late Antique exemplar constructs, in turn, would play a formative role in how Chrysostom develops his own ethical ideals and presentations of *imitatio sanctorum*. Consequently, it is pertinent for us to first survey the history of Greco-Roman ethics, in order to identify the relevant ethical concerns, framework and proposals that would be taken for granted by both pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity. It is by doing so can we properly understand the literary strategies underlying Chrysostom's exemplar portraits and move one step closer towards appreciating the hermeneutical potential of these literary constructs.

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<sup>22</sup> "Nature without learning," remarks Ps-Plutarch, "is a blind thing, and learning without nature is an imperfect thing, and practice without both is an ineffective thing." Ps-Plutarch, *lib. edu.* 4-9 [Translated by Babbitt in *Plutarch's Moralia*, Series: Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1, trans. Frank C. Babbitt (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1927), 7].

<sup>23</sup> This moralizing value of rhetoric is best expressed by Libanius's predecessor, Isocrates (436-338 B.C.). In his *Antidosis*, Isocrates argues that anyone who desires to speak well must first familiarize himself with the virtuous traditions of the Greeks, so that he may persuade his listeners with such stories. Such familiarity, in turn, will transform his moral character. *Anti.* 197-206; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 11-12, 14.

### *Homeric and Archaic Periods*

The earliest literary reflections on Greek ethics are probably found in the Homeric epics of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (c.800 BC).<sup>24</sup> Here, we encounter a warrior culture and society, where the highest good of every man and woman is to receive the τιμή, or honour, ascribed to them by their *oikos* (household).<sup>25</sup> For every Homeric hero, this *timē* is to be attained through the exercise of his ἀρετή for the sake of his *oikos*. Thus Achilles is said to have suffered αἰδώς, or shame, when his aide, Patroclus, was killed by Hector. His *timē* can only be regained when he avenges Patroclus by exercising the *aretē* of his battle skills and slaying Hector.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Penelope can speak of the gods as destroying her *aretē* of beauty and figure when her husband, Odysseus, left for the Trojan War, presumably because she can no longer receive the *timē* due to her as a wife.<sup>27</sup>

Understood in Homeric terms then, *aretē* refers essentially to the intrinsic excellence of its subject, whether it is one's beauty or battle skills, and does not bear any moral connotations – a point that is clearly seen in the fact that Penelope's unscrupulous

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<sup>24</sup> The Homeric epics are generally assumed to be written around the eighth century B.C. Proponents of this dating derives it from Herodotus' testimony that Homer and Hesiod lived no more than four hundred years before him. Others disagree and even question whether Homer ever existed in history. *Herod.* 2.53; Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 16-17.

<sup>25</sup> For the Homeric hero, *oikos* refers primarily to his family, dependents, followers and those under his protection. Often this will include allies within his wider social groupings, e.g., the army or the raiding party. Usually the *timē* due to him is expressed tangibly in terms of physical wealth, land or women. A. W. H. Adkins, *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 30-7; idem, "Homeric Values and Homeric Society," *Journal of Hellenistic Studies* 91 (1971): 4; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (USA: University of California Press, 1968), 17-8; Christopher J. Rowe, "The Nature of Homeric Morality," in *Approaches to Homer*, ed. Carl Rubino and Cynthia Shelmerdine (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1983 ), 260.

<sup>26</sup> *Il.* 18.18-21.

<sup>27</sup> *Od.* 18.251-52.

suitors are also praised as “by far best in *aretē*.”<sup>28</sup> Moreover, it is often the expectations of the hero’s *oikos* rather than that of his gods which determine how he would exercise his *aretē*.<sup>29</sup> It is along these lines that Aegisthus is criticised as having gone “beyond what was given” (ὑπὲρ μόρον) to him and incurred the indignation (νέμεσις) of others by murdering Agamemnon and marrying his wife.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, Homeric literature, on occasions, does recognize that one’s *moros*, or destiny, are in the hands of the gods, who can influence, albeit indirectly, the extent to which one can exercise his *aretē*. Thus, Nausikaa would regard Odysseus’ dire straits as an evil destiny (κακὸν μόρον) given by Zeus,<sup>31</sup> since

it is Zeus himself [...] who gives people good fortune (ὄλβον), to each single man, to the good and the bad, just as he wishes.<sup>32</sup>

The advent of the Archaic period (750-480 BC) saw the transformation of many Greek societies from a warrior culture that is centred on the *oikos* to a civic life that is based on the *nomoi*, or laws, of the *polis*. Along with this was a growing recognition among Greeks, like Hesiod and Theognis, that *aretē* should be bound up with what is praiseworthy, e.g., striving and hard work.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Theognis would even assert that “all

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<sup>28</sup> *Il.* 23.571; *Od.* 4.629, 21.187.

<sup>29</sup> This is evident in the fact the gods never censured Achille’s thirst for revenge and slaying of Hector. Instead, we find them intervening only when Achille’s excessive mutilation of Hector’s corpse was deemed too dishonourable to the latter. *Il.* 24.1-75, 10-115; Dodds, 17-18.

<sup>30</sup> *Od.* 1.34-35; Lionel Pearson, *Popular Ethics in Ancient Greece* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), 40-41.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 1.166.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 6.188-90.

<sup>33</sup> *Works and Days* 289-92; *Theog.* 464.

*aretē* is summed up in justice (*dikaioṣunē*), and every man is *agathos*, [...] when he is *dikaios*.”<sup>34</sup> For Theognis and many of his peers, this *dikaioṣunē* was understood as grounded not only in the *nomoi* of the city but in the very *nomoi* of the gods themselves.<sup>35</sup> This new appeal for allegiance to the *nomoi* of the *polis* cannot be underestimated, since it was on these grounds that Socrates (470-399) willingly drank his hemlock, rather than to violate the laws of Athens by fleeing for his life.<sup>36</sup>

This is not to say that the Homeric notions of *aretē* have therefore ceased. As Plato’s *Euthydemus* would testify, many Athenians continued to believe that *eudaimonia*, or happiness, was bound up with the possession of many external goods (*ἀγαθὰ*), or *aretai*, like riches, health, beauty and noble birth, or that greatest good of all, good fortune.<sup>37</sup> By and large, this mentality would persist in Greek culture even until Chrysostom’s time. Hence, in fourth century Syrian Antioch, we would still find Antiochenes flaunting their wealth ostentatiously, much to the chagrin of Chrysostom, while his teacher, Libanius, continued to take pride in the fact that his students, that is, his *oikos*, bore much animosity against those of his competitors.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Theog.* 144-48.

<sup>35</sup> Solon, *Ep.* 2.5.

<sup>36</sup> This new ethical conception is not without contest. The Sophists, in particular, would assert that all ethics are relative since they are based merely on local laws and customs rather than nature (*phusis*). *Cri.* 50A-54E; William J. Prior, *Virtue and Knowledge: An Introduction to Ancient Greek Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1991), 39-40.

<sup>37</sup> Plato often uses the words, *agatha* and *aretai*, interchangeably. For example, while he refers self-control, justice and courage as *agatha* in the *Euthydemus*, he would regard them as *aretai* in *Meno* 74A. *Euthyd.* 279A-C.

<sup>38</sup> Criatore, *School of Libanius*, 140.

As many of the Greeks realized, these two conceptions of virtue ethics often came into conflict with one another. This tension is well-expressed in their tragedies, such as Sophocles' (496-406 BC) *Antigone*, where the heroine, Antigone, is presented as being torn between her allegiance to her brother, Polynices, and to the laws of her state.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, this new understanding of virtue ethics would prove to be enduring in the centuries to come. Among its many conceptions, the most important and influential, at least for western civilization, is that of Plato.

### Plato

For Plato and his followers, the *telos* of human life is to “be happy and do well” (εὐδαιμονεῖν ἂν καὶ εὖ πράττειν).<sup>40</sup> By *eudaimonia*, they mean that it is to possess:

the good (ἀγαθὸν) composed of all goods (πάντων ἀγαθῶν); an ability which suffices for living well; perfection in respect of *aretē*; resources sufficient for a living creature.<sup>41</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Greeks commonly believed that *eudaimonia* is bound up with having many goods, including external goods like health and wealth.<sup>42</sup> While Plato does

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<sup>39</sup> Polynices had led an invading army into Thebes. After he was killed and his army repelled, Creon, Antigone's uncle and the new king of Thebes, decreed that Polynices was to be left unburied as a punishment for his treason. The penalty for disobeying this decree was death by stoning. As a result, Antigone was torn between allegiance to her brother, that is, giving him a proper burial, and allegiance to the laws of the state. *Anti.* 22.38.

<sup>40</sup> While *eudaimonia* is usually translated as happiness, its meaning is much richer than that suggested by the English word, which refers predominantly to “feeling good,” or “a sort of pleasure or being pleased.” *Euthyd.* 278e, 280b; Sarah Broadie, “Philosophical Introduction,” in Aristotle, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>41</sup> While the *Definitions* were unlikely to be written by Plato, most scholars assume its editor(s) to be representatives from his Academy. Thus, the definitions found here could be well-taken as reflective of the philosophy of Plato and his successors. Ps-Plato, *Definitions* 412d-e (Translated by D.S. Hutchinson in *Plato: Complete Works*, 1680).

not deny the relevance and usefulness of external goods, he is equally convinced that such goods do not necessarily lead to *eudaimonia*, since they are not “good by nature” (πέφυκεν ἀγαθὰ).<sup>43</sup> Rather, *eudaimonia* is to be gained through pursuing the most important good of all, which is wisdom (σοφία), or the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of using one’s goods rightly:<sup>44</sup>

As it seems, such a unitary view of *aretē* is often present in Plato’s earlier dialogues, where his reflections on the nature of different *aretai*, like piety (ἔσσιος), courage (ἀνδρεία) and moderation (σωφροσύνη) always conclude that each of these *aretē* are actually one and the same, namely, the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of good and evil.<sup>45</sup> For Plato, such a position is justifiable from a hedonistic perspective. According to the philosopher, the ground of all human activities is the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. When a person has *full knowledge* of what is good or evil, or what brings pleasure and pain, he would undoubtedly act in a way that will maximize his overall good, or pleasure.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the pursuit of pleasure is the impetus for all expressions of *aretai*. Having

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<sup>42</sup> In Plato’s *dialogues*, Socrates is often presented as the spokesman for Plato’s teachings. Undoubtedly, some of these teachings find their origins in the historical Socrates. Unfortunately, interpreters have frequently differed as to which of these theories should be rightly attributed the philosopher. Having said this, it is more important to note that Late Antique readers generally regard Plato to be the more important philosopher and that the teachings found in the *Dialogues* are his, rather than Socrates. Antiochus of Aschalon (c.130-68 BC), for example, would go so far as to declare that Plato is such an original thinker that he has surpassed Socrates. This is the position taken in this chapter. Varro, *Acad.* 1. 17–18; George E. Karamanolis, *Plato and Aristotle in Agreement?: Platonists on Aristotle from Antiochus to Porphyry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 51-52, 129-30.

<sup>43</sup> *Euthyd.* 279A-281D.

<sup>44</sup> *Euthyd.* 279D-282A (Translated by Sprague in *Plato: Complete Works*, 719).

<sup>45</sup> *Eu.* 6A, 7A, 8B, 9E, 10E; *Lac.* 199C-E, 192C, 198BC, 199C-D; *Char.* 159C, 160E, 174B-C.

<sup>46</sup> Terence Irwin, *Plato’s Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 81; *Pr.* 352C, 353C-D, 354A-C.

said this, Plato, in his dialogues elsewhere, also teaches a reciprocal understanding of the *aretai*, that is, the *aretai* are separable. For example, he criticizes the Spartans in his *Laws* for being too obsessed with *andreia* to the exclusion of the other *aretai*, while postulates in Book IV of his *Republic* that *andreia* is, properly speaking the *aretē* of the spirited (θυμοειδής) part of the soul.<sup>47</sup>

Although Plato does not fully resolve this ambiguity, he does have much to say about how one can cultivate the *aretai* in his life. For Plato, the human propensity for *aretē* is predicated on the gods' gift of this ability.<sup>48</sup> Yet at the same time, since *aretē* is a form of knowledge, it should also be teachable to others.<sup>49</sup> Both views are brought together in his *Republic*, where he asserts that a *polis* should be ruled by guardians, or philosopher-kings, With regards to these guardians, Plato recognizes, first of all, that they must be gifted by the gods with a philosophic nature. Yet this alone is insufficient since such natures are morally neutral and can be nurtured for either good or evil.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, each guardian must be carefully trained in a wide range of disciplines, including physical education, music, poetry, literature, arithmetic, astronomy and philosophical dialectics,

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<sup>47</sup> *Rep.* 442C-D, 443C-E.

<sup>48</sup> *M.* 99A-E.

<sup>49</sup> *Pr.* 361B-C.

<sup>50</sup> According to Plato, such philosophic natures are "good at remembering, quick to learn, high-minded, graceful, and a friend and relative of truth, justice, courage and moderation." Interestingly, he does not correlate the presence of such philosophic natures with noble birth. Rather, he believes that should a child of a ruler be born with such a nature, he is in greater danger of corrupting this nature. Should this happen, he is unlikely to be saved except by divine dispensation. *Rep.* 424A-B, 456A, 459D-460B, 485A, 487A, 493A, 499B, 502A (*Plato: Complete Works*, 1110).

before he is fully equipped to transform the entire *polis* into a virtuous city that is, just, beautiful, moderate and bearing “both the divine form and image” in their humanity.<sup>51</sup>

This regime, in turn, assumes a distinct psychology of the soul. The human soul, explains Plato, consists of three parts. The first is the appetitive part (ἐπιθυμητικόν), which is the seat of all human desires, e.g., hunger, thirst and lust. The second is the rational part (λογιστικόν) by which the soul reasons or deduces. The third is the spirited part (θυμοειδής), which is the seat of anger. While the *thumoeidēs* can riot against the *logistikon*, it can also ally itself with the *logistikon* to subdue the appetites. For this reason, a major aspect of the guardian’s moral training is to develop the *aretē* of *andreia* in his *thumoeidēs*, so that it can help the *logistikon* subdue the *epithumētikon* and develop the *aretē* of *sōphrosunē*. When this happens, the *logistikon* will be able to lead (*archomai*) the soul and attain the *aretē* of *dikaiousunē*.<sup>52</sup>

Plato’s vision of the philosopher-king, however, seems to be at odds with how he understands the *eudaimonia* of a philosopher in his *Theaetetus* and *Phaedo*. In *Theaetetus*, he suggests instead that “a man should make haste to escape from earth to heaven,” so that he might become “like god as much as he is able to” (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν).<sup>53</sup> As to how *homoioōsis theō* is achieved, Plato acknowledges in his *Phaedo* that it involves cultivating the *aretai* discussed earlier, that is, *andreia*, *sōphrosunē* and *dikaiousunē*. Nevertheless, these moral virtues are merely the means of purifying one’s soul, so that the

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<sup>51</sup> *Rep.* 376E, 377B-396E, 406B, 500E-501B.

<sup>52</sup> *Rep.* 442B-443E.

<sup>53</sup> *Tht.* 176b.

body (σῶμα) may not hinder the soul from contemplating the *ideai* of Justice, Beauty and the Good. Consequently, he conceives philosophical perfection as possible only at death when the philosopher's soul is fully separated from his body and can, henceforth, dwell with the gods.<sup>54</sup>

The breadth and depth of Plato's ethical reflections are remarkable and, along with the traditional Homeric concept of *aretē*, will dictate the course of subsequent ethical reflections right up to Late Antiquity. This is to be said for not only his successors, but also those who differ significantly from him, like the Stoics or Epicureans. For even in the case of the latter two, their philosophical reflections on ethics cannot be fully appreciated except within the ethical framework provided by Plato and Homer.

#### *The Platonic Tradition*

Among the successors to the Platonic tradition, the greatest is most certainly Aristotle (384-322).<sup>55</sup> Despite his philosophical differences from his mentor, Aristotle's ethics is, by and large, a development of Plato's ethical ideals.<sup>56</sup> Like Plato, Aristotle believes that the "chief good" of humanity is *eudaimonia*.<sup>57</sup> While acknowledging that "the

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<sup>54</sup> *Phd.* 65d-69c. For a helpful discussion of Plato's understanding of the moral virtues and their role in assisting the philosopher in contemplating true reality, see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 1-17.

<sup>55</sup> Prior goes so far as to declare Aristotle's ethics as the culmination of "the history of Greek philosophical thought about virtue." Prior, 144.

<sup>56</sup> Karamanolis, 25, 60, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Where Aristotle differs is his conviction that *eudaimonia* can only be derived from "what is knowable *in relation* to us" and not Plato's theory of the invisible forms. *Eth. Nic.* 1094a1-22, 1095a17-22.

chief good will be a kind of pleasure,” Aristotle also asserts that the more important aspects of *eudaimonia* consist of participation in the political life and a life of contemplation (ὁ πολιτικός καὶ τρίτος ὁ θεωρητικός).<sup>58</sup>

With regard to the *politikos*, Aristotle considers the Homeric view of *timē* as the *telos* of the political life to be inadequate and argues instead that “people of discernment” do not seek *timē* for its own sake, but rather for the sake of their *aretē*.<sup>59</sup> Presumably then, the *telos* of *politikos* is *aretē* and not *timē* itself. Having said this, Aristotle differs significantly from the Plato and his Academic successors by asserting that *aretē* alone is insufficient for *eudaimonia*, since no one would regard a virtuous person who is asleep, suffering or even ugly as being *eudaimōn*. Rather, external goods are necessary for complete human *eudaimonia*.<sup>60</sup>

As for the contemplative life, it is essentially participation in the activity of intelligence (θεωρητική). Such a work, says Aristotle, is most akin to the human nature and the “highest kind of activity” that has “no end beside itself.”<sup>61</sup> Through *theōrētikē*, a human being can also enjoy “pleasures amazing in purity and stability,” and the most enduring feature of the reflective life: self-sufficiency (αὐτάρκεια).<sup>62</sup> Indeed, *theōrētikē* is

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 1095b2-4, 5-11, 17-19; 1153a14, 1153b4.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 1095b29-30.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 1095b13, 22-23, 29-30, 1099a7-8, 32-33.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. 1177a12-22, 1178a9-14, 22-25, 1177b4, 16-26.

<sup>62</sup> For Aristotle, intellectual reflection is an individualistic activity because it is the one activity that a person can engage in alone and be self-sufficient with. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that one can benefit even more if he reflects with others. Ibid. 1177a12-1177b1 (Rowe, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 250-51).

higher than the human plane; for it is not in so far as he is human that he will live like this, but in so far as there is something divine in him, and to the degree that this is superior to the compound, to that degree will its activity too be superior to that in accordance with the rest of *aretē*. If, then, intelligence (νοῦς) is something divine (θεῖον) as compared to a human being, so too a life lived in accordance with this will be divine as compared to a human life.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, like Plato, Aristotle postulates two *teloi* for the virtuous life. The first, *politikos*, is akin to Plato's vision for the philosopher-king, while the second vision of the contemplative life parallels, in some ways, that which is depicted in Plato's *Phaedo* and *Theatetus*. Where Aristotle differs is the fact that he articulates more clearly his belief that the *politikos* is merely a means to the latter and greater end, that is, to contemplate like the gods, since it is in this that the "complete *eudaimonia* of man" consists.<sup>64</sup>

With regard to human psychology, Aristotle concurs with Plato that the soul is constituted by two aspects: the non-rational and the rational, the former of which is where the appetitive part (ἐπιθυμητικόν) resides.<sup>65</sup> Corresponding to this bipartite psychology is his two-fold conception of the *aretai*. The first is moral *aretai* (ἠθικοί) like *andreia*, *sophrosunē*, and *eleutherios* (open-handedness), while the second is intellectual *aretai* (διανοητικοί), where there are two aspects: the practical, which is wisdom (φρόνησις) and the theoretical, which is intellectual accomplishment (σοφία).<sup>66</sup> For Aristotle, *phronēsis*

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 1177b26-31 (Rowe, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 250-51).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 1177a24, 1177b8-9.

<sup>65</sup> Where Aristotle differs from Plato is his exclusion of the spirited part from his psychological model. Ibid. 1102b.

<sup>66</sup> Earlier, we mentioned that Plato, in his *Euthydemus*, speaks of *sophia* as the knowledge, or *epistēmē*, of using one's goods rightly. In *Meno* 88C, he also stresses the need for *phronēseōs* to guide all the undertaking of the soul. Clearly then, Aristotle's present conception of *phronēsis* is similar to that of Plato. Where they differ is the fact that Plato seems to use *sophia* and *phronēsis*

consists in one's ability "to deliberate well about things that are good and advantageous to himself," while *sophia* refers to excellence in purely theoretical knowledge, or *epistēmē*, and technical expertise (τέχνη), e.g., knowledge of astronomy.<sup>67</sup>

It is with these in mind that Aristotle argues that the *ēthikoi* are cultivated through a process of habituation, guided by the principle of means (μεσότης) and *phronesis*.<sup>68</sup> This, as he puts it elsewhere, essentially calls for a mastery over one's passions (πάθη), so that one might nurture a disposition for what is good and the ability to will (προαίρεσις) to act according to the *mesotēs* predicated in each character *aretai*.<sup>69</sup> With regards to the intellectual *aretai* (*dianoētikos*), however, it is simply the development of one's abstract knowledge and this is to be pursued for its own sake, with no bearing upon practical wisdom (*phronesis*).<sup>70</sup>

In the case of Plato's immediate successors, Speusippus (c.348-339), Xenocrates of Chalcedon (339-315) and Polemo of Athens (315-269), our knowledge of their ethical philosophy is far more fragmentary than our knowledge of Aristotle's ethics.

Nevertheless, from what we can gather, it appears that their teachings, like those of

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interchangeably, while Aristotle understands *sophia* as referring primarily to abstract knowledge, thus the translation of 'intellectual accomplishment' here. *Euthydemus* 279D-282A.

<sup>67</sup> *Eth. Nic.* 1139a20-25.

<sup>68</sup> For Aristotle, *ēthikoi* can only be learnt through practice, since "we become just by doing just things [and] moderate by doing moderate things." Concurrently, each *ēthikos*, e.g., *sophrosunē* and *andreia*, can be destroyed by excess and deficiency. These can only be preserved by learning how to do "what is intermediate (*mesotētos*) between them." *Ibid.* 1102a27-28, 1102b23, 1103a2-10, 18-20.1103a25, 1104b11-13.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* 1097a8-10, 1104a33-1104b3, 1105b19-28, 1106b14-1107a12, 1108b20-26, 1109a30, 1109b30-1110b18.

<sup>70</sup> Broadie, "Philosophical Introduction," 46.

Aristotle, are fairly similar to that of Plato. Like Plato and Aristotle, Speusippus, Xenocrates and Polemo recognize human goods like health, strength and wealth as valid forms of *agatha*, even though they regard the *aretai* as higher than these goods.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, they conceive the human being as “far more pre-eminent” than the other creatures, since the human soul is “from the divine mind (*ex mente divina*)” and “can be compared with nothing else [...] save God alone.”<sup>72</sup>

A strong continuity with Platonic ethics is also observed among the Middle and Neo Platonists from the first to the third century. To be sure, these philosophers rarely take on board Plato’s ethical proposals entirely. Nonetheless, the questions that he raised continued to preoccupy their ethical reflections.<sup>73</sup> Like his Platonic predecessors, Antiochus of Ascalon (c.130-68) would affirm that bodily goods are important for one’s ultimate good (*summum bonum*) even though the *aretai* of the soul must always take precedence.<sup>74</sup> Yet, when it comes to the question of how one might cultivate *aretai*, he adopts the Stoic position instead by declaring that the *pathē*, as the non-rational part of the

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<sup>71</sup> This is, of course, an interesting consensus since it runs contrary to Plato’s view of human goods as given in the *Phaedo* and *Theaetetus*. Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions, Against the Stoics* 1065a; John M. Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy (347-274 B.C.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 66-67; *DF* 4.49.

<sup>72</sup> Cicero, *TD* 5.38-39; Dillon, 148.

<sup>73</sup> Dogmatic Platonism had declined for a brief period when the Academy made a decisive turn towards philosophical scepticism and ethical agnosticism in the third century B.C. It was subsequently revived towards the end of the first century B.C. by Middle Platonists like Antiochus of Ascalon. Cicero *Acad* II.77; A. A. Long, “The Socratic Legacy,” in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 640; A. A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics*, 2nd ed., *Classical Life and Letters*. (London: Duckworth, 1986), 78.

<sup>74</sup> *DF* 5.68-9.

soul, do not aid the cultivation of *aretai* in any way.<sup>75</sup> Plutarch (46-122), on the other hand, takes a more thorough Platonic position by maintaining that the soul is divided into its rational and non-rational aspects, the latter of which consists of the appetitive and spirited parts. Furthermore, he asserts that the *pathos* plays an important role in one's cultivation of moral virtues (*ἦθος*), since *ēthos* is simply an acquired state of the *pathos*, after it has been properly bred by habit dictated by reason.<sup>76</sup> Like Aristotle, he also divides the soul's *aretai* into practical and contemplative *aretai*, and affirms that *aretē* is the mean of the passions.<sup>77</sup>

This bipartite human psychology is also observed in the teachings of the Neoplatonists, Atticus (c.175) and Plotinus (204-270). Plotinus, for example, teaches that the human soul is divided into the outer and inner man, the former of which constitutes the living functions, while the latter is the human intellect and the human's true, immortal and divine self.<sup>78</sup> Consequently, *eudaimonia* is attained through the intellective soul's contemplation of the True Being of the transcendental realm. Moreover, as a philosopher is increasingly assimilated into the divine Form of the Good, he would also find himself transformed into an increasingly moral person.<sup>79</sup>

### *The Cynics and Stoics*

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<sup>75</sup> *Acad.* 2.39.

<sup>76</sup> *virt. mor.* 441e-f, 442b, 443d.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 443e-f, 445a.

<sup>78</sup> *Enn.* 1.1.4.18-25; 1.1.10.5-15; Karamanolis, 222-3.

<sup>79</sup> *Enn.* 1.7.1.14-22; 3.8.6.1-6; *Ibid.* 233.

Apart from the Platonists, the most influential Greek ethical tradition remains that of the Stoics. According to Diogenes Laertius, the Stoics are the successors of the Cynics, whose origins may be traced back to Socrates.<sup>80</sup> Cynicism, as demonstrated in the lives of Diogenes of Sinope (c.412-323) and the later Cynics, by and large operates within an ethical framework similar to that of Platonism.<sup>81</sup> Like the Platonists, they affirm that the goal of human life is *eudaimonia*. They differ, however, by insisting that *eudaimonia* is possible only when one leads every moment of his life in accordance to nature (*kata phusin*), that is, a life of self-sufficiency (*αὐτάρκεια*) that follows only the laws affirmed by reason, and not those respected by human customs. Nevertheless, they agree with the Platonists that *eudaimonia*, or in this case, the simple and peaceful life of the gods, can only be reached through the discipline of *askēsis*. For it is through *askēsis* that one can tame his passions and help his reason properly recognize what is essential for *eudaimonia* and what is irrelevant for it, such as the possession of human goods or fulfilling the demands of social or political allegiance.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> The first Cynic, as Diogenes Laertius tells us, is Antisthenes, who inaugurated the Cynic lifestyle by imitating Socrates' patient endurance (*καρτερία*) and disregard for the passions (*ἀπάθεια*). *Vit. Phil.* 6.2.

<sup>81</sup> Diogenes of Sinope is the most famous of the Cynics and, as tradition tells us, is the disciple of Antisthenes. Although Diogenes Laertius attributes a number of writings to Diogenes, none of these are extant. What we have bequeathed to us instead are a series of anecdotes about his life, which powerfully presents Cynicism as primarily a way of life rather than a system of philosophical ideals. Donald Reynolds Dudley, *A History of Cynicism: From Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D.* (London: Methuen, 1937), 1-16; Luis E. Navia, *Diogenes of Sinope: The Man in the Tub*, Contributions in Philosophy (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 33, 52, 62, 110.

<sup>82</sup> Although a Cynic may aspire for the divine life, he is generally agnostic about the existence of gods and in fact dismisses the value of religion for ethical improvement. Navia, 113-27.

The Cynic tenets of *kata phusin* and *autarkeia* would be popularized by the Stoics, who develop these ideals by recasting them within a theological-cosmological framework.<sup>83</sup> “There is no other or more fitting way to tackle the theory of the good and bad things, the *aretai* and *eudaimonia*,” says Chrysippus (c.281-206), “than on the basis of nature (φύσις) as a whole and the administration of the *kosmos*.<sup>84</sup> As the Stoics understand it, *kosmos* is to be understood not only as an “orderly arrangement of heavenly bodies,” but as God himself, that is,

a living being, immortal, rational, perfect or intelligent in *eudaimonia*, admitting nothing evil [into him], taking providential care of the world and all that therein is, but he is not of human shape.<sup>85</sup>

Due to God’s “providential care for the world,” every creature, say the Stoics, has the natural tendency to pursue what is appropriate for itself. In the case of human beings, we are endowed with not only a first impulse towards self-preservation, but more importantly with the faculty of the reason (νοῦς) that permeates the entire *kosmos*. Accordingly then, to live a life of *kata phusin* is to live according to reason (λόγος). It is in this way that one becomes *enaretos* and attains *eudaimonia*.<sup>86</sup> When this happens, one will

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<sup>83</sup> Zeno (333-264), the founder of Stoicism, is known to be a disciple of Crates the Cynic. It is Chrysippus, however, who proves to be the intellectual giant of early Stoicism.” *Vit. Phil.* 7.1-4, 183. Susan Sauy Meyer, *Ancient Ethics: A Critical Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 134.

<sup>84</sup> Plutarch, *Stoic. Rep.* 1035c [Translation modified and quoted from Brian Inwood, “Stoic Ethics,” in *Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 675]. The Stoics, adds Diogenes Laertius, often liken the intricate and interdependent relationship between physics, ethics and logic to that of the egg yolk, egg white and shell of an egg. *Vit. Phil.* 7.39-42.

<sup>85</sup> *Vit. Phil.* 7.147 (Hicks, 251).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 7.94.

not only refrain “from every action forbidden by the law common to all things,” but also find his actions in harmony with the “purpose of he who orders the whole [*kosmos*].”

There are several implications for such a conception of *eudaimonia*. First of all, *aretē* is no longer regarded as the means to *eudaimonia*, but as the end or *eudaimonia* itself.

Secondly, since true *aretē* is bound up with reason, only those *aretai* which are “scientific and based on theory,” e.g., *phronēsis* and *dikaiosunē*, will be regarded as valid forms of *agatha*, worthy of cultivation. External goods, like health and wealth, are deemed as indifferent for *eudaimonia*.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, the Stoics do often regard some external goods as worthy of pursuit. For example, they will praise parental love, marriage and child-bearing as entirely virtuous, since these are valid expressions of *kata phusin*. Moreover, they also deem it appropriate for the wise to participate in politics, since this would restrain vice and promote *aretē*, which coheres with the nature of the *kosmos*.<sup>88</sup>

Thirdly, the Stoics, unlike the Platonists, situate the passions in the faculty of reason.<sup>89</sup> Such passions, as understood by Zeno and Chrysippus, arise whenever a person exercises his judgment and assents to an irrational impression made upon him.<sup>90</sup> Since *eudaimonia* is grounded in a life of reason, to be *enaretos* is essentially to live a passionless

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<sup>87</sup> The only Stoic to regard external goods as *agatha* is Posidonius. Ibid. 7.102-03.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. 7.120-21, 124.

<sup>89</sup> As Seneca puts it, reason and passion do not “dwell apart, in isolation from one another. Reason and passion are the mind’s transformation for better or for worse.” Seneca, *Ir.* 1.8.3 (Translation from Meyer, *Ancient Ethics*, 160).

<sup>90</sup> *Vit. Phil.* 7.110; Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 34.

life (*apatheia*), where one's irrational passions are completely eradicated.<sup>91</sup> Having said this, the Stoics do affirm the cultivation of three good emotional states (*ευπάθεια*), namely joy (*χαρά*), discretion (*εὐλάβεια*) and wish (*βούλησις*), which are the counterparts of pleasure, fear and desire (*epithumia*).<sup>92</sup>

Fourthly, the Stoics concur with the Platonists that a life of *aretē* can be cultivated by training, since the *aretai* are teachable and that moral progress (*προκοπή*) is possible.<sup>93</sup> Whosoever desires a philosophic life, as Zeno puts it, will obtain aid in "moderate exercise" (*ἄσκησις*) and instruction, and finds it easy "to acquire *aretē* in perfection."<sup>94</sup> Not unlike Aristotle, they affirm that a person is truly *enaretos* when he is able to act out of a virtuous disposition (*διαθέσις*) and habit (*ἔξις*).<sup>95</sup> However, they are also convinced that one's pursuit of *aretē* is entirely controlled by divine providence, a determinism which compels them to conclude that only some are fated to become sages, that is, entirely virtuous people.<sup>96</sup> Nonetheless, as Cleanthes insist, each man remains morally responsible since "Zeus wills everything except the actions of bad men."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *Vit. Phil.* 7.117; *DF* III.35.

<sup>92</sup> *Vit. Phil.* 7.116.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 7.91.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* 7.8-9 (Hicks, *Lives*, vol. 2, 119).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* 7.98; *DF* 3.59.

<sup>96</sup> Tad Brennan, *The Stoic Life: Emotions, Duties and Fate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 235-36.

<sup>97</sup> Cleanthes' remark quoted from F. H. Sandbach, *The Stoics*, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1989), 101; John M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 113-32.

### *Hedonism: The Cyrenaics and Epicureans*

Like the Cynics, the Cyrenaics also claim their origins from another Socratic associate, Aristippus of Cyrene (Aristippus Senior).<sup>98</sup> Like many of the Greek philosophers, Aristippus believes that one can attain *eudaimonia* when he develops self-sufficiency, or mastery (*ικανός*). This happens when one is able to adapt himself and feel at ease in any circumstances in life.<sup>99</sup> Ultimately, this *ikanos* should also help a person become free to pursue “a life of the greatest ease and pleasure that can be had.”<sup>100</sup> These hedonistic ideals will be developed by Aristippus Younger, who argues that *eudaimonia* is simply the “sum total of all particular [short-term] pleasures.” Accordingly then, all *aretai*, whether intellectual, moral or external, are to be valued not for their own sake, but for their ability to maximise one’s pleasures. Like most Greek ethical traditions, he also affirms that such *aretai* can only be acquired through bodily training or *askēsis*.<sup>101</sup>

A more enduring philosophy of hedonism, however, is to be found in the teachings of Epicurus (341-270). Like the Cyreniacs, Epicurus presupposes that all knowledge is grounded on our sensory perception. Consequently, “pleasure (*ἡδονή*) is our first and kindred good,” “the end and aim.” Unlike the Cyreniacs, Epicurus believes that pleasure can be either mental or bodily and that true pleasure is “the absence of pain in the body

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<sup>98</sup> *DF* 5.20.

<sup>99</sup> *Vit. Phil.* 2.66, 68.

<sup>100</sup> *Mem.* 2.1.1, 2.1.9-11.

<sup>101</sup> It is noteworthy that Cyrenaic hedonism, like the other philosophical traditions, is pluralistic. Hegesias would go so far as to doubt whether *eudaimonia* is possible, in view of the pervasiveness of suffering. *Vit. Phil.* 2.91-94.

and of trouble in the soul.”<sup>102</sup> Moreover, “Nature’s wealth,” as he sees it, “at once has its bounds and is easy to procure; but the wealth of vain fancies recedes to an infinite distance.” Hence, *eudaimonia* must consist only in the pursuit of pleasures that are natural and necessary. This, in turn, calls for the use of one’s sober reasoning to discern “the grounds of every choice and avoidance,” and to accustom oneself to a simple lifestyle devoid of all unnatural activities, including *paideia*. When this happens, a philosopher will lose “all semblance of mortality” and lives a divine life, “in the midst of immortal blessings.”<sup>103</sup>

By postulating *eudaimonia* as *qua* pleasure, Epicurus is inadvertently led to conclude that the *aretai* should not be pursued for their own sake, but to be valued only for their ability to increase one’s overall pleasure, that is, they have an instrumental value. Thus, *dikaiousunē*, according to Epicurus, should be valued only as a social contract or a means of preventing human beings from harming one another.<sup>104</sup>

### *The Legacy of Greco-Roman Ethics*

In view of the above, it should be apparent that, despite their philosophical differences, the major Greek philosophical traditions share several similarities in their approach to ethics. To begin with, they generally conceive ethics in terms of a framework of means and ends, which they most likely inherited from the Homeric period.

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<sup>102</sup> *Vit. Phil.* 10.129, 131, 136.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 10.5, 131-32, 135.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 10.129, 132, 138; X.150.

Specifically, *aretē* is to be understood as a means by which a human being attains the *telos* of his life, be it *timē*, *hēdonē*, *kata phusin* or whatever else they commonly regard as *eudaimonia*. Moreover, the *aretai* are frequently understood as exercised for the sake of others, be it one's *oikos* or the *polis*. In their different ways, both Plato and Aristotle would assert that the *politikos* is not only a valid aspect of *eudaimonia*, but is necessarily bound up with one's *oikos* and fellow citizens.<sup>105</sup> The same can be said for the Stoics, who, despite their belief that external goods are indifferent for human *eudaimonia*, would, nonetheless, affirm the social and political life as a valid expression of *kata phusin*.

Having said this, Greek ethical enquiry does often gravitate towards a more individualised understanding of *aretē*. This is already present in Plato's *Phaedo*, where philosophical *eudaimonia* is presented as the soul's departure from human life, so that it can enjoy the bliss of the gods. In this context, moral virtue is understood merely as a means of purifying one's soul and body, rather than exercised for the sake of the other. This tendency is certainly presumed in the Cynics' stress on *kata phusin*, which is often upheld as antithetical to the *politikos*. This individualism is only intensified in the teachings of hedonists, where pleasure is taken to be *eudaimonia* itself and *aretē* is regarded as useful only to the extent that it increases one's personal pleasures, or as Epicurus puts it, the bliss of immortal life.

This brings us to the diverse ways in which the philosophers understand the role of the gods in *aretē* ethics. By and large, the Homeric epics are ambivalent about the moral stance of the gods and often present them as taking a passive role in the human exercise of

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<sup>105</sup> *Rep.* 354A, 335b-e; *Eth. Nic.* 1094b7-11, 1097a32, 1097b9-11.

*aretē*. To be sure, the classical period saw a growing conviction that the *nomoi* of the *polis* is reminiscent of that of the gods. Indeed, philosophers as different as the Platonists and Epicureans would unhesitatingly regard the life of the gods, or the divine life, to be the ideal expression of human *aretē* and *eudaimonia*. Nevertheless, their ethical enquiry continued to presume, to different extents, a degree of divine passivity in the human development of *aretē*. A weak form of this assumption is seen in Plato, who, despite his recognition that the philosophic nature is the gift of the gods, does not say much about the role that they may play in the human development of *aretai*. A stronger form of divine passivity is to be found in the ethics of the Cynics and Epicureans, where both Diogenes of Sinope and Epicurus are agnostic about the existence of the gods, with Diogenes even dismissing the value of religion altogether.<sup>106</sup> It is only among the Stoics that we encounter a more theological approach towards ethics, where human rationality and potential for *aretē* is not only attributed to divine providence, but *eudaimonia* is posited as existing only when there is harmony between God, the *kosmos* and humanity.

With regards to the nature of *aretē*, most Greek ethical discourse from Aristotle onwards tend to present the *aretai* as separable, though not necessarily to the exclusion of the unitary view. The Platonists and Stoics, in particular, would categorize the *aretai* into those that are *agathon* by nature and external goods, and are convinced that the cultivation of the former is crucial for human *eudaimonia*, with the Stoics going so far as to regard a life of *aretē* as *eudaimonia* itself.<sup>107</sup> They differ significantly, however, on the value of external

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<sup>106</sup> Navia, 113; *Vit. Phil.* X.123, 139

<sup>107</sup> Aristotle, as mentioned earlier, would sub-divide the natural *agatha* into moral *aretai* and intellectual *aretai*.

goods. On the one end is Aristotle, who believes that external goods are necessary for *eudaimonia*. On the opposite end are the Cynics and Stoics, who consider human goods as indifferent for *eudaimonia* altogether. Taking the middle ground are the Platonists, who, despite their hesitation to regard human goods as necessary for *eudaimonia*, would, nevertheless, treat them as valid forms of *agatha*. Opposed to these are the hedonists, who generally adopt an instrumental approach to the nurture of *aretē*, which more often than not, leads them to stress the value of human goods, as opposed to the intellectual *aretai*.

Interestingly, all ethical traditions would stress the importance of living one's life according to reason. As taught explicitly by the Platonists and Stoics, this presumes not only a body-soul duality, but also the recognition that the soul can be divided into its rational and irrational aspects, notwithstanding the different conceptions of this division. Such a division can, of course, be traced as far back as the Platonic *Dialogues*. More importantly, this stress on the use of one's reason would compel all the ethical traditions to agree on the importance of *askēsis* for human *eudaimonia*. What is emphasized here is the training of one's soul and reason, so that human rationality may lead the irrational aspects of the soul and cultivate the *aretai* necessary for *eudaimonia*.

Clearly then, while there is no such thing as a homogeneous Greek ethical tradition, it is manifestly clear that the different Greco-Roman ethical traditions share a familial resemblance. What they bequeath to Late Antiquity is not only a series of similar ethical categories and concerns, but also a rich number of possibilities for how these categories may be configured and developed. This, in turn, provides a rich context by which we can discuss and nuance our understanding of Chrysostom's reception of Greco-Roman ethics.

## Chrysostom's Ethical Vision

### *Chrysostom's Reception of Greco-Roman Ethics*

While scholars generally concur that there are significant parallels between Chrysostom's ethical ideals and Greco-Roman ethics, it remains debatable as to how Chrysostom appropriated these ethical traditions. Whittaker, in his comparison of Christian and pagan morality in the Roman Empire, concludes that the early church fathers, including Chrysostom, generally believe that "the ethics prescribed by pagan philosophers coincide with those required for the practice of Christianity." With respect to Chrysostom, he adds that the bishop's moral ideals, by and large, operate within the framework and assumptions of Platonic ethical discourse.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, Osborn and Baur affirm that Chrysostom's ethics are often similar to that of the Platonists and Stoics. In the case of Osborn, he goes even further by speculating, perhaps unfairly, that Chrysostom, towards the end of his life and exile, had become more Stoic-Platonic than Christian in his ethical outlook.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the above, one must resist the temptation to conclude hastily that Chrysostom's ethics is largely Stoic or Platonic. Such a conclusion is clearly problematic or, to say the least, unhelpful, in view of our above discussions of Greco-Roman ethics. As we have argued earlier, by Chrysostom's time, many of the ethical categories and frameworks propounded by the different ethical traditions have passed on into common currency for both pagan and Christian ethical discourse. As a result, it is hardly illuminating for us to

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<sup>108</sup> Whittaker, "Christianity and Morality in the Roman Empire," 214, 219-221.

<sup>109</sup> Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, vol. 1, 308; Osborn, *Ethical Patterns*, 121.

say that Chrysostom's ethics is Platonic and Stoic when a similar conception can be found in other traditions of ethical discourse.

This difficulty is further compounded by Glucker's suggestion that "the average educated Greek most probably read very little Plato, just as the average educated Englishman reads very little Hobbes, Locke or Hume." Rather, if such a person wishes to be acquainted with Platonic philosophy, he would read instead "the usual literature written for that purpose: the various biographies, doxographies and mixtures of the two."<sup>110</sup> This seems to be the case for Chrysostom whose frequent references to Greek philosophers are mostly biographical and, indeed, strongly parallels those recorded in Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* and, on occasions, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.<sup>111</sup> For example, he would chide Aristippus for his immorality and condemn Zeno and Apollonia of Tyana for introducing "foreign ways of living." In the case of Diogenes of Sinope, however, he would both censure his indecency and praise him for his contempt of wealth and concern for ethics.<sup>112</sup> This is not to say that Chrysostom does not discuss the philosophers' doctrines at all. Indeed, he does occasionally refer to the teachings of

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<sup>110</sup> John Glucker, "Images of Plato in Late Antiquity," in *Physics, Cosmology and Astronomy, 1300-1700: Tension and Accommodation*, ed. Sabetai Unguru, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science (Dordrecht/ Boston/ London: Kluwer Academic, 1991), 5.

<sup>111</sup> Lamberton makes the interesting and plausible suggestion that Plutarch probably intended his *Parallel Lives* to be an aid for his students' rhetorical training. The same, I believe, can be said for Diogenes' *Lives*, which is similarly preoccupied with the biographical anecdotes of the philosophers rather than their teachings and is, therefore, well suited for the needs of rhetorical education. For these reasons, it is quite probable that Chrysostom read these books, or books similar to these, during the course of his rhetorical training. P.R. Coleman-Norton, "St. John Chrysostom and the Greek Philosophers," *Classical Philology* 25 (1930): 306-08, 314-16; Robert Lamberton, *Plutarch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 144-45; Jørgen Mejer, *Diogenes Laertius and His Hellenistic Background* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978), 4.

<sup>112</sup> PG 48.886; 57.188, 392.

philosophers like Anaximenes, Pythagoras and Plato.<sup>113</sup> Yet, his references are so infrequent that they can hardly constitute a grasp of the philosophers' teachings beyond the mere acquaintance.<sup>114</sup>

In view of the above, Chrysostom's reception of Greco-Roman ethics is more likely mediated through Late Antique culture and the Greco-Roman literature that he was exposed to, rather than derived from a deliberate study of the philosophers' writings. Hence, it would be a mistake for one to assert that Chrysostom's ethics is Platonic or Stoic, unless he means to use these terms simply as shorthand for the ethical categories shared by most of the Greco-Roman ethical traditions. Rather, a more profitable way of evaluating Chrysostom's reception of Greco-Roman ethics is to examine the continuities and discontinuities between his ethics and the major Greco-Roman ethical categories and approaches that have proven to be enduring and popular. This will be our focus for the remaining chapter.

### *Chrysostom's Aretē Ethics*

We begin first of all with Chrysostom's understanding of the nature of *aretē*. Like Homer, Herodotus and other pre-classical writers, Chrysostom often understands *aretē* as referring to the excellence or quality inherent to a subject. Thus, he would speak of the *aretē* of the flesh as its subjection to the soul, while that of a wife as her wisdom, discretion

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<sup>113</sup> A good example is Book II of his *Adversus Oppugnatores*, where Chrysostom quotes extensively from Plato's *Crito* 45. *adv. oppug.* 2.4.

<sup>114</sup> This is quite unlike the writings of earlier Christians like Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr and Origen, who were clearly familiar with the different philosophical traditions. Indeed, Clement's voluminous *Stromateis* and Origen's *Contra Celsum* are milestones in Christian discussion of Greco-Roman philosophies.

and care, not her riches.<sup>115</sup> In a similar vein, a teacher's *aretē* is to lead his students to salvation, rather to seek honour and glory.<sup>116</sup> More often than not, however, Chrysostom would follow the major Greco-Roman ethical traditions by using the term to denote moral excellence in general.<sup>117</sup>

Like the Greek philosophers from Aristotle onwards, Chrysostom generally presumes a multiplicity of *aretai*. These include not only the four cardinal virtues of *sōphrosunē*, *dikaiosunē*, *andreia* and *phronēsis*,<sup>118</sup> but also what might be understood as distinctively Christian *aretai*: faith, love (ἀγάπη), hospitality (φιλοξενία), mercy or almsgiving (ἐλεημοσύνη), humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη), patient endurance (ὑπομονή), forbearance (μακροθυμία), persistency in prayer and even a spiritual *phronēsis* that is capable of overcoming demonic powers.<sup>119</sup> To be sure, several of these virtues are not absent from Greek ethical or religious life. Nevertheless, they would hardly be recognized as distinct forms of *aretai* in their own right, worthy of ascetic cultivation.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *hom. in Eph.* 5, 20 (PG 62.41.26-27; 62.42.25-26; 62.146.51).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 8 (PG 62.55.23).

<sup>117</sup> This is evident in his frequent reference to *aretē* as moral excellence in his twenty-four homilies on the *Epistle to the Ephesians*. *Ibid.* 1, 4, 7, 9 (PG 62.12.49-50, 62.24.20, 62.35.20, 62.37.29, 62.38.2, 62.52.13, 62.75.2).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 24 (PG 62.174.45-46).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 10, 24 (PG 62.76-32-36, 62.173.21); Papageorgiou, 211-20.

<sup>120</sup> One of the most comprehensive Greco-Roman catalogues of *aretai* is that of Aristotle, as given in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: courage, open-handedness, munificence, greatness-of-soul, mild-temperedness, friendliness, ingenuity, righteous indignation, proper sense of shame and the mean between imposture and self-deprecation. As can be seen, there is very little, if any overlap between this traditional understanding of *aretai* and those expounded by Chrysostom. *Eth. Nic.* 1107b1-5, 10-31, 1108a5-b5, 1127a13-14, 1128a9-10.

In line with Plato and, more specifically, the Stoics, Chrysostom further assumes that an entirely virtuous person must necessarily possess all the *aretai*, rather than just a few.<sup>121</sup> Just as all five senses are necessary to our body, he explains, so should we have all the *aretai*.

Now if someone is temperate, but is merciless, or he is merciful, but greedy, or is able to abstain from what belongs to others, yet not sharing what belongs to him, all these becomes purposeless. For one *aretē* alone is insufficient to present us to the judgment seat of Christ with confidence, but it is necessary for our [*aretai* to be] many and varied and of every sort and of every kind.<sup>122</sup>

Chrysostom's reciprocal approach to *aretai* clearly parallels that of the Stoics, who would only regard a person as a sage when he has attained total moral perfection. Having said this, Chrysostom's conviction is grounded not so much so on the Stoic notion of *kata phusin*, that is, that one must be entirely rational before he becomes a sage, than it is on Jesus' admonition in the Sermon on the Mount: "whosoever shall break one of these least commandments shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven."<sup>123</sup> As we shall see, this reconfiguration of Greco-Roman ethical categories in the light of Christian teachings is a common phenomenon that runs throughout Chrysostom's ethical reflections.

This is evident in (what appears to be) a unitary view of *aretē* that he occasionally propounds in his homilies. Like Plato's earlier dialogues, Chrysostom can speak of *dikaiosunē* as the universal *aretē* and that the Christian's breastplate of *dikaiosunē* refers,

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<sup>121</sup> As mentioned earlier, Plato, in his *Laws* would have the Athenian declare that courage comes fourth in the order of merit and criticise the Spartans for their obsession with courage to the exclusion of the other *aretai*. *Laws* 630c-d.

<sup>122</sup> *hom. in Eph. 4* (PG 62.34.28-38).

<sup>123</sup> Matthew 5.19; *hom. in Eph. 4* (NPNF I.13, 68); Brennan, 36-7.

essentially, to “a life that is wholly *enaretos*.”<sup>124</sup> On other occasions, however, he can also declare that “*agapē* is the mother of all good things,” or indeed, “*aretē* [is] from love, and love is from *aretē*.”<sup>125</sup> Having said this, in his exposition of the motif of pilgrimage in Hebrews 11.13-16, he would assert instead that

the first *aretē*, and the whole *aretē* [is] to be a stranger to this world and a pilgrim (*παρεπίδημον*), and to have nothing in common with things here, but to be detached from them, as strange things [to us], just like the blessed [saints].<sup>126</sup>

Quite obviously, Chrysostom’s presentation of the unity of *aretē* is largely determined by the Scriptural texts that he is preaching from. Undoubtedly, there is some degree of rhetorical hyperbole here, which leads to, what may seem at first sight, a contradiction in his views. Nevertheless, these apparent contradictions can be reconciled once we recognize that each of these arguments shares a common ground, or as Plato calls it, an *epistēmē*. Specifically, it is the *epistēmē* of God and His *agapē*, that is, He has first loved humanity, so that humanity might love Him and His creation. It is on this basis that one can speak of *agapē*, *dikaïosunē* or even *parepidēmos* as the whole of *aretē*, since each of these is but an expression of the *epistēmē* of divine *agapē*.

If *aretē* is essentially the *epistēmē* of a loving God, the corollary must be that human *eudaimonia* cannot be the self-sufficient autonomy, or *autarkeia*, commonly propounded by Aristotle or the Stoics. Neither is it attained through the mere cultivation of human *aretai* or living a life that is *kata phusin*. Rather, *eudaimonia* is to be found in one’s participation in the *agapē* of God, which, as Chrysostom puts it elsewhere, is also bound up with the love

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<sup>124</sup> *hom. in Eph.* 13 (PG 62.96.38) and 24 (PG 62.167.55-56).

<sup>125</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 7 (PG 60.447.43); *hom. in Eph.* 9 (PG 62.73.60-74.8).

<sup>126</sup> *hom. in Heb.* 24 (PG 63.165.57-60).

of one's neighbour.<sup>127</sup> For Chrysostom, such a conception of *eudaimonia* has three implications on how we should understand the role of *aretai*, or the *agatha*, in the attainment of *eudaimonia*.

First of all, if *eudaimonia* is nothing less than participation in the love of God and to be able to imitate His love for others, this must also mean that one must become *like* God in the first place and to acquire His moral *aretai*, such as love, justice and wisdom. This is certainly the view of Chrysostom, who, in both his Genesis homilies and those preached elsewhere, would often affirm the Alexandrian-Cappadocian conception of salvation as the attainment of divine likeness – a formulation that is, of course, greatly indebted to Plato.<sup>128</sup>

Secondly, the same conception of *eudaimonia* also obliges Chrysostom to regard the external goods as both the expressions of the divine *agapē* and the means by which one can abide by this *agapē*. Both views find their clearest expressions in his *Homily 10 on Philippians*, where he reflects extensively on Christian stewardship of external goods. In this homily, Chrysostom adopts the common Platonic-Stoic assumption that external goods should be distinguished from moral *aretai* and that the former are not *agatha* by nature and are, therefore, unnecessary for *eudaimonia*. It is for this reason that Chrysostom, towards the end of his sermon, would caution his listeners not to flee from poverty as though it is evil nor pursue riches as though they are *agatha*. Nevertheless, he does concur

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<sup>127</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 71.1.

<sup>128</sup> See pp. 29 for Plato's vision of *eudaimonia* as the human being attaining divine likeness and the human *polis* taking on the divine form. For the early Christians and Chrysostom's appropriation of this idea, see Chapter 3, pp. 135-36, 144-146.

with the Platonists that external goods are the gifts or the *agatha* of God, given to humanity for our need and enjoyment.<sup>129</sup> Where he differs from the Platonists is his clear recognition that since humanity has its being from God, it should render these *agatha* serviceable (χρήσιμος) to God, whether they are “the strength of the body, and the abundance of money and all the others.”<sup>130</sup>

On this basis, Chrysostom lists a catalogue of *agatha*, which can be sub-divided into *bodily goods* – ear, mouth, hands, feet, belly, sexual desires and bodily strength; *mental goods* – understanding (νοῦς) and the arts or crafts (τέχναι); *material wealth* – money, a roof, clothing and shelter; *natural resources* – land and the sea, and explains how one should use them properly for God’s sake and not abuse these gifts. With regards to a bodily good like the mouth, he advises that one can make it serviceable to God by letting it

do nothing that is displeasing to Him, but sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. ‘Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth [...] but such as is good for edifying as the need be, that it may give grace to them that hear’; for edification and not for subversion, for fair words and not for evil speaking and plotting against the other, but the very opposite.<sup>131</sup>

With regards to a mental good like the *nous* and *technai*, he adds

He gave you *nous*, not to make of you a blasphemer or a reviler, but that you might be without falsehood. [...] He instituted *technai*, that our present state of existence might be held together by them, not that we should separate ourselves from spiritual things, not that we should devote ourselves to the base *technai* but to the necessary ones, that

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<sup>129</sup> It is on this basis that he recognizes that not everyone can lead a life of harsh asceticism. Instead, a Christian should be able to enjoy his baths, take care of his body, keep a household, have servants and make free use of his meat and drinks. The only injunction he gives that the laity should be moderate in these activities, and not indulge in excessiveness. *hom. in Eph.* 13 (NPNF I.13, 115).

<sup>130</sup> *hom. in Phil.* 10 (PG 62.261.39-40,42; 62.262.26).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* (PG 62.261.54-263.30).

we might minister to one another's good, and not that we should plot one against another.<sup>132</sup>

As for material wealth, God

gave us a roof, that it might afford shelter from the rain, and no more, not that it should be decked out with gold, while the poor man perishes with hunger. He gave clothing to cover us, not to make a display withal, not that things like these should have much gold lavished upon them, and that Christ should perish naked. He gave you a place of shelter, not that you should keep it to yourself, but to offer it to others also.<sup>133</sup>

Finally, for natural resources like land and the sea, he cautions

He gave you land, not that, cutting off the chief portion of it, you should spend the good gifts of God upon harlots, and dancers, and actors [...], but upon those that hunger and are in want. He gave you the sea to sail on, that you might not be wearied with journeying, not that you should pry into its depths, and bring up precious stones and all the other things of the same kind, nor that you should make this your business.<sup>134</sup>

Chrysostom's present argument clearly presumes, in some way, that the mental goods of *nous* and *technai*, or what Aristotle and others would usually regard as intellectual *aretai*, are on par with the other external goods. His point here, however, is not to say that these mental goods are no different from external goods like bodily goods or material riches. Rather, it is to draw attention to the instrumental nature of these *agatha*, in that each of these finds its proper excellence in the sustenance of human lives and, more importantly, the love of God and our neighbours, such as those who need edification, the 'Christ who is perishing in nakedness' or those who are homeless. The corollary of this is, of course, that such goods fail in their God-intended serviceability whenever they are used

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> *hom. in Phil.* 10 (PG 62.261.41-263.25).

to further human pleasure and vanity instead, be it the adornment of our clothing with gold, the pursuit of riches, harlotry or devotion to base *technai*.<sup>135</sup>

Thirdly, with regard to anthropology, Chrysostom's conception of *eudaimonia* also compels him to adopt a teleological understanding of human nature. Like many of the Greek Fathers, Chrysostom propounds a bipartite anthropology which asserts that human nature is constituted by a body (σῶμα or σάρξ) and a soul (ψυχή), both of which are naturally good.<sup>136</sup> For Chrysostom, even though the former is inferior to the latter, the body and soul are, by no means, opposed to one another.<sup>137</sup> Rather, the body is meant to be governed by the soul, just like a "lyre to its player," or a charioteer having mastery

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<sup>135</sup> The instrumental conception of external goods is also evident in Chrysostom's view of marriage. According to Ford, Chrysostom conceives marriage as the God-ordained setting for the chaste to channel their sexual passions. In addition, it is a safe harbour for the couple by "helping them to better negotiate the struggles and vicissitudes of life in this world, and to more fully develop as loving human beings." Ibid. (PG 62.263.89); Catherine P. Roth, "Introduction," in *St. John Chrysostom: On Marriage and Family Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Valdimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 7-24; David C. Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of St. John Chrysostom* (South Canaan, Pennsylvania: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1996), 64, 66.

<sup>136</sup> Chrysostom often uses the terms, *sarx* and *sōma*, interchangeably. See Chapter 3, pp. 150 for a more detailed discussion of his use of *sarx* and *sōma*. It is to be noted that some scholars, like Papageorgiou, have argued that Chrysostom's bipartite anthropology is sure evidence of his adoption of Stoic psychology. One must, however, be cautious against such a simplification of Chrysostom's psychology. In the first place, such a bipartite anthropology is common among Platonists, like Aristotle and Plutarch and is, by no means, restricted only to the Stoics. Moreover, there seems to be a degree of fluidity in Chrysostom's conception since he would, on occasions, affirm Plato's tripartite psychology. This is certainly the case in his *Address on Vainglory* and his *Homily 17 on Acts*, where he would speak of θυμός, or anger, as a dog that can be trained well, so that it can guard one's soul against evil thoughts. *inani glor.* 65; *hom. in Acts 17* (PG 60.139.46); Papageorgiou, 57-58; Matthew Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (Edinburgh: T.& T.Clark Ltd, 2009), 170.

<sup>137</sup> In *Homily 13 on Romans*, Chrysostom admits that the flesh is not so great as the soul and is weaker to it, but yet is "not contrary, or fighting against it, or evil." *hom. in Rom. 13* (PG 60.509.43-45).

(κράτησις) over his horse.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, sin occurs “whenever [the soul allows] the flesh [to] gain mastery (κράτησις) over her charioteer and exalts itself,” thus producing “ten thousand mischiefs.”<sup>139</sup> In other words, it is the soul and not the body that is responsible for human sin. Nonetheless, it is also manifestly clear that the *aretē*, or excellence, of the body is to be found in its *telos*, which is its subjection to the soul.<sup>140</sup>

Yet, as Chrysostom also recognizes, the soul does not, by necessity, tend towards doing good or the things divine. Speaking on the role of the soul in helping a human being attain divine likeness, he notes:

Just as on this wide and spacious earth some animals are tamer and others more savage, so too in the wide spaces of our soul some of our ideas (λογισμῶν) are more irrational (ἀλογώτεροι) and beast-like, others more savage and wilder. It is necessary to have mastery (κρατεῖν) and overcome them and submit them to the rule of reason.<sup>141</sup>

As Chrysostom sees it, this is not a difficult matter, especially for a Christian, since:

in a person reason (λογισμός) is present, and the fear of God, and much aid from many sides. [...] Therefore, do not say, [you are] inept and without excuse, for you have the power (δυνατόν), if you are willing to be tame and meek and reasonable.<sup>142</sup>

Undoubtedly, Chrysostom is presupposing here that human *logismos* and *boulēsis* are unaffected by the Fall and are still able (*dunatos*) to lead the soul and the body.

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<sup>138</sup> The first metaphor is taken from *Homily 13 on Romans*, while the second is from *Homily 5 on Ephesians*. In the second passage, we also find Chrysostom asserting similarly that “the *aretē* of the flesh is its subordination to the soul. *hom. in Rom.* 13 (PG 60.509.46; 62.41.24); *hom. in Eph.* 5 (PG 62.41.25-26).

<sup>139</sup> *hom. in Eph.* 5 (PG 62.41.24-26).

<sup>140</sup> Chrysostom speaks of the body as incapable of doing any “grievous harm without the soul, whereas the soul can do much [harm] without the body.” *hom. in Eph.* 5 (PG 62.43).

<sup>141</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 9 (PG 53.78b-c).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, he refuses to ascribe an ethical autonomy to the soul. Rather, as he declares in his *Homily 5 on Ephesians*, “neither the body (σῶμα) nor the soul (ψυχή) in itself, if it does not receive a decisive influence (ῥοπή) from above, is able to do anything noble or great.”<sup>143</sup> This is because they, like the eyes, have their natural limitations, or weaknesses:

The eyes are good (καλοὶ), but without light produce countless errors; but this is their weakness, not due to [their] nature (φύσεως). If their errors were natural (φυσικὰ ἦν τὰ κακὰ), then we should not be able to use them when there is need. For nothing that is natural is evil (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ φυσικὸν κακόν).<sup>144</sup>

Hence, for the soul to become the good “charioteer” of its body, it must have the necessary skills, or *epistēmē*, lest it commits “greater terror itself.” This is why, he continues, “the Spirit must be near [to us] in every moment,” so that it “imparts (ποιεῖ) greater strength to the charioteer; and beautifies (καλλωπίζει) both the body and the soul.”<sup>145</sup> In other words, the *aretē* of the soul, like that of the body, is teleological in that it is realized only when the soul becomes serviceable to God. This *aretē*, in turn, is to be gained through both the soul’s exercise of its reason and will to gain mastery over its more irrational aspects and also its constant dependence on the Spirit’s guidance and strength.<sup>146</sup>

Thus far, we have seen how Chrysostom’s conceptions of human *aretai* are largely dictated by his view of the human *telos* as participation in the divine *agapē*, that is, the love

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<sup>143</sup> *hom in Eph. 5* (PG 62.41.11-12).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* (PG 62.41.19-21).

<sup>145</sup> The use of the present indicatives, *ποιεῖ* and *καλλωπίζει*, is significant in that they clearly emphasize the continual dependence that the soul and the body has upon the Spirit of God. *Ibid.* PG 62.41.31-32.

<sup>146</sup> As we shall see in Chapter 3, Chrysostom’s understanding of the soul’s dependency on the Spirit’s aid is bound up with his vision of human salvation as deification. *hom. in Gen. 9* (PG 53.78b-c).

of God and one's neighbour. This, in turn, brings us back to the long-standing Homeric, or indeed, Greco-Roman ethical framework, which stresses that human *aretai* are always exercised for the sake of one's *oikos* or *polis*. Seen within this framework, Chrysostom's ethics obviously assumes a new *oikos* for the Christian, namely, God and his neighbours, especially his fellow Christians.<sup>147</sup> Instead of Homeric *timē*, what a Christian gains through his cultivation of *aretē* is the *agapē* of God. But more is involved here. Like Plato, Chrysostom is convinced that the human potential for *aretē* is a gift of God. Unlike the philosopher, however, Chrysostom does not believe that this potential is limited by one's nature and upbringing. Rather, as we have argued earlier, the human potential for *aretē* is pneumatologically centred, in that every person, as long as he wills, can become *enaretos* by the gift and transforming power of the Holy Spirit. It is in this way that one might say that Chrysostom's ethics are more Stoic than Platonic, since the Stoics postulate God as playing the primary role in the entire process of cultivation of *aretē*.<sup>148</sup>

### *Chrysostom and the Angelic Life*

Among the many motifs that Chrysostom uses to depict the Christian *telos* or *eudaimonia*, his favourite is most certainly the metaphor of the Christian as living the life of the angels.<sup>149</sup> The Son of God, he declares, has brought every *aretē*, or indeed "the way of

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<sup>147</sup> It is on this basis that Chrysostom asserts elsewhere that a man cannot be considered *enaretos* unless he takes up the responsibility of leading his entire household towards *aretē*. *hom. in Eph.* 13 (PG 62.99.27-30).

<sup>148</sup> See pp. 38-39.

<sup>149</sup> Chrysostom understands Christian salvation as essentially the restoration of the angelic life first enjoyed by Adam and Eve. For this reason, the angelic life is to constitute a dominant

life of the angels" (τῶν ἀγγέλων τὴν πολιτείαν) to humanity.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, every Christian, from their baptisms onwards, would begin to live the life of the angels on earth.<sup>151</sup> Quite obviously, the motif of the angelic life, for Chrysostom, is a powerful summarizing symbol that encapsulates the essence of what he thinks is the ideal Christian life. Yet at the same time, he also frequently presumes that there are differences between the angels and Christians. For this reason, the angelic motif also operates as an elaborating symbol for Chrysostom to re-conceptualize and develop his understanding of Christian life.<sup>152</sup> In view of these, two important questions must be addressed. Firstly, to what extent does Chrysostom perceive the life of the heavenly angels to be identifiable in that of a Christian? Secondly, how does Chrysostom develop this angelic motif so that it becomes more suited for the articulation of his vision of the Christian life? To answer these questions, we must first ascertain Chrysostom's angelology.

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motif in much of his soteriological and ethical discourse. Louis Meyer, *Saint John Chrysostome: Maître De Perfection Chrétienne* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne et Ses Fils, 1933), 192-219.

<sup>150</sup> *hom. in Eph. 23* (PG 62.167.13-17).

<sup>151</sup> "Second Instruction" (ACW 31, 53); *hom. in Rom. 23* (NPNF I.11, 516).

<sup>152</sup> A summarizing symbol, as Ortner explains, is a symbol that sums up, expresses or represents a complex system of ideas that are sacred to a community. An elaborating symbol, on the other hand, provides "vehicles for sorting out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas, making them comprehensible to oneself, communicable to others, and translatable into orderly action." Both types of symbols, adds Ortner, are not mutually exclusive but are, practically speaking, a continuum. Sherry B. Ortner, "On Key Symbols," *American Anthropologist* 75 (1973): 1338-46.

## Angelology

Although Chrysostom did not leave behind an extensive treatment of angelology, his views on this subject may be readily gathered from his various writings. First of all, he envisages a hierarchy of angelic orders in the heavenly realm, consisting of “the angels, the archangels, the cherubim, the seraphim, the thrones, the dominions, the principalities, the powers, the whole host, the royal palaces, the tabernacles.”<sup>153</sup> Elsewhere, he even claims that these myriads of heavenly beings and powers are countless and their tribes are beyond number.<sup>154</sup> While both lists are probably not indicative of the order among the angels, Chrysostom recognizes that a ranking does exist among them, as may be seen in his claim elsewhere that the Cherubim is greater than the Seraphim because the former are higher powers and stand closer to the throne of God.<sup>155</sup>

Unlike the rebellious devil and his fellow demons, these heavenly beings are regarded as good, holy and the servants of God, ever-ready to receive God’s commands.<sup>156</sup> Often they act as God’s messengers to address humankind on His behalf, whether it is to

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<sup>153</sup> This notion of angelic ranks is quite common among the Greek Fathers, like Cyril of Jerusalem and Athanasius. Nonetheless, as Tuschling points out, this list in *Homily 54* is most likely “simply rhetorical amplification” and should not be taken as a doctrinal statement on the angelic ranking. *Hom. in Matt.* 54.9 (NPNF I.10, 338); Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses*, 11.11-12; Athanasius, *Ep. Serap.* 1.13; R. M. M. Tuschling, *Angels & Orthodoxy: A Study in Their Development in Syria and Palestine from the Qumran Texts to Ephrem the Syrian* Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 69.

<sup>154</sup> *incomp.* 2.30.

<sup>155</sup> *incomp.* 3.24 (FC72, 106).

<sup>156</sup> *comm. Job* 1. Translated by Hill in John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Job*, trans. Robert C. Hill, 2 vols., Commentaries on the Sages, vol. 1 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2006) 23-5; See also *hom. in Gen.* 8.7-8. Translated by Hill in John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 74 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985) 108-9.

declare a prophecy to Daniel (Dan. 9.21), or to proclaim glad tidings to Joseph (Matt. 1.20).<sup>157</sup> As the “angel of the Lord,” an angel is also “entrusted with the management of the world,” and instrumental, for example, in the stopping of wars or the extermination the firstborn of the Egyptians.<sup>158</sup> In addition, the angels are also guardians of the faithful, ever-present in their lives to deliver them from danger.<sup>159</sup> In line with most early Christian traditions, Chrysostom also esteems the “choirs of angels,” archangels and seraphim as worshippers of God *par excellence*, who are never asleep, but ever-present before their Lord and singing praises to Him.<sup>160</sup>

With respect to angelic ontology, one of Chrysostom’s most detailed expositions is found in his *De incomprehensibili dei natura*. In *Homily 1* he stresses that the heavenly beings have “nothing in common with us,” and that “the distance which separates men from angels is a great one.” A similar point is reiterated in *Homilies 2* and *3*, where he declares that a single angel is more valuable than the whole visible universe and the glory of one angel is so great that even a just prophet like Daniel did not have the strength to look at him.<sup>161</sup> Interestingly, Chrysostom also draws attention to the wings of the angels and

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<sup>157</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 4.4, 5.8 (NPNFI.10, 21-2, 32).

<sup>158</sup> *comm. Job* 1. (Hill, *Job*, 26); *Commentary on the Psalms* 148. Translated by Hill in John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert C. Hill, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 370.

<sup>159</sup> *comm. Job* 1 (Hill, *Job*, 25-6).

<sup>160</sup> *hom. in John* 15.2; *hom. in Matt.* 19.4, 54.8.

<sup>161</sup> *incomp.* 2.29, 3.23.

archangels, explaining that these wings are important expressions of their loftiness over human nature.<sup>162</sup>

Having said this, Chrysostom's present interest in angelic ontology is aimed not so much at exalting the angels, but rather at discrediting the heresy of the Anomoeans. It is with this mind that he would emphasize concurrently that the angels are created and, therefore, cannot know the essence of God. This vast gulf between the divine and angelic natures is most clearly understood in the fact that God created the countless multitudes of powerful angels simply by an effortless act of His will. Knowing this difference, the angels do what is proper to their being, which is to worship and glorify God, rather than to speculate on His divine essence.<sup>163</sup> This is true even for the most powerful of these heavenly beings, the Cherubim, whose "knowledge," he claims, "has become abundant but is unable to look upon God's accommodation of condescension without fear."<sup>164</sup> This is, of course, entirely contrary to the Anomoeans' behaviour who, as Chrysostom puts it, have the audacity to speculate on the essence of God even though they are ontologically inferior to the angels.<sup>165</sup> In other words, Chrysostom's objective for talking about angelic ontology is to highlight the vast ontological distance between God and man and, therefore, the impossibility for any human being to know the divine essence. This, in turn, should also demonstrate the ludicrousness of the Anomoeans' claims, that is, that one can know God perfectly.

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<sup>162</sup> *incomp.* 3.28.

<sup>163</sup> *incomp.* 1.34-35, 2.30.

<sup>164</sup> *incomp.* 3.29 (SC 28.3.332).

<sup>165</sup> *incomp.* 1.36.

For Chrysostom, discourse about angelic ontology can operate at different levels. In his *Homily 3 on Hebrews*, for example, it is deployed to clearly distinguish the Son from the angels. Hence the Son is spoken of as entirely deserving of the Father's privileges while the "office of the angels" is simply defined as to "minister to God for our salvation."<sup>166</sup> As we shall see in the remaining sections and also in Chapter 3, discourse about the angels can also become, for Chrysostom, an important means of articulating his vision of the Christian life. In these cases, however, Chrysostom's pedagogical objective is to not so much to emphasize the divine-human distance but to stress the new proximity that has been achieved between both by God through the salvation of His Son.

### **The Angelic Motif: A Historical Overview**

The origins of the angelic life motif may be traced to the Second Temple period, when both Hellenistic and Palestinian Jews began to treat the angelic life as a symbol of the spiritual heights that the faithful can reach after death.<sup>167</sup> Enoch, for example, is esteemed

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<sup>166</sup> As Tuschling has highlighted, this sharp demarcation between Christ and the angels is commonly undertaken by the early Christians in their attempt to not only safeguard monotheism, but also to stress the uniqueness of Christ's mediating work. Elsewhere, in his *Homily 8 on Genesis*, Chrysostom would decry those who interpret Genesis 1.26, "let us make man in our image" as referring to God's conversation with his angels. On the contrary, he argues, the angels as servants of God cannot participate in the counsel of God. Hence, the party whom God converses with must be Christ, the Son of God Himself. *hom. in Heb.* 3.4 (NPNF I.14, 376-77), *hom. in Gen.* 8.7 (Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, 108-9); Tuschling, 207-8.

<sup>167</sup> Philo, for example, speaks of the faithful as passing on to immortality and the heavenly realms (*sacr.* 6, 8; *QG* 1.86), while 2 Baruch speaks quite explicitly of the justified being made "like the angels" (2 Bar. 51:10). This concept of the ascent of the faithful along a heavenly continuum will be picked up by Origen in his prologue to the *Commentary on Song of Songs*. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 146.

in 1 Enoch as having surpassed the angels, while the Qumran Community (c. 150 BCE-70) takes for granted that they are the covenantal people of God who participate in the angelic duties, such as liturgical worship and prayer, even in this present age.<sup>168</sup>

Among Christians, the earliest conception of the angelic life is articulated by Jesus, who proclaims that “in the resurrection [the faithful] neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.”<sup>169</sup> Certainly, Jesus’ eschatological vision resonates well with those of his Jewish contemporaries. Nevertheless, the question that is left open is the extent to which his disciples should imitate the life of the angels in the here and now. Over the next two centuries, a variety of answers would be proposed. Adopting a Philonic approach to this question, Clement of Alexandria considers those who engage constantly in the contemplation of God as having become like the angels.<sup>170</sup> A more popular answer, however, is to be found in the martyr literature composed in the same period.

To be sure, the martyrs are seldom referred to as angelic beings in the *Acts of the Martyrs*.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, it is also unmistakably clear that the *Acta’s* portrayals of the martyrs often resemble closely the ways in which the angels are depicted in Jewish

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<sup>168</sup> 1En. 14:18-25, 15:1-16:4; 4Q403; 1QS4:24, 1QH 3:5, 11Q13:10, 4Q400, 4Q403. Tuschling, 136; Geza Vermes, “The Religious Ideas of the Community,” in *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 84-85.

<sup>169</sup> Matt. 22.30 (NRSV). Luke 20.35-36 unpacks this idea further, by having Jesus say that “those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection” (NRSV).

<sup>170</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Clement’s appropriation of Philo’s teachings, see Chapter 3, pp. 135-36. *Strom.* 4.25.

<sup>171</sup> The only exception is the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, where the Smyrnaen martyrs are praised as “no longer humans but already angels.” *mart. Poly.* 2.3.

Apocalyptic literature.<sup>172</sup> Like the angels, the martyrs are participants in God's cosmic battle against the demonic realms, the recipients of heavenly visions and, quite often, workers of miracles.<sup>173</sup> Perpetua, for instance, even dreamt of herself entering a radiant place where she beheld the angels praising God.<sup>174</sup> In view of this narrative association, it is no wonder that the spiritual successor of the martyrs, namely, the Christian ascetic, or monk, would be depicted in a similar fashion and is also regarded as living the angelic life by the late fourth century.<sup>175</sup> St. Antony, we are told, is found not only ministering among the confessors who suffered under the persecution of Maximin Daia, but also withdraws to a cell where he is "daily being martyred by his conscience, and doing battle in the contests of faith."<sup>176</sup> Elsewhere in his *Vita*, Antony is frequently presented as a wonder-worker, endowed with heavenly visions and prophetic gifts – not unlike the earlier Jewish angelic and Christian martyr portraits.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 77-78.

<sup>173</sup> A more detailed analysis of these martyr portraits will be conducted in Chapter 5, where we discuss the Christian character of Chrysostom's rhetoric of martyrdom.

<sup>174</sup> *Pass. Perpet.* 4.2.

<sup>175</sup> In its prologue, the late fourth century *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* speaks of the Egyptian monks as those "living the angelic life." *hist. monach.* Prol. 4 [Translated by Russell in Norman Russell, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, Cistercian Studies Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1980), 49]. For a detailed study of the ways in which the monk was the successor of the martyr, see Edward E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr*, ed. Johannes Quasten, *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, vol. 12 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950).

<sup>176</sup> *V. Ant.* 47.

<sup>177</sup> A similar portrayal of the Egyptian monks is also found in the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* (II.1, VIII.5-6, X.12-14). *V. Ant.* 15, 58, 60-64, 82, 84, 86, 89. William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 66-67, 292-99.

A similar stance is also observed among the Cappadocian Fathers. Certainly, Gregory of Nazianus maintains that the baptized are those “who have attained equality with the angels.”<sup>178</sup> Nonetheless, he also agrees with Basil that the ascetics participate uniquely in the life and duties of the angels, be it worship, prayer or even in their wondrous gifts and visions.

Illuminated by the Spirit, [the ascetics] themselves become spiritual, and send forth their grace to others. Hence comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, apprehension of what is hidden, distribution of good gifts, the heavenly citizenship, a place in the chorus of angels, joy without end, abiding in God, being made like God, and, the highest goal of all, becoming a god.<sup>179</sup>

### **The Angelic Life in Chrysostom’s Writings**

Like the Cappadocians, Chrysostom also constantly regards the Christian monks as living an angelic life on earth.<sup>180</sup> Where he differs from them or, indeed, many of his theological predecessors, is his frequent insistence that *all* Christians in general can realize this angelic life to some degree. This is certainly presumed in his *Homily 23 on Ephesians*, where he reminds his predominantly lay Antiochene congregation that

the Son of the very God has brought all the *aretē*. He has brought down to us all the fruits that are that place [heaven]. I tell you, [even] the heavenly hymns that the Cherubim sing – for he has appointed us also to say, “Holy, holy, holy.” He has brought the way of life of the angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων τὴν πολιτείαν). The angels neither marry nor are they given in marriage – this good [plant] he has planted here also. They neither love riches nor other things like that – this also he

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<sup>178</sup> Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 223.

<sup>179</sup> This is similarly expressed by Gregory in his *Oration* 4.71. Basil, *De Sp.* S. 9.23.

<sup>180</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 1.12; 69.3-4 (NPNF I.10.425).

has sown among us. They never die – this also has been granted to us. For death is no longer death, but sleep.<sup>181</sup>

What we have here is a clear attempt to delineate the aspects of the angelic life that are directly applicable to Christians. A few important observations can be made here. Firstly, the *aretē*, or “the way of life of the angels” that the Son of God brings down from heaven to earth is clearly understood in moral rather than ontological terms, since Christians can only imitate the angels and not change their *phusis* in this present age. Secondly, the agricultural metaphors he uses to describe these gifts, that is, “this good plant he has planted here” and “this also he has sown among us” suggests the fact that the angelic life has only just taken root in humanity. Although Chrysostom expects it to unfold and grow among Christians, it is yet to be fully materialized among *all* Christians.

Thirdly, when understood within the framework of Greco-Roman ethics, Chrysostom’s portrayal of Christians as participants in the *politeia* of the angels is, fundamentally speaking, a re-conceptualization of the Christians’ *oikos* to that of a heavenly realm, rather than his earthly *oikos* or *polis*. There are both Platonic and Aristotelian allusions here. If the *telos* of human life is participation in the heavenly *politeia*, the value of the earthly life is inevitably downplayed. By doing so, Chrysostom’s conception of the angelic life is to some extent similar to the philosophical *eudaimonia* envisaged in Plato’s *Phaedo*. Where he clearly differs is the fact that his heavenly *politeia* is constituted not only by communion with the heavenly beings, but also the fellowship of saints in the Church. This, in turn, compels him to recognize the earthly dimensions of this heavenly *oikos*, in that there remains a body of Christ on earth to be loved and cared for,

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<sup>181</sup> *hom. in Eph. 23* (PG 62.167.12-22).

whether they are the poor, the homeless, one's family members or fellow Christians. In this respect then, his conception of the Christian life as angelic is quite similar to Aristotle's esteem for the *politikos* as an essential expression of human *eudaimonia*.

The significance of these traits for Chrysostom is evident in the fact that they are often brought up in his discussions of the same motif elsewhere. His *Homily 9 on Hebrews* is a good example. Here, he similarly assumes that for Christians to "live like the angels," is tantamount "to lack[ing] not one of these earthly things" and to enjoy both an "eternal life and angelic conversation."<sup>182</sup> This is not to say, however, that morality is not important for his conception of this motif. On the contrary, it is presumed from the onset of this angelic *politeia*. As he puts it in his *Homily 11 on Romans*:

For he did not only set us free from our old evils, but he led us also into the angelic life, and he paved the road for the most excellent way of life for us, after handing us over to the safekeeping of righteousness, and killed our former evils, and deadened our old humanity, and led us to an immortal life.<sup>183</sup>

Based on the above then, it should be clear that the angelic life, as a summarizing symbol for the Christian life, is meant to denote five main similarities between the angel and the Christian. Like the angel, the Christian should not be given in marriage, not love material riches, should enjoy immortality, participate in the heavenly *politikos* and attain a morality reminiscent to the angels.

Having said this, the same motif is also a basis for Chrysostom to re-conceptualize and elaborate on the ideal Christian life in the present age. Thus he would distinguish the Christian life from that of the angels by asserting that the Christian can "live the life of the

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<sup>182</sup> *hom. in Heb.* 9 (NPNF I.14, 411).

<sup>183</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 11 (PG 60.489.42-47).

angels” while still residing on earth, that is, in their bodies, and that this in no way renders them “inferior to those [heavenly beings] who inhabit the heaven.”<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, he also stresses the fact that Christian participation in the angelic life is contingent upon the Spirit’s aid, since He must grant every Christian the faith and the teachings to do so.<sup>185</sup>

Finally, for Chrysostom to speak of the Christian life as comparable to that of the angels is, ultimately speaking, to highlight the great heights to which every Christian has ascended because of Christ’s salvation. Indeed, what he has in mind is not merely the fact that every Christian can become like an angel, but that they should transcend the angels altogether. This point is clearly stressed in his *Homily 5 on Colossians*, where he speaks initially of Christian salvation as God exalting creatures who are “more senseless than stone,” that is, human beings, to the “dignity of the angels.” Having said this, Chrysostom adds immediately that God has even enabled Christians to

become the body (σῶμα) of the Master of the angels and archangels, and from not knowing who is God, they instantly become even sharers of God’s throne.<sup>186</sup>

In other words, within the context of Christian soteriology, discourses about or comparisons with angelic ontology are teleological, in that they are meant to highlight the glorious fact that the Christian life is, essentially, participation in the divine life of God. As to how Chrysostom conceives Christian salvation as a deification of humankind, this will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, when we examine Chrysostom’s soteriology.

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<sup>184</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 23 (PG 60.621.30-31). See also *hom. in Eph.* 1 (NPNF I.13, 55).

<sup>185</sup> *hom. in Heb.* 9 (NPNF I.14, 411).

<sup>186</sup> *hom. in Col.* 5 (PG 62.332.19-20, 33-35).

## Conclusion

We began this chapter by assuming that Chrysostom's exemplar discourse was firmly rooted in the Greco-Roman traditions of *imitatio exemplorum*. On this basis, we looked, first of all, at *enkyklios paideia* in Late Antiquity and concluded that this system of education had thoroughly institutionalized its pedagogy of *imitatio exemplorum*. The net effect was that the notion of imitation would have been taken for granted by most in Late Antiquity as the most natural way of expounding and legitimizing their ethics and worldviews, whether pagan or Christian.

Following this, we surveyed the history of Greco-Roman ethical traditions, with the aim of elucidating the continuities and discontinuities between these traditions and Chrysostom's ethical ideals. Here, we argued, first of all, that there is a familial resemblance between these Greco-Roman traditions, in that they not only share similar ethical categories and framework, but are also preoccupied with similar questions and concerns in their ethical reflections. Among these are questions on the nature, categories and functions of the *aretai*, the role of external goods, the nature of human anthropology, such as whether it is bipartite or tripartite, how one might cultivate *aretai*, the degree of divine passivity or activity in the cultivation of *aretai* and the role of the *oikos* or *polis* in the human exercise of *aretē*.

Secondly, we also contended that Chrysostom's ethical ideals were probably shaped by Late Antique culture in general, rather than through a direct interaction with philosophical ethics. Nevertheless, it is clear that Chrysostom's ethical vision is indebted to the philosophical traditions in several ways. With regard to the nature and

categorization of the *aretai*, Chrysostom's scheme, by and large, coheres with those of the Platonists and Stoics. Where he differs is his conviction that *eudaimonia* is to be found in human participation in the *agapē* of God. This, in turn, has three implications on his understanding of *aretai*.

First of all, it leads him to concur with the Platonists and early Christians that *eudaimonia* is to be attained through the cultivation of divine likeness and *aretai*, such as love and justice. Secondly, apart from being expressions of God's *agapē* for humanity, external goods are to be regarded also as instrumental in nature. By this Chrysostom means that the excellence of the external goods is dependent largely on the extent to which they are made serviceable to God. Thirdly, the *aretē* of human nature should also be understood teleologically. Specifically, the body is regarded as *enaretos* only when it is subjected to the soul, while the soul is to gain its excellence only when it exercises its rational rule over its irrational aspects, and relies on Spirit's aid to participate in God's *agapē*.

Finally, we looked at Chrysostom's conception of Christian *eudaimonia* as the life of the angels. While this angelic motif is clearly intended to highlight the similarities between the ideal Christian life and that of the angels, Chrysostom is also convinced that there are stark differences between them, in that the Christian's angelic life may be lived on earth, presumably, in a bodily form, is reliant on the Spirit's aid and is even superior to that of the angels. Implicit to such a teleological conception is also the recognition that a Christian's *oikos* is no longer an earthly one, but that which is in heaven, that is, with the angels and his fellow saints. Yet at the same time, since there remains a body of Christ on earth, there are earthly dimensions even to this heavenly *oikos*.

Considered as a whole, the above findings provide a clear theoretical framework in which we can understand Chrysostom's ethical discourse in general. This is certainly the case for his exemplar portraits, which are, more often than not, embodiments of his ethical ideals. Indeed, it is only when his exemplar portraits are read in the light of these ethical assumptions that the ideological and pedagogical functions that Chrysostom conceives for these portraits can be properly recognized and appreciated.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE PORTRAYAL OF VIRTUE IN LATE ANTIQUITY:

### DAVID AS EXEMPLAR IN CHRYSOSTOM'S WRITINGS

#### **Introduction**

In the last chapter, we drew attention to the fact that Greco-Roman ethics was not only the predominant ideology propounded by *imitatio exemplorum* discourse, but also played an important role in determining the literary forms and strategies that such discourse will take in the Late Antique world. In this chapter, we will focus on these literary forms and strategies by examining the two major traditions of Greco-Roman exemplar discourse, namely, the biographical and rhetorical traditions and identify the major approaches that these traditions adopt to present their subjects. In this process, due attention will also be paid to the influence that Greco-Roman ethics had on both traditions. Having done this, we will then look at how Chrysostom employs these traditions to portray one of his favourite exemplars, King David, and consider how these Davidic portraits might serve to elucidate his pastoral and ethical concerns. More importantly, this exemplar study should also help us identify the reading strategies required for a hermeneutical appropriation of Chrysostom's exemplar portraits.

#### **The Biographical Traditions**

##### *Historical Overview*

Since antiquity, the Greeks always had a keen biographical interest in those they esteemed, whether these were heroes – mythical or real, literary, political or philosophical

figures.<sup>1</sup> Among these, the first to be depicted were heroes like Achilles and Odysseus, whose lives were not only acclaimed in the Homeric epics, but were also retold in subsequent centuries, such as the tragedies of Sophocles (496-406) and the novel tales of Philostratus (c.170-247).<sup>2</sup> From the classical period onwards, distinct personalities began to take centre stage in Greek literature, one of the earliest being Homer, whose different *vitae* were narrated by the rhapsodies, presumably to satisfy the curiosity of their audiences and to legitimize the authority of his epics.<sup>3</sup>

This legitimization or, indeed, ideological character of Greek biographical writing reached a milestone in the fourth century with the apologies of Plato and Xenophon (431-355).<sup>4</sup> Despite their common objective of absolving Socrates from the charges that he had corrupted the young and disbelieved in the Athenian gods, both authors were to take rather different approaches in their defence of Socrates.<sup>5</sup> For Xenophon, Socrates'

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<sup>1</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, Expanded ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> Graham Anderson, *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 245; Duane Reed Stuart, *Epochs of Greek and Roman Biography*, Sather Classical Lectures (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), 12-15.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Graziosi, *Inventing Homer: The Early Reception of Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50, 122.

<sup>4</sup> Hadas is surely right to highlight the significance of Socrates' life and death for subsequent exemplary literature. Nevertheless, he exaggerates the degree of its impact, especially for Second Temple Jewish and Christian literature. For example, his argument that Eleazar in Second and Fourth Maccabees is a Socratic figure fails to give due account to the priest's Jewish faith and context. Readers of such texts would have assumed, first of all, that Eleazar exemplifies the ideal Torah fearing Jew, not Plato's Socrates. Moses Hadas and Morton Smith, *Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies in Antiquity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 49, 63, 90-93.

<sup>5</sup> This apologetic aim is hinted at in both Plato's *Apology* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Both mention that Socrates was found "guilty of corrupting the young and of not believing in the gods in whom the city believes." While it is debatable whether this is the primary intent for both works, it is most likely one of the major motivations for these writings. *Mem.* I.1.1. *Ap.* 18b-c, 24b; Harold

innocence is clearly evident in his cultic practices and ascetic lifestyle.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Plato, however, Socrates' religiosity and morality is confirmed in his earnest pursuit of philosophy as a faithful response to the Delphic oracle.<sup>7</sup> Although scholars differ on which is the more accurate portrait of the historical Socrates, it is manifestly clear that the Socratic figure encountered in each apology is nothing less than the enshrinement of the religious and philosophical expectations of its author.<sup>8</sup>

This same period also saw the development of the first paradigm for exemplar discourse, as found in what Isocrates (436-338) claims to be the first prose *enkōmion*, that is, his funeral eulogy of the Cyprian king, Evagoras (c. 370 B.C.). In this and Xenophon's *Agesilaus* (c. 360 B.C.) which follows, we see a conscious effort by both authors to not only exalt their subjects as the ideal and exemplary monarch, but also to organize their lives within the paradigmatic categories of nature, upbringing and deeds.<sup>9</sup> Xenophon, for example, not only claims the mighty Heracles as Agesilaus's ancestor, but also stresses that Agesilaus, as a youth, had already possessed all the virtues necessary for kingship.<sup>10</sup> During his reign, Agesilaus turned out to be a virtuous ruler in every way, being pious,

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Tarrant, "Introduction," in *The Last Days of Socrates: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito and Phaedo* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> *Mem.* I.1.2-20, 2.1-11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ap.* 21e-22e; 38a.

<sup>8</sup> Irwin, for example, argues that the Xenophonic Socrates matches closely with Xenophon's own religious and moral outlook and is therefore less trustworthy than the witness of Plato and Aristotle. Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15; Momigliano, 46.

<sup>9</sup> Richard A. Burridge, "Biography," in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 Bc - Ad 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 1997), 375.

<sup>10</sup> *Ages.* I.1-2.

trustworthy, swift to repay his debts, indifferent to riches, unmoved by his passions, loyal to his fellow men and so on, and was therefore a worthy “pattern and example” for every monarch.<sup>11</sup>

The development of such a literary paradigm is not surprising in view of the contemporary and subsequent Greek ethical discourse. Plato, for example, would teach in his *Republic* that the guardians of the *polis* should not only possess an excellent philosophic nature, but also receive a comprehensive training and upbringing, so that they can be well-equipped to lead the city.<sup>12</sup> Aristotle and the Stoics would similarly assert that one’s potential for *aretē* and, therefore, *eudaimonia* is both a function of his god-given nature and *askēsis*.<sup>13</sup> As we have shown in Chapter 1, even those Greco-Roman philosophers who downplay the significance of *phusis* for one’s *aretē* and *eudaimonia*, like the Cynics and Epicureans, nevertheless agree on the importance of *askēsis* for the cultivation of *aretē*. Given this ethical context and the growing popularity of Platonism and Stoicism from the Hellenistic period onwards, it is hardly surprising that this *enkōmion* paradigm of praising a subject’s origins, upbringing and deeds will be readily adopted by the Greco-Roman world as an organizing structure for the praise of an exemplary figure. In due course, the

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<sup>11</sup> *Ages*. III.

<sup>12</sup> Where Plato differs from Isocrates and Xenophon is his belief that a child with a philosophic nature will not fare well if he is born in nobility or royalty, since he would be in greater danger of corrupting his nature. See Chapter 1, pp. 28.

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle speaks of *eudaimonia* as a God-given gift or at least a most god-like good. *Eth. Nic.* 1099b12-20, 1103a25, 1104b11-13.

same paradigm would be formalized by rhetors in their *progymnasmata*, or preliminary exercises, to be learnt by every aspiring orator in Late Antiquity.<sup>14</sup>

By the Late Antique period, this *enkōmion* paradigm, along with the ideological focus of Greek biographies, would be taken for granted by most biographers, such as Plutarch, Philostratus and Prophyry.<sup>15</sup> Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is a good case in point. Structured according to the *enkōmion* paradigm, the biography is a clear attempt to articulate a new vision of the Late Antique philosopher. Like his classical predecessors, Apollonius is presented as an ascetic, teacher of philosophy and an advisor of monarchs. Yet, what endears him particularly to his Late Antique audience is the fact that he is also an advocate of paganism – a point that is powerfully put across in Philostratus' claims that Apollonius was an incarnation of Proteus, the Egyptian God of wisdom, a reformer of pagan worship, and a miracle worker capable of exorcising demons and resurrecting a bride.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Kennedy's *Progymnasmata* for translations of these texts.

<sup>15</sup> There are, of course, exceptions to this, the most significant being Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, which, Momigliano remarks, is "all show and no substance," written more as a Sophistic tabloid to satisfy the curiosity of its readers. Anderson, 51-71, 77, 114-5; Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient Biography and the Study of Religion in the Roman Empire," in *On Pagans, Jews and Christians*, ed. Arnaldo Momigliano (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1987) 171, 174.

<sup>16</sup> For the accounts of Apollonius' deeds, see VA 1.8, 1.13-19, 2.4, 2.22-39, 3.1, 3.38, 4.4-10, 4.25, 4.45, 5.28, 6.29, 8.26. A similar conception of Pythagoras is observed in the *Lives* by Porphyry and Iamblichus. Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist: Holy Men and Their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 35-6, 54-72; Gillian Clark, "Philosophic Lives and the Philosophic Life," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 48; Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man, Transformation of the Classical Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 23-24, 35, 62; Christopher Jones, "Apollonius of Tyana, Hero and Holy Man" in *Philostratus' Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.*, ed. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical

Among the Late Antique biographies, the most prominent are probably Plutarch's voluminous *Parallel Lives*, many of which are composed to present the political statesman as an exemplary philosopher-king – an ethical motif which, as we shall see, is equally valued by Chrysostom and his contemporaries.<sup>17</sup> More important for our purposes is the fact that Plutarch's clear moral agenda for his *Lives* coheres significantly with Chrysostom's aims for his exemplar discourse. For this reason, attention must be paid to these *Vitae*, so that the insights gained here may become for us a lens to better understand Chrysostom's narrative strategies for his exemplar portraits.

Unlike Philostratus, the primary objective of Plutarch's *Lives* is not to exalt his subjects' deeds (πράξεις) as public figures. Rather, they are intended more as occasions for ethical reflection, that is, to bring into relief the moral character (ἦθος) of his subjects, so that his readers and himself can "both observe and imitate" their exemplary lifestyles.<sup>18</sup>

For it is

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Literature, 2004), 78-79; Christopher P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 9, 14, 20, 26, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Plutarch's preference in political statesmen is already hinted at in an earlier declamation, where, he declares that "Athens' glory laid in its statesmen and generals, not its poets and artists." For Chrysostom's portrayal of King David and the Christian monk as a philosopher-king, see below pp. 102-7 and Chapter 4, pp. 212-14. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, 105.

<sup>18</sup> This moral agenda of the *Lives* is achieved both by highlighting the virtues and the vices of the subjects, the latter of which is presented more as a warning to his readers. This moral emphasis, however, need not be the only agenda for the *Parallel Lives*. Homeyer, for example, suggests that there is a political dimension to these *Lives*, in that they are written to foster greater cultural respect between the Greeks and Romans. Jones, on the other hand, argues that Plutarch's admiration for Roman exemplars stems from his general admiration for the Romans whom he regards as having ushered in an era of peace and stability for the Greeks. In the case of Wardman, he argues, quite plausibly, that the *Lives* should be regarded more as an affirmation of the broader values and ideals of the Greco-Roman intellectual circles that Plutarch is familiar with, rather than

by spending time on history and by practising writing we prepare ourselves to receive and store in our souls recollection of the best and most famous men, and to drive out and thrust from us whatever mean or corrupt or ignoble influence is exercised on us by those with whom daily life compels association, and to temper and discipline our thoughts and turn them towards the very best ideals of conduct.<sup>19</sup>

This moral interest, in turn, compels Plutarch to focus not so much so on the “distinguished deeds” of his subjects which, as he puts it, are “not always a manifestation of virtue or vice,” but instead on the “phrase or a jest [that] often makes a greater revelation of character (ἦθους),” that is, the “the signs of the soul” (τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα) of his subjects.<sup>20</sup> Such *sēmeia* would include “childhood anecdotes, education, emergence into public life, conflicts, responses to the challenge of circumstances,” and other narrative motifs that would best illustrate his subject’s character.<sup>21</sup>

Plutarch’s dual interest in political statesmen as philosopher-kings and ethics is well illustrated in his *Life of Alexander*.<sup>22</sup> In Alexander’s life, what we encounter most frequently are the narrative motifs typically associated with the *aretai* of the philosopher-king. First of all, Alexander is ascribed a lofty, or indeed, divine pedigree, since he is identified as not only a descendant of Heracles, but also the god Ammon himself – a point

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as an apology directed at both. *Rom.* 12.6, *Per.* 1.3, 24.1, *Aem.* 1.3; *De fort. Rom.* 316F; H. Homeyer, “Beob- achtungen Zu Den Hellenistischen Quellen Der Plutarch- Viten,” *Klio* 41 (1963): 157; Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, 69, 70, 107; Alan Wardman, *Plutarch’s Lives* (London: Elek, 1974), 9, 12, 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Tim. Pr.* (Translation from Barrow, 54).

<sup>20</sup> *Alex.* 1 (Perrin, LCL 99, 225). A similar assumption is made in *Demosthenes* 11.6, *Cimon* 2.3-5, *Pericles* 1-2.4, *Nicias* 1.5 and *Aemilius Paulus* 1. This moral objective, as Jones notes, also coheres with the biographical intentions of his earlier *Lives of the Caesars*. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, 78-80.

<sup>21</sup> D. A. Russell, *Plutarch, Classical Life and Letters*. (London: Duckworth, 1972), 102-3.

<sup>22</sup> Other figures that are presented as philosopher-kings by Plutarch include Solon and Cicero. Wardman, 206, 212.

poignantly expressed in the account of Ammon impregnating Alexander's mother by the form of a serpent. As a youth, Alexander displays a great zeal and yearning for philosophy and enjoys the tutelage of many worthy teachers, including the eminent Aristotle.<sup>23</sup> Even during the course of his military campaigns, he maintains an avid interest for philosophy, and shows much respect for, and even accepts advice from, its practitioners.<sup>24</sup> On occasions, Plutarch would even have Alexander philosophizing about the uncertainty of life, affirm the fatherhood of god for all humanity and pay tribute to Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>25</sup>

During his reign, Alexander also proves to be an exemplary philosopher-king, who is endowed with numerous kingly virtues, such as his wise and compassionate leadership, respect for virtues, philanthropy, esteem for friendship and munificence. After his victory over the Persians, for example, he has the wisdom to send some of the spoils to the Greeks as recognition of their partnership in his victory. During times of leisure, he remains a hardworking administrator of military affairs.<sup>26</sup> Like his biographer, Alexander also fulfils the religious expectations for a Late Antique philosopher. This is to be seen in the fact that

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<sup>23</sup> *Alex.* 5-9.

<sup>24</sup> For example, despite Diogenes of Sinope's aloofness, Alexander respected the Cynic so much that he apparently claimed that "if I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes." *Alex.* 14, 27, 64-5; Tim Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 85.

<sup>25</sup> *Alex.* 26-27, 69.

<sup>26</sup> *Alex.* 4, 11-12, 16, 21, 23-24.

Alexander frequently offers sacrifices to the gods, whether as part of daily ritual or before battles, and is a man who takes the signs (σημεία) and visions (ὄψιαι) seriously.<sup>27</sup>

In many ways, Plutarch's portrayal of Alexander the philosopher-king is both a reflection and a demonstration of the Delphic priest's ethical philosophy. This is to be seen from the onset, where Plutarch first draws attention to the king's spirited (θυμοειδῆ) nature which, according to a dream of Alexander's mother, had descended upon her womb as a thunderbolt and broke out in many flames.<sup>28</sup> This ethical motif is further developed in Plutarch's narration of Alexander's youth, where Alexander's *thuoeidē* is not only attributed to his bodily heat and, therefore, his nature (φύσις), but is also seen as the cause of his furious and exceedingly violent temper.<sup>29</sup> Yet, presumably in line with Platonic psychology, this same hot-tempered nature also enables Alexander to restrain his body's desire for pleasures, so much so that he develops the *aretē* of moderation (σωφροσύνη).<sup>30</sup> This spirited nature, along with his ambition and love of honour

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<sup>27</sup> Plutarch is well-known as both a Middle Platonist and priest of the Delphic oracle. Having said this, Plutarch disapproves of Alexander's increasing preoccupation with signs and visions towards the end of his life, by succumbing to a superstitious fear of the ill omens proclaimed against him. *Alex.* 15, 25-27, 29, 31, 37, 41, 63, 72-5.

<sup>28</sup> Judging from this narrative, it is apparent that Plutarch presumes that one's potential for moral virtue and philosophy is due to a god-given *phusis*. This position certainly coheres with that asserted in *The Education of Children*, which some has ascribed to him, not implausibly. Here, we find a similar assertion that "perfect just behaviour" is the concurrence of nature (φύσιν), reason (λόγον), or learning, and habit (ἔθος). It should be noted that this view need not negate Plutarch's remarks elsewhere in *Demosthenes* 1.3, where he claims that *aretē* is dependent not so much on the place of one's birth than on a usable nature and a diligent soul (φύσεώς γε χρηστῆς καὶ φιλοπόνου ψυχῆς). *Alex.* 2.1-3.1; *Ps-Plutarch, lib. edu.* 2.4.

<sup>29</sup> *Alex.* 4.3-4.

<sup>30</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Plato asserts that the *thumoeidēs* is capable of helping the *logistikos* subdue the *epithumētikon* and, therefore, develop the *aretē* of *sōphrosunē*. See pp. 29. *Alex.* 4.8; *Rep.* 442B-443E.

(φιλοτιμία), says Plutarch, would dispose Alexander to accomplish greater things than his father and to attain *aretē* and glory on his own.<sup>31</sup> As a matter of fact, they not only characterize his leadership as an adult, but also play a vital role in both his military successes and subsequent follies.

This is to be seen in his military campaign in Asia. During his first battle with the Persians, many of his men were afraid to cross the rapids of the river Granicus. Spurred by his *thuoeidē*, Alexander led a small troop and charged ahead courageously, in the face of many hostile projectiles and enemies. This was to clinch the decisive victory for the Macedonians and to become a familiar scene that would be replayed frequently throughout the course of his military campaign.<sup>32</sup> Having said this, whenever *sōphrosunē* was called for the same spirited nature was clearly able to prevent Alexander from compromising his war needlessly. This is well-demonstrated in the Macedonian king's ability to stop himself from engaging Darius prematurely, even though he was eager to do so. Instead, he chose to train and strengthen his army, by acquiring the regions around the sea and their resources. Alexander's respect for *askēsis* is a sharp contrast to the Persian king who, in his eagerness to march out against Alexander, ignored the wise counsel to delay his advance and was consequently defeated at the Cilician pass.<sup>33</sup>

As it seems to Plutarch, Alexander regards such self-mastery (τὸ κρατεῖν) as a more kingly thing than the conquest of his enemies. For this reason, a substantial portion of

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<sup>31</sup> *Alex.* 4.8, 5.3, 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Alex.* 16.

<sup>33</sup> Alexander, as Plutarch tells us, would continue to maintain a stringent training routine even when there is no impending battle. These observations, of course, affirm the importance of training for the development of one's character and skills. *Alex.* 17.3; 20.2; 40.

Plutarch's *Vita* is devoted to praising Alexander's ability for physical self-restraint, be it against desires for sex, sleep or food.<sup>34</sup> Having said this, Alexander's life is also a platform for Plutarch to reflect soberly on what may happen if one does not properly habituate his nature or curb its potential vices. This is clearly the case for Alexander's spirited nature, whose violent outbursts led him ultimately to slay Clitus and other men. Later, the same hot-temperedness was to cause his men to fear instead of admire him.<sup>35</sup>

As we may infer from the *Vita*, Plutarch generally grounds the potential of his subjects upon their natures and the extent to which their natures are trained. This has led some scholars to conclude that Plutarch, along with other Late Antique biographers, commonly presumes his characters to possess static natures that do not change over time.<sup>36</sup> This does appear to be the case for Plutarch, who is often reluctant to interpret a moral anomaly as a change of character, but rather considers it as a revelation of an otherwise veiled nature or simply as a moral lapse arising from various circumstances, like political exigency.<sup>37</sup> Having said this, we must remember that the objective of Plutarch's *Parallel*

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander clearly expects his men to exercise a similar self-restraint since he has no qualms executing two soldiers for ravaging the wives of certain mercenaries. *Alex.* 21-23.

<sup>35</sup> *Alex.* 51, 74; Duff, 85.

<sup>36</sup> A similar principle seems operative in Athanasius's *Life of Antony*, where the monk is portrayed as one given to piety and averse to *paideia* and other childish things even as a young lad. Similarly, Eusebius, in his *Life of Origen*, would presume that the teenage Origen has already possessed a mature orthodoxy, worthy of respect even from his father. Samuel Rubenson, "Philosophy and Simplicity: The Problem of Classical Education in Early Christian Biography," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 118; Cox, 80-1; Russell, 102.

<sup>37</sup> This is clearly demonstrated in Plutarch's portrait of Philip of Macedon. Philip, as it appears, had degenerated from a moderate young man into a licentious king at his old age. For Plutarch, however, this change is simply a revelation of Philip's true nature of badness. The same

*Lives* is exhortative, or, in other words, they are meant to aid readers in the development of their character. This, coupled with Plutarch's insistence that *aretē* is dependent not only on a "usable nature" (φύσεώς γε χρηστῆς) but also a "diligent soul," should caution us against accepting such a claim in its entirety.<sup>38</sup> Rather, within Plutarch's scheme of ethics, there is a dynamic and amenable dimension to one's moral character, which allows for significant character change whenever one undergoes the proper training and education.

### *Chrysostom's Reception of Biographical Traditions*

In view of the above, it should now be clear that Late Antique biographies generally presume one or more ideological interests, whether it is presenting their visions for the ideal philosopher or political statesman, or elucidating the moral vision of their authors. This ideological focus is, more often than not, expressed through the organizing structure of the *enkōmion* paradigm, which compels the biographers to focus first on the subject's origins or birth, followed by his upbringing and deeds. Within this literary framework, the appropriate narratives are drawn from or composed for the subject's life, so as to particularize and accentuate the ideologies concerned.

As far as extant evidence is concerned, it is Plutarch who proves to be the most influential biographer for subsequent Late Antique intellectual life.<sup>39</sup> With regard to

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may be said of Plutarch's interpretation of Marius' harsh character. Wardman, 132-5; *Arat.* 51.4, 54.2; *Sull.* 30.5.

<sup>38</sup> *Dem.* 1.3.

<sup>39</sup> This can be inferred from the numerous occasions in which later sophists and philosophers quote from Plutarch's writings or take pride in being his supposed descendants. For example, the Platonist, Apuleius of Madauros, would make the hero of his *Metamorphoses* a

Chrysostom's familiarity with Plutarch, however, the evidence is not conclusive.

Coleman-Norton, for example, has noted some literary parallels between the two, in terms of their biographical accounts and proverbial usage.<sup>40</sup> While this may count as evidence for Chrysostom's appropriation of Plutarch, it may well be a mere indication that both have drawn from a similar Greek literary culture, or that Chrysostom has read biographies akin to those of Plutarch.<sup>41</sup> Despite these uncertainties, the fact remains that Chrysostom is evidently familiar with some sources of Greco-Roman biographies and it is, therefore, entirely reasonable for us to conclude that he has benefitted from the narrative framework and strategies highlighted above.<sup>42</sup> Regardless of the extent to which Chrysostom might have imbibed these literary strategies, the fact remains that their application in Chrysostom's writings would have been mediated through a more significant and influential aspect of his education, namely, Greco-Roman rhetoric.

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descendant of "the renowned Plutarch and Sextus." The third century sophist, Nicagoras, and his fourth century counterpart, Himerius, separately claim him as one of their ancestors. Menander Rhetor, in the third century, even commends Plutarch's *Lives* as essential readings for aspiring students of rhetoric. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome*, 11; Russell, 144; Duff, 3.

<sup>40</sup> For example, Chrysostom gives an account of Alexander's encounter with Diogenes the Cynic that is similar to that of Plutarch (*PG* 67:339). See also *PG* 58.606-7, 700 for the proverbial similarities. P.R. Coleman-Norton, "St. John Chrysostom and the Greek Philosophers," *Classical Philology* 25 (1930), 308; P.R. Coleman-Norton, "St. John Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets," *Classical Philology* 27, no. 3 (1932), 215, 220.

<sup>41</sup> The case for Chrysostom's reading of Plutarch is strengthened by Lamberton's suggestion that Plutarch had probably intended his *Lives* to also be a 'textbook' source for students of rhetoric. Accordingly then, it is not implausible for Chrysostom to have read some of the *Lives* as part of his rhetorical training. Robert Lamberton, *Plutarch* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 145.

<sup>42</sup> Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse*, Sather Classical Lectures (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 144-46.

## The Rhetorical Traditions

### *Progymnasmata and Rhetorical Training*

Chrysostom, as Socrates tells us, was trained under the famous orator, Libanius.<sup>43</sup> Although the duration of his training is uncertain, it seems that the future bishop of Constantinople was regarded as the greatest protégé of the ‘official sophist’ of Antioch, so much so that Sozomen would have Libanius lament in his deathbed that the Christians had taken his successor from him.<sup>44</sup> With regards to his rhetorical training, Chrysostom would have spent much time reading poetry and prose literature, the chief being “Homer, Hesiod and other poets, Demosthenes, Lysias and other orators, Herodotus, Thucydides and other historians.”<sup>45</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, Chrysostom was probably acquainted with Greek philosophy during this period, though he was unlikely to have seriously studied the philosophers.<sup>46</sup>

During the first year of his rhetorical education, Chrysostom would have learnt his rhetorical techniques from one of the *progymnasmata*, or preliminary exercises, composed

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<sup>43</sup> To be sure, Chrysostom never refers to Libanius as his teacher. Nevertheless, his depiction of his anonymous teacher of rhetoric coheres well with the existing sources about Libanius. *ad vid.* 2 (PG 48.601); Socrates, *hist.* 6.3.

<sup>44</sup> According to Criore, most students opted to have a “veneer of rhetoric” rather than being well-trained. Moreover, they often did not remain with a sophist for a prolonged period of time. If Chrysostom had belonged to this demographic profile, he would probably have studied with Libanius for no more than 2-3 years. Sozomen, *hist.* 8.2; Criore, *School of Libanius*, 82.

<sup>45</sup> This catalogue of Libanius’ library, as Criore tells us, is largely similar to those prescribed to rhetorical students elsewhere. *Ep.* 1036; A.F. Norman, “The Library of Libanius,” *Rheinisches Museum fur Philologie* 107 (1964): 159; Raffaella Criore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 227, 237; Raffaella Criore, *The School of Libanius in Late Antique Antioch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 149

<sup>46</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 46-47.

by the Late Antique rhetors.<sup>47</sup> Among these is that composed by Libanius' student, Aphthonius.<sup>48</sup> According to Aphthonius, a typical student would have to work through and master fourteen rhetorical techniques and genres.<sup>49</sup> While most, if not all, of these would be deployed by rhetors, both Christian and pagan, in their exemplar discourse, there are some which would be particularly relevant for such epideictic oratory.<sup>50</sup> Among these, the first is the *diēgēma*, or the "narrative of an action that has happened or as though it had happened." According to Aphthonius, there are "six attributes" to the literary framework of narrative: "the person who acted, the thing done, the time at which, the place in which, the manner how, and the cause for which it was done."<sup>51</sup> When well-told, such a narrative would obviously establish the solid ground on which an orator can develop his case for the exemplary conduct and virtues of his subject.

The second technique popular in exemplar discourse is the *synkrisis*, or comparison, which is often used to compare a good exemplar with another virtuous character. The aim of such association is to allow the orator to contrast the virtues of the first with the second

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<sup>47</sup> Criboire observes that only about one sixth of Libanius's students stayed with him for five to six years. For the most part, students came under his tutelage for only one to two years. For this reason, the *progymnasmata* would have been used in the very early stage of the student's rhetorical training. Criboire, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 224.

<sup>48</sup> In practice, rhetorical studies in the fourth century Roman East were, by and large, homogeneous, and teachers, like Libanius, were obliged to adopt a similar curriculum. This is why the *progymnasmata* commonly used in this period generally agreed, with minor differences, on the major rhetorical techniques available for the orator. For translations of the *progymnasmata* of Aphthonius and other rhetors, see Kennedy's *Progymnasmata*. Criboire, *School of Libanius*, 148.

<sup>49</sup> Aphthonius, *prog.* (Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 95-127).

<sup>50</sup> The sequence of rhetorical techniques and genres presented here does not reflect the degree of importance that these may have for exemplary discourse.

<sup>51</sup> The same, of course, may be done for negative exemplars. Aphthonius, *prog.* 10 (Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 114-5).

exemplar, so that he might either highlight the superiority or enhance the status of the exemplar discussed. This technique is well-demonstrated in Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*, where the philosophical status of Apollonius is elevated simply through a repeated comparison of the sage with other renowned Greek philosophers, including the esteemed Pythagoras.<sup>52</sup>

With regards to the *anaskeuē*, or refutation, it is basically "an overturning of some matter at hand," e.g., a false claim, and would be used frequently in situations when the moral integrity of an exemplary figure is called into question. In the case of the *kataskeuē*, or confirmation, it is the opposite of the *anaskeuē* and is deployed to corroborate matters that are unclear. When applied to epideictic oratory, it enables an orator to draw out, from specific narratives or incidents, the virtuous aspects of the exemplar at hand.

Complementing this is the *ēthopoiia*, or the "imitation of the character of a proposed speaker," which enables the orator to animate his subject with a fictitious speech. Besides elucidating the motivations of the subject concerned, such dramatization also helps an audience better visualize the exemplary figure and therefore render his virtues more plausible to their ears. Another strategy that aids audience visualization is the *ekphrasis*. Here, the orator would depict the physical features, environment, or the deeds of the exemplar in the most vivid ways, with the aim of not only transposing the audiences' imagination into the 'world' of the exemplar, but ultimately enhance the 'visual' impact and therefore the plausibility of the exemplar's deeds and virtues.

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<sup>52</sup> VA 1.2, 1.10, 1.13, 1.29.

As we have shown in our earlier discussion of Greco-Roman biographies, the most important rhetorical genres for exemplar discourse remain the *enkōmion* and its counterpart, the *psogos*. The *enkōmion*, explains Aphthonius, is basically “language expressive of the inherent excellences (τῶν προσόντων καλῶν)” of an exemplary figure.<sup>53</sup> In his *progymnasmata*, we find one of the most extensive discussions on how the exemplar paradigm of origins, upbringing and deeds may be applied.

This is the division of the *enkōmion*. You should elaborate it with the following headings. You will construct a prooemion appropriate to the subject; then you will state the person’s origin (γένος), which you will divide into nation, homeland, ancestors, and parents; then upbringing (ἀνατροφὴν), which you will divide into habits and required skill and principles of conduct; then you will compose the greatest heading of the *enkōmion*, deeds (πράξεις), which you will divide into those of mind and body and fortune (ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα καὶ τύχην): mind, as courage or prudence; body, as beauty or swiftness or strength; and fortune, as power and wealth and friends; after these a comparison, attributing superiority to what is being celebrated by contrast; then an epilogue rather fitting a prayer.<sup>54</sup>

A similar rhetorical structure, as Aphthonius explains later, is presumed for the *psogos*, or invective. The key difference is that, in the case of the *psogos*, the aim is entirely opposite, that is, it is “language expressive of [the] inherent evils” of the subject according to the categories of origins, upbringing and deeds.<sup>55</sup> Within exemplar discourse, a *psogos* is often introduced in a *synkrisis*, where the ‘villain’ character is not only denounced systematically, but compared with a more virtuous exemplar, so that the latter’s excellence

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<sup>53</sup> The subject of the *enkōmion*, as Aphthonius tells us, can also be things (e.g., a virtue), occasions or places, dumb animals or plants, or even a group of people. Libanius, for example, composed an *enkōmion* praising his native city of Antioch. *Prog.* 10.21.5 (Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 108); Libanius, *Or.* 11 [Translated by A.F. Norman in Libanius, *Antioch as a Centre of Hellenic Culture by Libanius*, trans. A.F. Norman, Series: Translated Texts for Historians, vol. 34 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 15-44.

<sup>54</sup> *prog.* 21-22.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 27-28 (Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 108, 111-2).

can be highlighted. Not infrequently, another rhetorical technique, the *koinos topos*, or “language amplifying evils that are attached to something,” would also be deployed within these invective categories to intensify the perceived vices of its subject.

### *Epidictic Rhetoric and Paradeigmata*

From the classical period onwards, orators have generally classified rhetoric into three genres, namely, deliberative, judicial and epideictic rhetoric.<sup>56</sup> Epideictic rhetoric, with its objective of praising or blaming a subject, is the most common expression of exemplar discourse and usually takes the form of the *enkōmion*.<sup>57</sup> Yet, as orators also recognize, exemplars or *παράδειγματα* also frequently function as the *pisteis* or proofs for their rhetorical arguments, whether these are presented in epideictic, deliberative or judicial speech.<sup>58</sup>

One of the earliest reflections of the role of *paradeigmata* as *pisteis* is that given in Anaximenes’ (c.380-320) *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*. According to Anaximenes,

some proofs are drawn from words and actions and persons themselves, others are supplementary to what the persons say and do. Probabilities (εἰκὸς), examples (παράδειγμα), tokens, enthymemes, maxims, signs, and refutations are proofs drawn from actual words and persons and actions; the opinion of the speaker, the evidence of witnesses, evidence given under torture, [and] oaths are supplementary.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.3.1 (1358b3).

<sup>57</sup> Chrysostom’s appropriation of epideictic rhetoric will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, when we analyse his martyr panegyrics. *Rh.* 1.9 (1366a).

<sup>58</sup> Aristotle, *Rh.* 3.13, 17.

<sup>59</sup> *Rh. Al.* 7.2. Translated by Rackham in Aristotle, *Aristotle: Problems 2: Books 22-38 and Rhetorica Ad Alexandrum*, trans. W. S. Hett and H. Rackham (London: Heinemann, 1936), 319-21.

Among the primary *pisteis*, the first to be presented as evidence for one's case should always be an *eikos*, that is, "a statement supported by examples present [or self-evident] in the minds of an audience." It is only when such arguments from *eikota* are unconvincing (*ἄπιστον*) that *paradeigmata* are deployed to either illustrate or substantiate the *eikota*, so that "your audience may be more ready to believe in your statements when they realize that another action resembling the one you allege has been committed in the way in which you say that it occurred."<sup>60</sup>

Writing in the same period, Aristotle similarly asserts that the primary role of *paradeigmata* is to be supplementary proofs for one's enthymemes.<sup>61</sup> Nonetheless, he does allow for their usage as demonstrative proofs in the rare cases when enthymemes are entirely unavailable.

If one does not have a supply of enthymemes, one should use *paradeigmata* as *demonstration*; for persuasion [then] depends on them. But if there are enthymemes, *paradeigmata* should be used as *witnesses*, [as] a supplement to enthymemes. When the *paradeigmata* are placed first, there is the appearance of induction, but induction is not suitable to rhetorical discourses except in a few cases; when they are put at the end they become witnesses, and a witness is everywhere persuasive. Thus, too, when they are first, it is necessary to supply *many of them* [but] when they are mentioned at the end one is sufficient; for even a single trustworthy witness is useful (*italics mine*).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Rh. Al.* 7.4 (Rackham, 321).

<sup>61</sup> An enthymeme is a rhetorical syllogism or deduction constructed based on probable premises (that is, *eikota*) and leading to probable conclusions. Both the premises and conclusions, however, are "not necessarily logically valid" to the audiences. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*, trans. George Alexander Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 315; Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, ed. Michael V. Fox and Pheme Perkins, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>62</sup> *Rh.* 2.20.9 (1394a). Translated by Kennedy in Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 181. Later, Quintilian would teach similarly that the *paradeigma* is essentially utilized in rhetorical induction, where it constitutes an analogy for the argument introduced. *Insti. Ort.* 5.11.3.

According to Aristotle, there are two kinds of *paradeigmata*: the historical *paradeigma* and the fabricated *paradeigma*, the latter of which may be sub-divided as παραβολή (illustrative analogy or comparison) and λόγος (fable).<sup>63</sup> Like Anaximenes, Aristotle's historical *paradeigma* are examples based on historical events, either past or present. The *parabolē*, on the other hand, differs from the historical *paradeigma* in that it "describes the activities of types of people rather than specific individuals," e.g., the athletes and sailors in Aristotle's examples, and it could be a hypothetical invention of the orator. As for the *logoi*, or fables, a good example would be those composed by Aesop.<sup>64</sup>

As it seems, Anaximenes and Aristotle's theories of *paradeigmata* would be taken on board by most Greco-Roman orators by the first century A.D. This is clearly the case for Quintilian who develops the subject in great detail in Book V of his *Institutio Oratoria*. Here, he introduces the *exemplum* as "the third kind of Technical Proof, one which is based on matters introduced into a Cause from outside" and categorises the *exempla* into five types, namely, the similar, the dissimilar, the contrary, "from greater to lesser," and "from lesser to greater."<sup>65</sup> A similar example would be "Saturninus was rightly killed, as were the Gracchi," while a dissimilar example is "Brutus killed his sons when they were plotting treachery; Manlius punished his son's valour with death." A contrary example is given in the case where "Marcellus restored works of art to the Syracusans when they were the enemy; Verres took them from them though they were our allies."

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<sup>63</sup> *Rh.* 2.20.2 (1393a29-30). Bennett Price, "Paradeigma and Exemplum in Ancient Rhetorical Theory" (University of California, 1975), 39.

<sup>64</sup> Price, "Paradeigma and Exemplum," 42-44; *Rh.* 2.20.5-6 (93b8-94a1).

<sup>65</sup> *insti.* 5.11.1. Translated by Russell in Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, trans. D. A. Russell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 431.

As for “from the greater to the lesser,” it is operative when one argues “if whole cities have been overthrown because of violated marriages, what should be done to an adulterer?” In the case of “from the lesser to the greater,” it is demonstrated when one argues that “the pipers, having left the city, were recalled by the authority of the people; how much more should leading citizens who have deserved well of the state, but have been victims of envy, be recalled from exile!”<sup>66</sup> An interesting variant of “from the greater to lesser,” adds Quintilian, is the use of “unequal parallels,” which are “particularly useful for exhortations.” “Courage,” for example, “is more to be admired in a woman than in a man. Therefore, if someone is to be fired to do brave deeds, [...] Cato and Scipio will be less persuasive than Lucretia.”<sup>67</sup>

Like his Greek predecessors, Quintilian similarly stresses the importance of historical examples in *paradeigma* argumentations. Implicit to this is the conviction that, whenever possible, a more recent *exemplum* should be used rather than an ancient one, since the latter can be easily dismissed as legendary and, therefore, invalid.<sup>68</sup> The corollary here, of course, is that poetic fables (*poetics fabulis*), that is, mythology or fiction, possess “less probative force,” even though they might offer acceptable forms of *exempla*.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> *insti.* 5.11.7 (Russell, 433-35). Quintilian’s similar and dissimilar examples clearly parallels that taught in *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, which asserts that “most [historical] actions are partly like [similar] and partly unlike one another [dissimilar], so that for this reason we shall be well supplied with examples.” *Rh. Al.* 8.14 (1430a7-11).

<sup>67</sup> *insti.* 5.11.10-11 (Russell, 433-35).

<sup>68</sup> *insti.* 5.13.24 (Russell, 479); Eisenbaum, 63.

<sup>69</sup> Having said this, Quintilian acknowledges that fables can be particularly effective with the “uneducated rustics, who listen to fiction in a simpler spirit and, in their delight, readily assent to things that they enjoy hearing.” *insti.* 5.11.18 (Russell, 439).

## Chrysostom's Exemplar Discourse: A Davidic Case Study

### *Chrysostom's Rhetorical Portrayal of David: An Overview*

Despite the reservations of earlier scholars, recent scholarship generally concur that Greco-Roman rhetoric had a pervasive influence upon Chrysostom's writings.<sup>70</sup> More importantly, the work of Wilken, Hunter, Mitchell and others have demonstrated, quite convincingly, that a good grasp of this rhetorical tradition is absolutely crucial for a proper understanding of the teachings and ideologies implicit in Chrysostom's writings.<sup>71</sup>

This is certainly the case for the wide range of exemplar discourse dispersed throughout Chrysostom's eight hundred plus homilies, treatises and letters.<sup>72</sup> Often, these exemplar portraits are presented in the form of full scale *enkōmia*, like his *De laudibus sancti Pauli* or panegyrics on the martyrs. More commonly, however, they are found simply as episodic expositions of an exemplar's deeds or even casual references to the exemplar's

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<sup>70</sup> Writing in the late nineteenth century, Aimé Puech insists that Chrysostom is entirely hostile to pagan culture and, therefore, also to pagan learning and rhetoric. Similar sentiments are expressed by Simonetti, Piédagnel and Kennedy, though they do allow a limited degree of pagan influence. These claims, however, have been disproved by Ameringer, Burns, Delehay and Hubbell's studies of Chrysostom's use of Greco-Roman rhetorical techniques and genres. See Introduction, pp. 3-4.

<sup>71</sup> Wilken's *John Chrysostom and the Jews* is a brilliant attempt to analyse John's *Homilies Against the Judaizing Christians* as a rhetoric of *psogos*, whereby the Jews are portrayed negatively to his audience, in order to head off any possible temptation, on their part, for Judaizing behaviour. Mitchell's *Heavenly Trumpet*, as mentioned in our Introduction, is the first concerted effort to deploy exemplar rhetoric, whether it is the *enkōmion* or *ekphrasis*, as a means of clarifying the ideologies implicit in Chrysostom's Pauline portraits. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 95-127; Mitchell, 95-104.

<sup>72</sup> Wendy Mayer, *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom-Provenance: Reshaping the Foundations*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* vol. 273 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005), 26.

virtues.<sup>73</sup> These “encomiastic material[s],” as Hubbell explains, are usually “worked up in shorter speeches with great freedom of arrangement” and shows the closest resemblance to the *λαλιαί*, or “talks,” that have been classified by Menander.<sup>74</sup> For the most part, they are summoned up as *pisteis* for an ethical or theological point that Chrysostom is making.

The variety of exemplary figures exalted by Chrysostom is also very diverse. They include biblical characters, such as Abraham, Elijah, and the Roman centurion in the Book of Acts; lay figures like David, Hannah and Mary; martyrs, such as Lucian, Babylas and the Maccabean martyrs; ecclesiastical figures, like Ignatius, Flavian and Meletius; the monks and virgins that his audiences regularly encounter in the *polis* and Syrian mountains. In this thesis, we will focus on four of Chrysostom’s favourite exemplars, namely, the apostle Paul, Christian ascetics, martyrs and biblical laity. The first three will be examined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The fourth will be taken up in the rest of this chapter through our study of Chrysostom’s favourite lay exemplar: King David.

Apart from the usual affirmations of David as the author of the Psalms and the ancestor of Christ, Chrysostom’s writings regularly present the Israelite king as a versatile exemplar.<sup>75</sup> The range of *aretai* that David exemplifies is diverse and includes faith,

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<sup>73</sup> This is well demonstrated in Mitchell’s analysis of Chrysostom’s Pauline portraits, where we encounter not only extensive *enkōmia* to the apostle, but also what she calls, “Pauline miniatures,” or cursory references to his virtues. Mitchell, 69-93

<sup>74</sup> Hubbell, 267-68.

<sup>75</sup> Both Davidic motifs trace their origins to the post-exilic Jewish literature. References to the Davidic covenant are found in Ezekiel 34.24, 37.24; Zechariah 12-13 and Sirach 45.25. Esteem for David the Psalmist and reformer of worship is seen in 1 Chronicles 16, 1 Esdras 1.15 and Sirach 47.9-10. Where Chrysostom and his Christian predecessors differ from the Jews is their convictions that David the Psalmist should be revered more as a prophet of Christ than a teacher of the law – though the latter is still mentioned occasionally, and their insistence that the Davidic covenant is now realized in Jesus the Messiah. For Chrysostom’s regard for David the Psalmist, see *Homily 7*

repentance (μετάνοια), humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη), gentleness (πραΰτης) and clemency (ἐπιείκεια).<sup>76</sup> The contexts in which David is praised are equally varied, ranging from causal references to him as one of the many biblical characters who mourn for the sins of others, to the many rhetorical comparisons between David and Saul, and also the more extensive reflections on David's life and virtues, as is the case in his *De Davide et Saule*.<sup>77</sup>

Given their kaleidoscopic nature and frequent occurrence, these Davidic portraits are a rich source of exemplar pericopes whose analysis should yield valuable insights into Chrysostom's objectives for his exemplar discourse in general and his vision for the lay exemplar in particular. The aim of our present analysis of Chrysostom's Davidic portraits is thus three fold. The first is to explore how Chrysostom appropriates the different narrative and literary strategies that he inherits from the Greco-Roman biographical and rhetorical traditions for his exemplar constructs. The second is to ascertain how these exemplar portraits might support or elucidate his pastoral and ethical vision, including the spiritual ideals that he conceives for the laity. These lead us to our third and final objective, which is to formalize a hermeneutical approach that can be applied to the analysis of the ideals and worldviews underlying the exemplar portraits found elsewhere in his writings.

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*and 28 on Romans*. His conception of David as a prophet of Christ may be found in *Homily 36 on Matthew*. For Christian interpretations of the motif of God's covenant with David, as given in the New Testament, see Matthew 1 and 12.23, Mark 10.48, Luke 1.32 and 3.31, Romans 1.3, Hebrews 4.7 and Revelation 5.5. Christ's Davidic ancestry is discussed in *Homilies 1.7* and 2.2-3 of Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew*. Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus' Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 537; *hom. in Rom.* 7, 28 (NPNF I.11, 375-76, 539-40); *hom. in Matt.* 36 (NPNF I.10, 240).

<sup>76</sup> *hom. in 2 Cor.* 26.3; *Dav. et Sau.* 1 (PG 54.677.32)

<sup>77</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 15.4.

### *The Figure of David in Chrysostom's Pastoral Context*

By the time Chrysostom became a priest in 386, the world of Christianity had changed tremendously, as compared to that inhabited by his spiritual forefathers. The Arian controversy that was raging throughout much of the fourth century was finally subsiding – a result of Theodosius I's calling and endorsement of the Council of Constantinople (381). For the ordinary Christians, however, the more significant imperial decree remained that initiated by Constantine and continued by most of his successors, namely, their official support for Christianity.<sup>78</sup>

Christianity, by the end of the fourth century, was no longer a religion of the minority or persecuted. Rather, it was becoming an increasingly popular religion, favoured not only by those who were attracted to its tenets, but also those who saw it as a means of enhancing their social status, or even acquiring political privileges.<sup>79</sup> The cosmopolitan city of Syrian Antioch is a good case in point, having seen its Christian population grow to about 100,000, or one-third of the city, by Chrysostom's day.<sup>80</sup> As so often happens, such conversion *en masse* inevitably leads to a wide spectrum of spiritual commitments among the Antiochene Christians. No doubt, there must have been many, like Chrysostom and his childhood friend, Basil, who remained fervent for Christ and the

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<sup>78</sup> John Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital : Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 197-9, 210; Averil Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire: Ad 284-430* (London: Fontana, 1993), 75.

<sup>79</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (A.D. 100-400)* (New Haven: Yale Univ. P., 1984), 57-58.

<sup>80</sup> J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch : City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 76-77, 95.

Church.<sup>81</sup> Yet, there would also be others who were more lukewarm towards the faith that they, or their fathers, had just embraced – a point attested not only in their continued engagement in pagan customs and superstition, but also the Judaizing behaviour evident among some.<sup>82</sup>

Alongside this development is a second and equally dramatic sociological change within the Church, that is, the rapid growth of monasticism in the region of Syria. Asceticism has always been an enduring aspect of Antiochene Christianity, whose roots may be traced to as far back as the second century order of the ‘Sons and Daughters of the Covenant’, established in Syria and Mesopotamia.<sup>83</sup> In the fourth century, however, the Syrian monastic movement experienced such an unprecedented growth in the region of Antioch that its presence could actually irritate the cultured sentiments of Libanius, or even challenge the religious conceptions of some Antiochene Christians.<sup>84</sup> More importantly, the pervasive presence of Syrian monks devoting themselves to the pursuit of the angelic life would inadvertently redefine the traditional categories of spirituality for the Antiochene Christians. For most Antiochene Christians, the monks now constituted the spiritual elite, and represented a spiritual maturity and excellence that lay Christians

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<sup>81</sup> *sac.* 1.1-4.

<sup>82</sup> Chrysostom, *adv. Iud.* 1.3 (FC 68, 10-4); Downey, *Antioch: In the Age of Theodosius the Great*, 115; Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1997), 150-4; Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 17-19.

<sup>83</sup> R.M. Price, "Introduction," in *Theodoret of Cyrrhus, a History of the Monks of Syria.* , Cistercian Studies Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1985), xxi-xxii.

<sup>84</sup> David G. Hunter, "Introduction," in *John Chrysostom: A Comparison between a King and a Monk/ against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 62-63; Chrysostom, *oppug.* 2-3.

could never dream of attaining.<sup>85</sup> The result of this development, quite obviously, was a greater degree of uncertainty or ambiguity in the laity's perception of the nature of their Christian calling and spiritual maturity.

This is the ecclesiastical context in which Chrysostom served during the two decades of his ministry: an environment where Christians, as compared to the previous centuries, were no longer as clear about their spiritual commitments, and thus found themselves in a greater variety of compromising situations.<sup>86</sup> It is also within this socio-pastoral matrix, I suggest, that Chrysostom's Davidic portraits can be properly appreciated.

#### *David: Paradeigma of Virtue*

Among the different Davidic stories re-told by Chrysostom, five narratives are clearly his favourite. They are, in the order of our discussion, David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12), Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15-18), David's duel with Goliath (1 Sam. 17-18), the punishment of the plague (2 Sam. 24) and his twice sparing of Saul's life (1 Sam. 24, 26). The first story is probably the most popular among the early Christians, including Chrysostom, and is often held by them as the *paradeigma* of Christian humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη) and repentance (μετάνοια). Clement clearly presumes this in his letter

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<sup>85</sup> This sentiment is well-expressed in Chrysostom's *Homily 72* on the Gospel of Matthew, where he pre-empts his audiences' excuse that they could never attain the monks' spirit of humility by exalting David and other biblical exemplars as lay believers who had similarly attained this virtue.

<sup>86</sup> This is not to say that all Christians in the previous centuries were more moral and spiritually attuned to the demands of their faith. Apostasy and sexual immorality had appeared even as early as the apostolic period (1 Cor. 5; 2 Tim. 1.15).

to the Corinthians, where the entire Psalm 51 is cited as an illustration of David's humility and repentance, and part of his call for the Corinthians to do likewise.<sup>87</sup> Elsewhere in Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*, the story is expounded extensively as a *paradeigma* of the truth that God is "no respecter of persons" and will punish each person's sin accordingly.<sup>88</sup>

Likewise Chrysostom, over the course of his two decade ministry, would often refer to this narrative as a *paradeigma* for humility and repentance.<sup>89</sup> Like many of his Christian predecessors, he also recognizes the iconic potential of this story. Thus, he would occasionally present it as a demonstration of the severity of divine judgment and the divine mercy that remains available for the repentant, and, on other occasions, recast the story as a warning against similar moral lapses or the harbouring of secret sins.<sup>90</sup> This iconic approach to David's life is well-illustrated in his *Homily 26 on Matthew* where Chrysostom constructs a *synkrisis* between David and his listeners and presents the former as a *paradeigma* of how divine judgment can fall upon sinners. Deploying a sub-category of *paradeigmatic* rhetoric, that is, to argue from the "lesser to the greater," Chrysostom then cautions his listeners against a careless morality by reminding them that if "that righteous

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<sup>87</sup> 1 Clem. 16-18.

<sup>88</sup> AH 4.27

<sup>89</sup> For references to David's repentance, see *hom. in Matt.* 2.11 (NPNF I.10, 14); *hom. in 1 Cor.* 16.3 (NPNF I.12, 90); *hom. in 2 Cor.* 15.2 (NPNF I.12, 351); *hom. in Heb.* 31.4-5 (NPNF I.14, 507). For the use of this story as an example of humility, see *hom. in Matt* 3.8-9 (NPNF I.11, 18-19).

<sup>90</sup> Basil, in his *Epistle 42*, would speak of the story as highlighting the importance of ending one's life well. *hom. in Matt.* 26.8, 75.5; *hom. in 2 Cor.* 4.9; *hom. in Heb.* 31.7.

man [David] through a little remissness received such wounds, what shall we have to suffer, who are every day negligent?"<sup>91</sup>

On several occasions, the same affair also becomes a platform for Chrysostom to reflect on the nature of Christian ethical development. As discussed in Chapter 1 and our earlier section on Late Antique biographies, Greco-Roman philosophers generally presume that a virtuous life is a direct result of both nature and nurture. Within this ethical scheme, each person is expected to act in accordance to his habituated nature, or the lack of it. The story of David's adultery, however, presents obvious difficulties to this ethical conception. For the early Jewish and Christian interpreters, David is the Israelite *par excellence* who is pious in his worship, entirely obedient to God and habituated in every virtue. Consequently, it is unthinkable that such a virtuous man can lapse into such a grievous sin as this. Yet, the fact remains that he did and an explanation for this apparent contradiction is called for.<sup>92</sup> This is certainly the case for Josephus who, in his account of the affair, would begin by qualifying that David was "by nature a righteous and god-fearing man, and one who strictly observed the laws of his fathers," before suggesting or, indeed, downplaying David's lapse as a mere error, or false step.<sup>93</sup> Chrysostom, as it seems, adopts a similar approach in his *Homily 16 on Romans*, where he maintains, in

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<sup>91</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 26.10.

<sup>92</sup> As mentioned earlier, Plutarch's biographies often seem reluctant to interpret a moral anomaly as a change of character, but rather consider it as a revelation of a veiled nature, or just a lapse arising from various circumstances. Wardman, 132-35.

<sup>93</sup> *Anti.* 7.130 [Translated by Thackeray in Flavius Josephus, *Josephus*, 8 vols., The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 5 (London: Heinemann, 1926), 431].

accordance with Late Antique ethical ideals, that David's sin did not arise from a "habitual practice of wickedness." Instead, the king was simply "carried away by circumstances."<sup>94</sup>

Elsewhere, however, Chrysostom appears to allow for a more dynamic view of David's character and nature. Commenting on Jesus' remark that "every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matt 7.17), he argues that Christ is not teaching here that "there is no way for the wicked to change or that the good cannot fall away." Rather, the axiom should be taken to mean that "so long as he [a sinner] is living in wickedness, he will not be able to bear good fruit. For he may indeed change to virtue, being evil; but while continuing in wickedness, he will not bear good fruit."<sup>95</sup> It is at this point that Chrysostom reflects upon the story of David's adultery:

What then? Did not David, being good, bear evil fruit? Not continuing good, but being changed; since, undoubtedly, had he remained always what he was, he would not have brought forth such fruit. For not surely while abiding in the habit of virtue (ἔξει τῆς ἀρετῆς), did he commit what he committed.

Quite obviously, even though Chrysostom agrees with the Greco-Roman notion that one's actions are bound up with one's habitual nature, he does not subscribe to a static view of human character. Instead, as he puts it elsewhere, human nature (ἀνθρώπων γένος) is so inherently unstable (ἀστατον) that David's fall should not be surprising in the first place.<sup>96</sup> Accordingly then, David's moral failure in this instance can be attributed to the fact that he allowed his sexual desire (ἐπιθυμία) to hold down "all his

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<sup>94</sup> PG 60.557. 66-558.3. Chrysostom would similarly presume elsewhere that David's sin was due to his "slight negligence" (μικρὸν ὀλιγωρήσας). *hom. in Matt.* 26.8.

<sup>95</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 23.8 (NPNF I.10, 230, modified).

<sup>96</sup> *hom. in 1 Cor.* 1.1 (PG 61.14.33-4).

reasoning powers."<sup>97</sup> The consequence of this was that his intelligence (συνετός) was dulled to the extent that he could even murder a faithful subject like Uriah.<sup>98</sup>

What Chrysostom conceives here is clearly in line with his understanding of human psychology, as outlined in Chapter 1. For Chrysostom, human nature is never ethically autonomous. Rather, an innate contingency exists in human psychology, so much so that there is always a potential for the soul to mislead the body into all sorts of mischief. The only guarantee for an entirely and enduring virtuous life, as he puts it, is through the decisive help and guidance of the Holy Spirit.<sup>99</sup>

Related to the above story is the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sam. 15-18) which the prophet Nathan predicts to be the direct consequence of David's sin (2 Sam. 12.11). Like the antecedent narrative, David is taken here as an exemplar of a cluster of *aretai*, namely, guilelessness (ἄπλαστος), love (ἀγάπη), submission to divine judgment and humility (τᾶπεινοφροσύνη).<sup>100</sup> Among these, it is the *aretē* of humility that predominates so much that the story may well be regarded by Chrysostom as the *locus classicus* of David the humble. Here, two motifs are central to Chrysostom's retelling of this story. The first is

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<sup>97</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 60.1 (PG 58.585.41-42).

<sup>98</sup> It is noted that Chrysostom does not directly associate this loss of *sunetos* with David's murder of Uriah. Nonetheless, this conclusion may be assumed in view that Chrysostom portrays David as having lost so much *sunetos* that "he stood in need of others to correct him, and did not even perceive amidst what evils he was," that is, a direct reference to Nathan's rebuke of his adultery and murder." *hom. in 1Cor.* 44.5.

<sup>99</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 56-57.

<sup>100</sup> In *Homily 33 on 1Corinthians*, David is praised for his strong love for Absalom, despite the latter's rebellion against him. In *Homily 15 on Ephesians*, he is compared to Absalom again and emerges, this time, as a guileless (ἄπλαστος) person. *hom. in 1 Cor.* 33.4 (NPNF I.12, 198; PG 61.281.43); *hom. in Eph.* 15 (NPNF I.13, 122-23, PG 62.108.1); *hom. in Matt.* 3.9 (PG 57.39.7-8).

David's express willingness to "let him [God] do to me whatever seems good to him" with regards to Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15.25-26) and the second is his humble response to Shimei's curse (2 Sam. 16.9-12).<sup>101</sup> While the tradition for this dual emphasis may be traced as far back as Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, the latter motif's association with the virtue of humility is already established in the Septuagint, where David's prayerful response to Shimei's curse, "the Lord will look on my distress ( )," as given in the Masoretic text, is rendered as the Lord will look upon his "humiliation" (ταπείνωσις) instead.<sup>102</sup>

In Chrysostom's homilies, these two motifs are not simply convenient references to the virtue of humility. When the situation calls for it, they can also be deployed creatively to enrich his audiences' conception of the *aretē* and their understanding of how they might cultivate it in their lives. A good example is given in his *Homily 3* on the Gospel of Matthew. In the concluding section of this homily, Chrysostom, as he so often does, urges his audience to cultivate the virtue of humility which he declares to be "the first principle of all philosophy." This is because he who is "humbled and bruised [in heart] will not be vainglorious, wrathful, jealous for riches or harbour any passion."<sup>103</sup>

To substantiate his case, Chrysostom turns immediately to the two stories by highlighting the fact that David, despite being a doer of "ten thousand good works," had

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<sup>101</sup> See also *Homily 5 on Philipians*, where David is once again compared to Absalom and exalted as a humble (ταπεινόφρων) person and *Homily 7*, where both motifs are introduced as proofs for David's humility. *hom. in Phil 5, 7* (NPNF I.13, 205, 216; PG 62.216.49-50).

<sup>102</sup> This interpretation of David's magnanimity towards Shimei is clearly an idealized portrayal of David, since it does not account for the fact that David, at his deathbed, would hold Shimei guilty and ask Solomon to "bring his [Shimei's] gray head down to the grave in blood" (1 Kgs 2.8-9, TNIV). Josephus, *Anti.* 7.199, 209, 264-66.

<sup>103</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 3.8 (PG 57.38.29-31).

ended up as a refugee from his home, reviled by a “vile and outcast common soldier [Shimei].”<sup>104</sup> Yet, despite such difficulties, David continued to trust and to be content with God’s will and judgment which, as Chrysostom further explains, was due to the king’s single-minded desire to obey God and His laws in everything. To reinforce this conception of humility as contentment with divine judgement, Chrysostom then introduces a *synkrisis* between David and Absalom, where he not only has David encountering his son, but also making the fictitious pronouncement, that is, an *ēthopoia*, that “if this pleased God [...] that I should be chased and wander, and flee, and that he should be in honour, I acquiesce, and accept it, and do thank God for His many afflictions.”<sup>105</sup>

Two important pedagogical results are achieved through this conflation of Chrysostom’s rhetorical exposition of the two motifs with his earlier didactic teachings on humility. Firstly, by introducing the two motifs as *paradeigmata* for his arguments, along with the *synkrisis* and *ēthopoia* that follow, Chrysostom is able to drive home the point that David’s humility, or to his being humble and bruised, is essentially to be content with God’s judgment. Secondly, by conflating this Davidic portrait with his earlier didactic material, he inadvertently enriches the motif of David the humble by conveying the sense that Davidic contentment is necessarily bound up with the lack of vainglory, wrath, jealousy and the harbouring of any other passion. Such a varied understanding of David’s humility has, of course, much practical value for his listeners. Realistically speaking, few,

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. (PG 57.38.40-41).

<sup>105</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 3.9 (NPNF I.10, 19).

if any, would experience the afflictions and persecutions that David had suffered. Yet, most of them would struggle, in different degrees, with envy, vainglory or wrath – all signs of a lack of contentment. Hence, by equating Davidic humility and contentment with the eradication of these passions, Chrysostom would have effectively rendered the *aretē* more practicable for his listeners.

### *David as Greco-Roman Philosopher-King*

Thus far, we have seen how specific Davidic narratives can, in the hands of Chrysostom, turn out to be excellent vehicles for communicating his ethical ideals, whether it is his understanding of repentance and humility as important Christian virtues or his conviction that Christian *askēsis* must be grounded in pneumatology. Apart from these, the figure of David is also frequently exalted by Chrysostom as a type of a Greco-Roman philosopher king or leader and also a lay Christian exemplar *par excellence*. In the rest of this chapter, both Davidic motifs will be discussed separately before they are jointly examined in Chrysostom's *De Davide et Saule*.

David the archetypal king is probably the most important and prevalent motif in Second Temple Jewish and early Christian writings. Ben Sira, for example, praises David as a victorious king who was “set apart from the Israelites,” “played with lions as though they were young goats,” killed the boasting Goliath, conquered tens of thousands, enjoyed “the blessings bestowed by the Lord,” reformed worship and so on (Sir. 47.2-11).<sup>106</sup> Josephus similarly exalts David as a Greco-Roman philosopher king who can not only

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<sup>106</sup> In contrast, his adultery with Bathsheba and presumptuous census (2 Sam. 11-12, 24) are merely alluded to in the single phrase – “the Lord took away his sins” (Sir. 47.11).

boast of his “distinguished ancestry,” that is, Ruth, but can also claim to be a successful warrior. Not unlike the typical philosopher-kings, he is a Psalmist and therefore poet in his own right, possesses great wealth, the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, a philanthropic love for people, and great piety, or fear of God.<sup>107</sup>

Generally speaking, this motif of David the Greco-Roman philosopher-king and archetypal leader continued to be popular among the early Christians. Writing to the schismatic Church of Corinth, Clement of Rome would exhort the Corinthians to imitate the humility (ταπεινοφροσύνη) of Christ and a long string of leaders, including David, by ceasing their rebellion against their leaders.<sup>108</sup> Two centuries later, Athanasius would urge the Roman emperor to imitate David’s leadership by persuading his subordinates through reasoning, rather than sheer political authority.<sup>109</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, in his panegyric for Athanasius, even favourably compares the Alexandrian bishop with other biblical leaders, like David, and regards him as another Davidic leader, capable of combining both the “most active and most solitary life” in his career.<sup>110</sup> Elsewhere, in an *Oration* in memory of his father, Gregory also praises David as a gentle (πρᾶος) leader, a point that is later affirmed by his namesake, Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> *Ant.* 6.310-318, 7.101, 7.184, 7.291, 7.391; Feldman, 541-52, 562.

<sup>108</sup> *1 Clem.* 16-18.

<sup>109</sup> Athanasius refers specifically to 1 Samuel 26.8, where Abishai tried to convince David to strike the sleeping Saul. David, however, reasoned otherwise. *hist. Arian.* (NPNF 4, 246).

<sup>110</sup> Gregory probably had in mind David’s dual vocation as warrior-king and the author of the Psalms. *Or.* 21.3, 20 (PG 35.1104.36-38).

<sup>111</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, in his *Funeral Oration on Meletius* similarly praises David for his gentleness (πραότητα). *Or.* 18.24 (*Funebris oratio in patrem*, PG 35.1013.16-25); *Funeral Oration on Meletius* (*Gregorii Nysseni opera* 9.1.449.15-450.1). The roots of this motif of David the gentle is clearly Psalm 131.1 (LXX).

Likewise, Chrysostom's homilies generally present David as an archetypal leader, whose life, in many ways, conformed to the expectations for the Greco-Roman philosopher king. This is readily observed in his narration of one of the earliest and most popular Davidic story, that is, his duel with Goliath. Unlike Ben Sira and Josephus, who takes this as an opportunity to exalt David as a warrior-king or the courage of the Jews, Chrysostom generally interprets this battle as a reflection of David's "divine zeal and love of country" and his "regard of men as sheep."<sup>112</sup> As he puts it in his *Homily 29 on Romans*, this regard, or indeed, "parental affection" (φιλοστοργία) for his people was already present in David even before he became king.<sup>113</sup> Such a conception of David's *philostorgia*, of course, bears much resemblance to the Greco-Roman monarchical portraits, where a monarch, whether he is Agesilaus or Alexander, is presumed to have developed similar kingly *aretē*, before he took up his role as a ruler over his people.

For Chrysostom, this notion of David's kingly *philostorgia* is confirmed in another important narrative, that is, David's intercessory prayer for the plague (2 Sam. 24).<sup>114</sup> In his *Homily 29 on Romans*, he likens David to an exemplary Shepherd, who, like Christ, is

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<sup>112</sup> This is not to say that Chrysostom does not recognize this story as expressive of David's courage. He clearly does so, as in the case of his *Homily 26 on 2 Corinthians*. Yet, even in this homily, the reference to David's valour is secondary. As Chrysostom understands it, David only gave proof of his valour, that is, he had previously fought with the lion and the bear, because he was seeking to bring about a greater end – the salvation of the Jews, rather than to win the praise of others. In other words, David's courage is once again subsumed under the greater virtue of parental affection for his people. *Dav. et Sau.* 1 (PG 54.678.44-46); *hom. in 2 Cor.* 26.3.

<sup>113</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 29 (PG 60.658.20-37). See *hom. in 2 Cor.* 15.4 (PG 61.506.4-19) for a similar assertion that David possessed such *philostorgia* before his reign.

<sup>114</sup> *hom. in 1 Cor.* 25.4 (PG 61.506.4-19).

willing to “lay down his life for his sheep” (John 10.11).<sup>115</sup> This is to be seen in David’s choice of the plague which Chrysostom interprets, like Josephus, as David’s attempt to ensure that the punishment is inflicted upon himself rather than his people.<sup>116</sup> Here, he draws attention to David’s pleading with God, “let your hand fall on me and my family,” for “I, the shepherd, have sinned,” which the king prays after realizing that the plague is killing his people instead of himself (2 Sam. 24.17). As an interpretation of this prayer, Chrysostom introduces an *ēthopoia* and has David add,

“if they [my people] also sinned, I was the person who should suffer the vengeance, as I corrected them not. But since the sin is mine also, it is I who deserve to suffer the vengeance.”<sup>117</sup>

By this rhetorical move, two central features of David the Shepherd, or indeed, the pastor (ποιμένος), are clearly explicated: his humble recognition and confession of his personal sins, and his deep concern and sympathy for his people.<sup>118</sup>

David’s concern and sympathy for his people, particularly his ritualistic intercession on their behalf, certainly coheres with Late Antique expectations for a philosopher or philosopher-king.<sup>119</sup> Apollonius of Tyana, for example, is esteemed by

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<sup>115</sup> *hom. in Rom. 29.24* (NPNF I.11, 729).

<sup>116</sup> While it is impossible to ascertain whether Chrysostom appropriated Josephus’ justification for David’s choice of the punishment of the plague (*Anti. 7.322-23*), our present assertion is quite plausible in view of Chrysostom’s clear knowledge of Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities*.

<sup>117</sup> *hom. in Rom. 29.24* (NPNF I.11, 729).

<sup>118</sup> *hom. in Rom. 29.24* (PG 60.659.5-7). The word, ποιμένος, literally means shepherd, but in the Christian context is often understood as referring to a teacher or pastor.

<sup>119</sup> Elsewhere in *Homily 25.4 on 1 Corinthians*, Chrysostom speaks of David as an exemplary prayer intercessor, just like Abraham and Moses. This tradition dates back to 4 Esdras 7.108, which similarly presents David, along with Abraham, Moses and others as prayer intercessors. Having said this, Justin Martyr, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, would regard the story as simply a warning against boasting instead. *Dial. 141*.

Philostratus as a philosopher who revitalized several pagan temples in the Empire.

Plutarch, in his *Life of Alexander*, similarly praises Alexander for taking seriously the importance of ritual sacrifice. Where David differs from these Greco-Roman figures, however, is the fact that he concurrently exemplifies a highly-esteemed Christian *aretē* which is unheard of in most biographies of Greco-Roman philosopher-kings, namely, the willingness to confess (ἐξομολόγησις) one's sin.

There is yet a second and more significance difference between Chrysostom's David and the typical Greco-Roman philosopher king. This is to be seen in how Chrysostom presents David's origins. Generally speaking, Greco-Roman accounts of philosopher-kings tend to emphasize the lofty or even divine origins of their subjects.<sup>120</sup> Yet in his homilies, Chrysostom would consistently stress David's lowly origins instead. A case in point is his *Homily 48 on Matthew*, where Chrysostom defends Jesus' humble origins as a "carpenter's son" (Matt. 15.55) by deploying the rhetoric of *paradeigmata*. Here, he reminds his listeners that David was a king of Israel, despite the fact that he was merely the "son of a certain husbandman (γεωργός)." To strengthen his rhetorical induction, he introduces two further *paradeigmata*. Amos, he notes, was also "the child of a goatherd, and himself a goatherd," while Moses's father was far inferior (ἀποδέοντα) to himself. Yet in spite of such lowly origins, these men had gone on to become excellent prophets and leaders of Israel.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Examples include Isocrates' *Evagoras* and Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*.

<sup>121</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 48.1 (PG 58.487. 23-34).

To be sure, it is not uncommon for Greco-Roman epideictic rhetoric to stress, as Mitchell puts it, “the lowly origins of one who was later to earn great fame.”<sup>122</sup> I believe, however, that this is not Chrysostom’s rationale here. The hint is given in his refusal to follow the precedence set by Josephus, whom he most probably read, and Philo (20 BCE – 50), both of whom unreservedly give Moses a lofty origin in their biographies.<sup>123</sup> This contrast is only accentuated by the fact that Philo elsewhere clearly recognizes that one’s *aretai* is not dependent on his noble birth (εὐγενεία), but rather on the “mercy and loving-kindness” of God – a principle that, interestingly, he does not apply to his account of Moses’ ancestry.<sup>124</sup> Clearly then, Chrysostom’s demeaning of Moses’ origins, along with that of David and Amos, cannot be understood as mere rhetorical exigency. Instead, it is meant to convey the important theological point that David, Amos and Moses’ lowly origins are not hindrances to their future success, but opportunities for magnifying the

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<sup>122</sup> Menander Rhetor, for example, would advise that if a subject “is humble or without prestige, omit it. [...] Alternatively, you can say something about the family along these lines [...] ‘many seem to be of human stock, but in truth are sent down from God, and are verily an emanation of the higher power.’” Mitchell, 235; *Men. Rhet.* 2.370.

<sup>123</sup> Philo, in his *De Vita Mosis*, exalts Moses’ origins by asserting that his parents were “the best of their contemporaries” (*Mos.* I.7.1-4) and that, even as a babe, he was the designated successor of the Pharaoh (*Mos.* 1.13). For Josephus, he claims that Moses was the son of “Amaram, a Hebrew of noble birth” (*Ant.* 2.210). For Chrysostom’s familiarity with Josephus, see Heinz Schreckenberg, “Josephus in Early Christian Literature and Medieval Christian Art,” in *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, ed. David Flusser, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum* Section 3 Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992), 75.

<sup>124</sup> For Philo, this point is clearly attested in the biblical narratives, whether it is in Adam, who fell despite a “most noble birth” or Abraham’s faithfulness to God despite his idolatrous upbringing. *virt.* 187-88, 206, 212-16.

divine grace that has helped them overcome their natural difficulties and attain the pinnacle of leadership.<sup>125</sup>

As we shall see in Chapter 3, this demeaning of the exemplar's origins would prove to be an important narrative strategy for Chrysostom's exemplar discourse. The underlying rationale, as we will argue, is soteriological, since it is in this way that the glory and power that God had invested in each Christian through Christ's salvation will be clearly demonstrated.

### *David the Lay Exemplar*

To be sure, the *aretai* of parental affection and humble confession that characterize David's kingship are in no way unique to Christian leaders. Indeed, they are equally relevant for Chrysostom's lay audiences, as can be seen in the fact that Chrysostom's expositions of these Davidic narratives frequently conclude with exhortations for his lay listeners to imitate likewise. His above portrayal of David the Shepherd is a good example, since it terminates with a clear call for Christian fathers to imitate David by becoming similar shepherds to their families and children.<sup>126</sup> This leads us to what I think is the second major focus of Chrysostom's homiletical portrayal of David, namely, the Israelite king is more often than not presented as an exemplary lay person *par excellence*.

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<sup>125</sup> By stressing David's lowly origins, Chrysostom is clearly following the precedence of early Christians, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, who similar argues that one's poor pedigree or upbringing in no way hinders him from becoming a shepherd of Israel (that is, David), a prophet of God or even an apostle of Christ. *Or.* 32.10.

<sup>126</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 29.24 (NPNF I.11, 547).

Once again, this conception has a rich Jewish and early Christian lineage. Ben Sira and Josephus, for example, separately affirm David as an exemplary practitioner of the Torah, while the author of the Fourth Maccabees praises him for his temperate mind (σώφρων νοῦς) and ability to resist his passions.<sup>127</sup> Writing to his brother Gregory, Basil of Caesarea presents David as an excellent *paradeigma* of one who is “at once gentle (πρᾶος) and great-hearted, passionate (θυμῶν) against sin, [and] gentle (πραότητι) towards men, since he was “noble in warlike exploits, yet gentle (πρᾶον) and unruffled with regards revenge on enemies.”<sup>128</sup> This spiritualization of David’s feats would be taken seriously by Gregory of Nyssa who, later on, likens the Arian, Eunomius, to Goliath and urges his readers to imitate David’s courage in their resistance against this foe of orthodox faith.<sup>129</sup>

Generally speaking, five major features characterize Chrysostom’s homiletical portrayal of David the exemplary lay person. First and foremost, David is presented as a *Christian* exemplar whose life thoroughly exemplifies the virtues that ought to be cultivated among every Christian. This is clearly evident in his discussion of David’s self-restraint, where he remarks that David had “transcended (ὑπερέβη) even the old law and came near to the apostolic commands.”<sup>130</sup> The point is only made more explicit in *Homily 3* of his *De Davide et Saule*, where he declares:

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<sup>127</sup> *Sir.* 49.4; *Ant.* 6.165, 4*Macc.* 3.7-17.

<sup>128</sup> The latter part of Basil’s praise alludes, most certainly, to David’s twice sparing of Saul’s life. *Ep.* 2.3.20-25 (NPNF II.8, 111).

<sup>129</sup> *C. Eunom.* 2.1.6.5.

<sup>130</sup> This notion of transcendence or ὑπερβάθμιος would prove to be an important category for Chrysostom and will feature prominently in his soteriological discourse. Indeed, it will fundamentally alter the literary form of his rhetoric of exemplary figures. This will be addressed in

It is impossible [...] for someone in the Old dispensation to show such sound values, [...] David had not heard the parable of the ten thousand talents and the hundred denarii; David had not heard the prayer that says, "Forgive people their debts as your heavenly Father also does;" he had not seen Christ crucified. [...] Instead he was raised on imperfect laws that made no such requirements, yet he attained to the very summit of sound values of the age of grace.<sup>131</sup>

Secondly, as we have mentioned above, David is frequently regarded as an excellent *paradeigma* for a whole host of *aretai* that Chrysostom deems worthy of cultivation by the laity. These include not only the excellences of repentance and humility that were mentioned earlier, but also others like gentleness, faith, forbearance and the mourning for others' sins.<sup>132</sup> More importantly, David, along with other 'lay' biblical saints like Abraham and Paul, is also praised as a *paradeigma* of how one can maintain a secular lifestyle and yet remain entirely virtuous – a point that is clearly aimed at his audiences' excuse that their lives in the *polis* have made it impossible for them to cultivate saintly virtues. Against such claims, Chrysostom reminds his listeners that just as Abraham among the Canaanites can say, "I am but dust and ashes," and David in the midst of the army camps can utter "I am a worm and no man," so also do they have no excuse for cultivating the *aretē* of moderation (μετροπτός) in their present lifestyles.<sup>133</sup> A similar point is made in *Homily 61*, where Chrysostom insists that it is "not crafts (τέχναις)

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greater detail in Chapters 3 and 5, where we will discuss his soteriology and rhetoric of martyrdom. *hom. in Matt. 3.9* (PG 57.39.5-6).

<sup>131</sup> *Dav. et Sau. 3* (PG 54.698). Translated by Robert Hill in John Chrysostom, *Old Testament Homilies*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 43-44. See also *hom. in Heb. 19.4* for a similar portrayal of David as an exemplar of *Christian* virtue, in this case the love for one's enemies.

<sup>132</sup> Surprisingly, the motif of David the exemplar of faith is rarely discussed by the early Christians. The only explicit reference to this is that given in Athanasius' *To the Bishops of Egypt 21* (NPNF 4, 234); *hom. in Matt. 3.9, 15.4*; *Dav. et Sau. 1-2* (PG 54.677.32, 39-40).

<sup>133</sup> *hom. in Matt. 72.4* (NPNF I.10, 439; PG 58.672.33).

or farming or military service or working in the fields” that prevents a Christian from cultivating *aretē*. Rather, the fault lies with the Christian, not the vocation. To substantiate his argument, Chrysostom produces another similar catalogue of lay saints, such as David the king, Cornelius the centurion, Paul the worker of leather and Job the landowner, as *paradeigmata* for how one can remain untainted despite having to practise a secular vocation.<sup>134</sup>

Next, against those who claim that they cannot perform miracles, or signs, like the apostles and therefore should not be expected to transform the world like the apostles did, Chrysostom summons yet another catalogue of saints. This time, *paradeigmata* like David, Job, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, along with prophets, like John the Baptist and Isaiah, are highlighted to demonstrate the fact that these saints, in spite of their inability to perform miracles, can nevertheless bring much glory to God through their *aretai* and good works.<sup>135</sup>

As to the final feature of David the lay exemplar, it is to be seen in the many ways in which he is presented as not only an embodiment or icon of the Christian life, with all its challenges and struggles, but also a proof of how one might continue to walk with God despite such troubles. In one instance, David’s life is compared with that of Solomon, the one being in toil all his life, while the other enjoyed forty years of “profound peace, glory and honour.” Together, they serve, for Chrysostom, as an apt reminder for Christians that God did not “exercise” all men alike, though each was “great and wonderful” before

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<sup>134</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 61.3 (NPNF I.10, 378; PG 58.592.16-21). See also *hom. in Phil.* 12 for a similar assertion that David, despite being a king, “shone forth in his kingdom, the purple and the diadem rendered him not at all remiss.” The same is to be said of Abraham and Job, who remained virtuous despite being rich and married.

<sup>135</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 46.3.

Him.<sup>136</sup> In another homily, David's life is conceived as a clear demonstration that "life cannot be without pain." This, in turn, allows Chrysostom to argue from "greater to the lesser" that "if the king [David] is burdened with so many misfortunes," how much more it would be true of the 'private life' of the laity?"<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, the extent to which Chrysostom is eager to identify David's experiences with those of his audiences may be seen in his narration of David's mourning for his dead infant (2 Sam. 12.15-23). David, he remarks, clearly loved his infant son and had, indeed, "sat in sackcloth and ashes" to intercede for the child's sake. Yet unlike his predecessor, Saul, David did not seek recourse to soothsayers or enchanters, but relied solely on his supplications to God. When the child finally died, David accepted it with thanksgiving to God. Praising this as a true expression of wisdom and affection, Chrysostom then encourages those who are experiencing a similar situation to imitate David's grief and faith in God.<sup>138</sup>

#### *De Davide et Saule*

Having considered Chrysostom's Davidic portraits extensively, we will conclude our present study by considering how the Davidic narratives may be appropriated as rhetorical vehicles for communicating Chrysostom's dual vision of David the philosopher-king and lay exemplar *par excellence*. For this, we must turn to the story of David's twice

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<sup>136</sup> *hom. in 1 Cor.* 29.5.

<sup>137</sup> *hom. in Phil.* 15.

<sup>138</sup> *hom. in Col.* 8.

sparing of Saul's life (1 Sam. 24, 26). Among the early Christians, this episode was interpreted frequently as an example of how one might be devoured by his own jealousy (ζήλος), or envy (φθόνος).<sup>139</sup> Interestingly, it is also used by Athanasius as a justification for his fleeing from persecution.<sup>140</sup> A more enduring interpretation, however, has been the recognition that David's unwillingness to slay Saul is expressive of his patient endurance during persecution.<sup>141</sup> In his retelling of this story, Chrysostom, by and large, concurs with these traditions, that the story not only epitomizes the ills of envy and jealousy but also illustrates how one might submit patiently to divine judgment during persecution.<sup>142</sup> Among the many rhetorical motifs he develops from this narrative, his favourite is most probably the *synkrisis* of David and Saul, the most extensive of which is that given in his *De Davide et Saule*.<sup>143</sup>

In his introduction to the first English translation of these three homilies, Hill argues that these sermons were probably preached in the year 387, shortly after the defacing of the Emperor's statue during Antiochenes' riot, while the city was still waiting

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<sup>139</sup> 1 Clem. 4.13; See also Basil's *Homilia de invidia*, where Saul is depicted as persecuting David because of envy (PG 31.376.14-40). Translated by Wagner in Basil and M. Monica Wagner, *Ascetical Works*, Fathers of the Church (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), 466.

<sup>140</sup> *Defence of His Flight* 25.

<sup>141</sup> Josephus, for example, would have David surmise that "it is not right to murder one's own master or one whom God has accounted worthy of kingship. And even though he treats me ill, yet I must not do the like to him." *Ant.* 6.284 (Translated by Thackeray in Josephus, 309). See also *Ap. Fuga* 10-12, 16, 21; *AH* 4.27.

<sup>142</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 42.2.

<sup>143</sup> Similar *synkriseis* between Saul and David may also be found in *hom. in Matt.* 42.2 and 62.5-6.

anxiously for Theodosius' decision on its appeal for clemency. Hill's thesis is certainly plausible and, in fact, introduces an additional perspective on Chrysostom's conception of David as an archetypal leader. Unfortunately, Hill does not seem to do much with the provenance he establishes but simply relegates the sermons as additional expressions of Chrysostom's esteem for the Scriptures as a "moral and hagiographical treasury."<sup>144</sup> This, I think, is short-changing the ideological richness of the texts, which can be better appreciated when attention is paid to the various Davidic portraits constructed during the course of these sermons.

We begin with *Homily 1*, where David is introduced as "a kind of archetypal image" for the *aretai* of clemency and gentleness.<sup>145</sup> This is because David is, essentially, an exemplary Christian, who, during the days of the Old Dispensation, had already "surpass[ed] the norm of the commandments and attain[ed] to New Testament values."<sup>146</sup> The "precise knowledge of his virtue" is to be seen in the repeated kindness that David showed to Saul, despite the great evil that the latter did to him.

To prove this thesis, Chrysostom summons a series of six narratives, beginning with David's duel with Goliath. Here, Chrysostom introduces a *synkrisis* between David

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<sup>144</sup> According to Hill, Homily 1's introductory reference to the Matthean parable of the Merciful Master by the phrase, "the other day," is most probably alluding to Chrysostom's exposition of the parable in the last sermon of his *Homilies on the Statutes*. This allusion does not only determine the provenance of the homilies, but more importantly, clarifies Chrysostom's rationale for the sermons, that is, he is likening the emperor to another Davidic King, who would also exercise a similar Davidic gentleness to the Antiochenes – an encouragement that would surely be welcomed by them. See Hill's introduction in *St. John Chrysostom Old Testament Homilies Volume one: Homilies on Hannah, David and Saul*, trans. Robert Charles Hill (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 6-8. For more details about the riot see J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London: Duckworth, 1995), 72-75.

<sup>145</sup> *Dav. et Sau.* 1 (PG 54.677.32, 39-40).

<sup>146</sup> PG 57.678 (Hill, 11).

and the Israelite soldiers, including Saul. The latter, as he puts it, “were cowering and terrified” before the giant, while David courageously “emerged from the sheep to enter the battle line,” even though he had no apparent battle experience. It is noteworthy that Chrysostom does not mention David’s claims to have fought with the lion and the bear previously (1 Sam. 17.34-37). Instead, all he declares is that the shepherd boy “was stirred up by divine zeal and love of country, regarded men as sheep and was [therefore] bent on driving off this mighty army like dogs.”<sup>147</sup> Clearly, he is not following the *enkōmion* convention for Greco-Roman monarchs here, since he does not emphasize the fact that David had already developed the kingly *aretē* of battle skills before his reign. Instead, what he focuses on is the spiritual aspect of David’s future leadership, in that David, even as a shepherd boy, had already nurtured a zeal for God and pastoral love for his people.

By and large, these spiritual qualities of David would continue to characterize Chrysostom’s account of the remaining Davidic narratives. After his victory over Goliath, David was praised by the women as being superior to Saul. The future king, however, was not “carried away with that eulogy, and had become envious” of Saul, but “maintained the simplicity befitting him.” In stark contrast, Saul would become unjustifiably jealous against David.<sup>148</sup> During his subsequent service of Saul, David proved to be “wiser than Saul’s servants” so much so that he won over “all the populace and the king’s household.” Nevertheless, he did not become puffed up, aspire to the kingship or take vengeance on Saul. Saul, on the other hand, would attempt to spear

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<sup>147</sup> PG 57.678 (Hill, 12).

<sup>148</sup> PG 57.679-680 (Hill, 13-15).

David to death three times (1 Sam. 18.10-11, 19.9), even though David, on those occasions, was playing the harp to soothe Saul's "disturbed spirits."<sup>149</sup> Indeed, David would continue to put himself in danger for Saul's sake,

taking his place in the battle line in all the wars and preserving his own assailant at personal risk. [...] Though not receiving the prize due for his victory, and instead deprived of the reward for dangers undergone, he still did not ever utter reproaches to the soldiers or to the king; after all he was doing this not for human reward, but in the hope of recompense from on high.<sup>150</sup>

Furthermore, David was to maintain a similar humility when Saul sought to give him Michal's hand in marriage. In his gentleness, David declined the marriage, even though it was his proper due, and instead considered himself "unworthy of relationship" with Saul.<sup>151</sup> Later on, he even chose voluntary exile rather than to oppose the king. "The reason for withdrawing himself from his enemy's sight," explains Chrysostom, "was to bring down the swelling, check the inflammation and allay the malice" in Saul's soul – a point that is powerfully conveyed in the *ēthopoia* – "it is better for me [...] to be in a wretched state and suffer countless wrongs than be convicted by God of this unlawful killing." In other words, David the exile is recast as David the spiritual physician (ιατρός) or indeed a Christ figure who not only loved his enemies, but was also even willing to sacrifice his well-being for their sake.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> PG 57.680 (Hill, 15-16).

<sup>150</sup> PG 57.681 (Hill, 16).

<sup>151</sup> PG 57.681.27 (Hill, 16).

<sup>152</sup> PG 57.681-682 (Hill, 17).

This brings us to the climatic encounter between David and Saul at the cave (1 Sam. 24). Here, the urging of David's men to kill Saul is spoken of as a temptation and what is at stake here is "the struggle, the victory, the crown." In fact,

That cave was an arena (στάδιον), and a kind of remarkable and surprising contest (πάλη) took place. [...] David entered the lists, resentment struck a blow, Saul was the prize, and God acted as a referee – or, rather, the battle was not against himself, and his desires but also against the soldiers present [who might slay him if he spares Saul].<sup>153</sup>

The motifs of arena, contest, victory and crown, of course, echo the martyr contests that Chrysostom's four-century audiences would be familiar with. For Chrysostom to evoke these motifs in his Davidic portrait must surely mean that David is also regarded as a martyr figure.<sup>154</sup> Yet, David is no mere martyr from the era of persecutions. Rather, he is the exemplary spiritual martyr who does not die physically but only to his *epithumia*. The victory that he wins here is the overcoming of his resentment and fear of his revengeful soldiers, and the crown that he gains is not glory in heaven, but the "crown of forbearance."<sup>155</sup>

Against those who doubt that David's struggle was real, Chrysostom adds that "billows of resentment" had buffeted him and "a great tempest of thoughts was stirred up." Yet, David "held the storm in check with the fear of God and subdued his thinking." By saying this, Chrysostom is also counting David as one of those ascetic saints, who "before falling they get up, before proceeding to sin they get a grip on themselves since they are

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<sup>153</sup> PG 57.682.41, 45 (Hill, 18).

<sup>154</sup> Chrysostom's rhetoric of martyrdom will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>155</sup> PG 57.683 (Hill, 19-20).

watching and always on the alert."<sup>156</sup> Nonetheless, Chrysostom's ascetic David is far removed from the Late Antique philosopher, who perfects himself autonomously. This is to be seen in the *ēthopoiia* that he introduces as an exegesis of David's prayer, 'The Lord forbid' (1 Sam. 24.6): "may the Lord be merciful to me, and if I actually had the intention, may God not allow me to act on it nor permit me to proceed to the sin." This, as Chrysostom explains, is due to David's clear recognition that "sound values of this kind are almost beyond human nature and require grace from on high." In other words, David is likened to a Christian figure who is entirely dependent on the aid of divine grace, so that he is able to "keep his hand unstained."<sup>157</sup> It is on the same basis that Chrysostom would immediately praise David as one who "while still belonging to the human nature is giving evidence of the angelic way of life."<sup>158</sup>

*Homily 1* concludes at the point where Saul awakens to David's call, with the latter addressing Saul as the "Lord's anointed." Chrysostom takes this as an excellent example of how one should treat his enemy respectfully and commends it to his listeners:

imitate this man, and learn this lesson first, never should your mouth be in the habit of calling your aggressor by names that are respectful and betoken service, the soul on hearing this will learn from the tongue, become accustomed and undergo a change of heart towards him. The words themselves will be the best remedy for the heart's choler.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> PG 57.684 (Hill, 21).

<sup>157</sup> PG 57.684-685 (Hill, 22).

<sup>158</sup> PG 57.685.7 (Hill, 22).

<sup>159</sup> PG 57.685 (Hill, 24).

By using David's example as a basis for introducing this spiritual advice, Chrysostom is clearly reinforcing the earlier notion of David the ascetic, since the future king both understood and practised such a spiritual discipline.

*Homilies 2 and 3* basically dwell on the conversation between Saul and David outside the cave. Here, we encounter a cluster of Davidic motifs similar to those introduced in *Homily 1*. In *Homily 2*, David is again portrayed as the spiritual contestant cum martyr who offers as a sacrifice "resentment mortified and rage unnerved" and wins his ultimate victory not against Saul, but "the real enemy, the devil." This martyrdom motif is only reinforced by Chrysostom's comparison of David's triumph with those of the three young men in the furnace and Daniel in the lion's pit – stories which, by Chrysostom's time, are taken for granted as proto-martyr acts.<sup>160</sup>

David's triumph, continues Chrysostom, is wholly dependent upon the grace of God, since it is only by this divine aid that he is able to dissuade his men from their murderous thoughts and, therefore, play the role of the priest (ἱερεὺς) or even the bishop (ἐπισκοπή) preaching a homily to them, rather than that of the commander of the troops (στρατηγός).<sup>161</sup> Further on, the motif of David the spiritual physician is reiterated when David's claim that Saul's jealousy was due to the misleading of others rather than his own malice is being taken by Chrysostom as a sign of David's parental wisdom and ability as a spiritual healer, in that he sought to restore Saul without embarrassing the king.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> See Chapter 5, pp. 238-39 for a short discussion on proto-martyr acts in Old Testament narratives. *Dav. et Sau. 2* (PG 57.688, Hill, 28-30).

<sup>161</sup> PG 57.688.25-29 (Hill, 27-28).

<sup>162</sup> PG 57.691 (Hill, 31-32).

In *Homily 3*, David is once again introduced as an exemplary Christian who has attained the “sound values of the age of grace,” despite living in the Old Dispensation. Through another *synkrisis* with Saul, he is also praised as a man of forbearance, who is willing to forgive and care for his enemy.<sup>163</sup> Here, the motif of David the spiritual martyr is repeated again. This time Chrysostom would regard the sparing of Saul’s life as David subjecting himself anew to further threats from his enemy. Effectively speaking, this amounts to David “being slain countless times,” and therefore becoming the winner of “many crowns for martyrdom.”<sup>164</sup>

Another Davidic motif that is reinforced in *Homily 3* is David the spiritual physician. In this case, it is demonstrated through the healing power of David’s gentle voice, which so penetrates Saul’s heart that the king regains his sound ability to recognize David as holy and being in the right.<sup>165</sup> As Chrysostom puts it, David’s present feat is no different from that of Joshua and Moses, who similarly overcome the elements of nature by their own voices. Indeed, David should be regarded as superior to Moses since what he overcomes is not mere nature, but Saul’s “frenzy” and “inflamed heart.”<sup>166</sup> As a conclusion to his sermon, Chrysostom draws attention to the kindness that David would show to Saul’s posterity. Noting the great hospitality and care that David shows to Saul’s grandson, the lame Mephibosheth, Chrysostom exalts David with yet another favourite

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<sup>163</sup> PG 57.698-699 (Hill, 43-44).

<sup>164</sup> PG 57.700 (Hill, 45).

<sup>165</sup> PG 57.702 (Hill, 49).

<sup>166</sup> PG 57.703-704 (Hill, 50, 52-53).

motif of his, that is, to regard David's feats as that of an angel rather than a human being.

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Taken as a whole, these three homilies clearly affirm Hill's suggestion that David is some form of archetypal leader, or indeed, bears a strong resemblance to the typical Greco-Roman philosopher-king. This is to be seen not merely from Hill's argument from the homilies' historical context, but more importantly through the series of Davidic motifs that Chrysostom develops from the Davidic narratives. The Late Antique philosopher-king, as we have gathered from our discussions of Plutarch's Alexander, is not only a man endowed with kingly virtues, but is also a lover of philosophy, an ascetic and a religious figure. By and large, this stereotype corroborates Chrysostom's motifs of David the man who fights with divine zeal and love for his people, and the ascetic who triumphs over his passions. Where David differs from this Greco-Roman archetype is the fact that he is presented predominantly as a *Christian* exemplar and therefore embodies in his life distinctive Christian *aretai*, like gentleness, the love for his enemies and a willing submission to divine judgment, rather than a monarchical *aretē*, such as battle skills.

Furthermore, Chrysostom's Davidic portraits, generally speaking, seem to emphasize his philosophical rather than military excellences. This is clearly evident in his portrayals of David as a bishop teaching a group of murderous subordinates, or even the spiritual physician, ministering to others and healing moral ailments. Indeed,

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<sup>167</sup> Hill considers Chrysostom's present interpretation as an idealization of the story since 2 Samuel 9:1 clearly states that David was doing this "for Jonathan's sake." Nevertheless, one must remember that 2 Samuel 9:3 also stresses that David's intention was to show kindness to the "house of Saul." Bearing in mind that ancient Israelite culture is more collective than individualistic, Chrysostom is probably correct to regard David's favour to Mephibosheth as, essentially, a kindness shown to Saul. PG 57.707 (Hill, 7, 58).

Chrysostom's emphasis on the healing power of David's gentle voice is surely reminiscent of the miracles performed by a philosopher like that of Apollonius. Having said this, the model that Chrysostom has in mind here is not the Late Antique philosopher, but that of the Christian ascetic-bishop – a point this is powerfully put across not only through his association of David with the roles of the priest and bishop and other biblical leaders, but also through his repeated insistence that David is a spiritual martyr who has in fact transcended his humanity and attained the ways of the angels. Judging from these, we may reasonably conclude that the ideal Christian, for Chrysostom, is the ascetic-priest/bishop, since he is the only Christian figure that embodies in his life all the spiritual attributes conveyed by these Davidic motifs. More importantly, by commending this Christian archetype as the ideal *paradeigma* for his lay audiences, Chrysostom is also setting here a new conception and standard for lay spirituality.

### Conclusion

Based on the above study, it is clear that Chrysostom's exemplary discourse, as given in his various portrayals of David, is greatly indebted to the rhetorical tradition that he was trained in. With regard to his more encomiastic material, like the *De Davide et Saule*, he, generally speaking, conforms to the literary requirements of Greco-Roman epideictic oratory. In most cases, however, his Davidic portraits tend to be more episodic in nature and are presented, more often than not, as proofs, or *pisteis*, for a theological or ethical point that he is making. Although the brevity of these Davidic portraits does not permit him to abide entirely by the *enkōmion* paradigm, this organizing scheme, nonetheless, is presumed in the background of his exemplary discourse, such as his frequent assumptions

that David had developed the virtues reminiscent of a king even before his reign.

Interestingly, the most significant expression of this paradigm is his conscious effort to subvert the ethical ideal implicit to the paradigm, that is, his constant demeaning of the origins or even the upbringing of David and other exemplars, so that he might exalt the efficacy of God's grace.

Among the rhetorical techniques that he was trained in, two of his favourite, at least in his Davidic portraits, appears to be the *ēthopoia* and the *synkrisis*. The former is usually deployed as a means of clarifying the motivations of the exemplar and therefore reinforcing the *aretai* that he exemplifies, while the latter is often practised both as a means of exalting the exemplary figure and exhorting his lay audiences. In the case of the latter, this often involves a comparison of the exemplar with the laity so that the latter might not only be ashamed of their spiritual stupor, but are also motivated towards greater spiritual progress.

Although Chrysostom's Davidic portraits are not strictly speaking biographical, they, nevertheless, abide by the literary assumptions of Greco-Roman biography. Among these assumptions is his clear affirmation of the ideological function of exemplar portraits. This is readily demonstrated in how he presents David as exemplifying specific *Christian aretai* that he deems appropriate for cultivation by the laity. It is also evident in how he uses David's deeds as a basis for deepening his audience's understanding of how a particular virtue may be practised, or even the kind of psychology that should presupposed in this practice, as is the case with his rationalization of David's lapse into adultery.

With regards to the many ideologies conveyed by Chrysostom's David, the most explicit is the ideal of David the Greco-Roman philosopher king, which he regularly emphasizes through narrative motifs such as David's parental love for his people or his ascetic triumph over his *epithumia*. Having said this, David is not so much so a Greco-Roman king than he is truly an archetype of Christian leadership. This is powerfully put across by the way Chrysostom supplements the Greco-Roman leadership ideal with what he takes to be the traits of Christian leadership, e.g., the ability to heal the morally afflicted, the pastoral love that a leader should have for his people or the identification of leader as a kind of spiritual martyr.

More importantly, Chrysostom also keenly recognizes that these spiritual traits are not unique to Christian leaders, but are traits to be commended to the laity, including the uneducated non-elite, for their imitation. This is because every single lay person, whether leader or servant, is called by God to the same spiritual perfection that is embodied by a Christian archetypal leader like David, that is, to live a life that transcends his origins by depending on divine grace and attaining, ultimately, the angelic way of life. Clearly then, the figure of the Christian priest or bishop has become, for Chrysostom, the archetypal Christian that should be emulated by his listeners, whether lay or ascetic.

This brings us, finally, to our third objective for this chapter, that is, the formalization of a hermeneutics of exemplar portraits. In view of our findings in these two chapters, it should be clear that a hermeneutics of exemplar portraits must begin with an *a priori* conception of Chrysostom's didactic teachings – in this case, his ethical ideals. It is only when a model of his didactic teachings, preliminary though it may be, is established that we can conduct a rhetorical and narrative analysis of Chrysostom's

exemplar portraits and determine the degree to which these portraits validate, reinforce or supplement this model.

In the case of Chrysostom's Davidic portraits, these portrayals are often intended as straightforward affirmations and, therefore, reinforcements of the particular *Christian aretai*, such as humility, repentance and a dependence on divine grace, which he believes should be cultivated in every Christian. Frequently, they also function as *validations* of the many ethical ideals that Chrysostom expounds in his didactic material, such as his belief that human goodness is dependent upon the aid of the Holy Spirit. In some instances, these Davidic portraits also provide opportunities for Chrysostom to enrich or supplement his ethical teachings. Such is the case for his exposition of David's humble response to Absalom's rebellion in his *Homily 3 on Matthew*.<sup>168</sup> Here, what we gain is not merely the idea of humility as a willingness to suffer under persecutions, but a much deeper understanding of the virtue's essence, namely, to be contented and devoid of the passions of vainglory, wrath and jealousy.

These hermeneutical functions of validation, reinforcement and supplementation will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, when we consider the interpretative role of Chrysostom's exemplar portraits in his soteriology. At that juncture, we will also examine the meta-narratives frequently found in his exemplar portraits and consider the roles that they may play in establishing the correlation between Chrysostom's soteriology and his exemplar portraits.

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<sup>168</sup> *hom. in Matt. 3.8.*

## PART 2: CHRYSOSTOM AND HIS EXEMPLAR PORTRAITS

## CHAPTER 3

### THE IMAGE OF SALVATION:

#### EXEMPLAR PORTRAITS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF CHRYSOSTOM'S

#### SOTERIOLOGY

##### **Exemplar Portraits and Chrysostom's Soteriology**

Among the teachings of Chrysostom, one of the most controversial subjects, particularly among Protestant theologians, is his doctrine of salvation. This is well-exemplified in the magisterial reformer, John Calvin's, attitude towards the bishop. Despite his admiration for Chrysostom's writings, Calvin, nevertheless, faults the Antiochene for what he perceives to be an over-emphasis on the role of the free will in human salvation.<sup>1</sup> By and large, this sentiment would hold sway in Protestant quarters right until the present age, though there are some, like Frances Young, who would criticize this tendency to "enquire how far [Chrysostom's] thought was Pelagian" as an "unjustifiable question."<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the hermeneutical role that exemplar portraits might play in this soteriological debate, it is Mitchell who first introduces Chrysostom's Pauline portraits as a means of overcoming this scholarly deadlock. In her *Heavenly Trumpet*, Mitchell examines the Pauline portraits that Chrysostom constructs in his *De laudibus sancti Pauli*

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<sup>1</sup> *Praefatio in Chrysostomi Homilias*. For an English translation of the Preface, see McIndoe, "Preface to the Homilies of Chrysostom," 19-26. A helpful discussion of the preface may be found in John Robert Walchenbach, "John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin's Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor" (Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh, 1974), 31.

<sup>2</sup> For contemporary Protestant criticism of Chrysostom's soteriology, see Hoffmann-Aleith and Wiles. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 150; Hoffman-Aleith, "Das Paulusverständnis," 181-88; Maurice Wiles, *The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles in the Early Church* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 94-131, 137-39.

and concludes that Chrysostom's Paul is, essentially, "the Christian version of the classical virtue theory – that one can attain even angelic virtue if one sets one's προαίρεσις [deliberate choice] correctly." Such a portrayal, she remarks, stands in sharp contrast to that conceived by the mature Augustine, that is, Paul the "man in valiant struggle against the concupiscence of the flesh."<sup>3</sup> On this basis, she suggests that Chrysostom has actually "dallied on the theological boundary to Pelagianism by promoting Paul as the supreme example of humanity's boundless capacity for virtue."<sup>4</sup> In other words, the role of Chrysostom's Pauline portraits in the interpretation of his soteriology is one of supplementation, in that it demonstrates, at least to Mitchell, that Chrysostom's doctrine is far more Pelagian than what his didactic teachings tell us.

Although Mitchell's analysis confirms for us the synergistic emphasis of Chrysostom's salvation doctrine, her conclusions are, nevertheless, problematic. This is because her assessment of Chrysostom's Pauline portraits is conducted primarily through the lens of Protestant soteriology, with its preoccupation with a proper conceptualization of the relationship between divine grace and free will.<sup>5</sup> The net result of this is that Mitchell inevitably ignores or misunderstands several narrative motifs that are commonly

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<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, 416, 421.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell, 400, 416.

<sup>5</sup> This approach is well-exemplified by Kelly who remarks that the Eastern Fathers, including Chrysostom, fell short in their understanding of original sin when compared to Augustine. This, unfortunately, leads them to develop a synergistic soteriology rather than the monergistic model proposed by Augustine. Nevertheless, Kelly recognizes that the Eastern Fathers were theologizing from a different starting point, namely, the concept of deification. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th revised ed. (London: A. and C. Black, 1977), 352.

found in Chrysostom's Pauline portraits, but, according to the Protestant framework, are insignificant for soteriology.

Take Chrysostom's portrayal of Paul as an ascetic figure or "super-monk," for example. Despite its frequent occurrence in Chrysostom's Pauline portraits, Mitchell does not see its relevance for Chrysostom's soteriology, apart from the fact that it functions well as a model of imitation and legitimization of his ascetic ideals.<sup>6</sup> The same can be said about Chrysostom's frequent exaltation of Paul's human achievements. The possible relationships that Paul's achievements may have with Christ's work of recapitulation as a human being simply do not appear on her interpretative horizons. Likewise, Chrysostom's portrayal of Paul as the "archetype of virtue" and a figure greater than the angels only solicits her criticism of Pelagianism.<sup>7</sup> This is because within the scheme of Protestant soteriology, where the divide between the human and the divine, or more specifically, the human and the angels, is wide and insurmountable, it is entirely inappropriate, let alone relevant, to speak of human salvation as having any form of angelic association.

Underlying these difficulties in Mitchell's analysis, I believe, is the problem of anachronism. Despite its close parallels with Chrysostom's teachings, the structure and emphasis of Protestant soteriology is significantly influenced by the theological and pastoral concerns of the Reformation, with its interest in securing the certainty of salvation for Christians and fending off any human confidence in one's self-righteousness through a

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<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, 308-26.

<sup>7</sup> *laud. Paul* 1.15, 2.8, 3.1; Mitchell, 400.

re-appropriation of Augustinian soteriology. Within such a theological framework, many of the narrative motifs commonly found in Chrysostom's exemplar portraits simply do not have a soteriological relevance. Yet, if we are to read these narrative motifs in the context of patristic deification discourse, it would be immediately clear that they are important for deepening our understanding of Chrysostom's soteriology. In other words, there is an apparent incoherence between Chrysostom's Pauline portraits and the soteriological model that Mitchell presupposes for her analysis, an incoherence that ultimately calls into question the validity of her model of Chrysostom's didactic teachings in the first place.

Indeed, I will argue that Chrysostom's soteriology, when understood within its historical and theological context, is nothing less than a doctrine of deification and that his doctrine is both well-illustrated and enriched by the numerous Pauline and non-Pauline portraits presented in his writings. To demonstrate this thesis, we will first survey the deification discourse prior and contemporary to Chrysostom before considering how he appropriates these rich traditions for his soteriology. Having established the didactic contours of Chrysostom's deification doctrine, we will then examine his portrayals of Paul, as given in his *De laudibus sancti Pauli*, to ascertain the different ways in which his Pauline portraits may reinforce or supplement our understanding of Chrysostom's soteriology.

### **Deification Discourse: A Historical Overview**

The origins of deification discourse may be traced to as early as the exilic or even pre-exilic period of Israelite faith.<sup>8</sup> A more concerted reflection on this subject, however,

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<sup>8</sup> The earliest conception of the resurrection of the faithful, for example, may be found in the exilic and post-exilic texts of Ezekiel 37.14 and Daniel 12.1-3. Yet, as Levenson has convincingly

occurs only during the Second Temple period, where the faithful are frequently conceived as participants in the life and duties of the angels, even in the present age, as it is the case with the Qumran community. This motif of the angelic life would be readily appropriated by both Greek and Syriac Christians and used interchangeably with the divine title as a reference to Christians.<sup>9</sup> As for the notion that the angelic life can be realized in the present age, at least to some degree, it would also gain popularity in the early centuries, first in the Christians' martyr literature and, later, in their ascetic writings.<sup>10</sup>

With regard to the use of divine titles to describe the faithful, it is Philo of Alexandria who sets a precedent by referring to Moses as "a god to Pharaoh" (Exod. 7:1) and taking this not only in the titular sense, but also as an analogy of the spiritual heights to which Moses had ascended, namely, that which is higher than the angels and beside God.<sup>11</sup> By the late second century, such practice would become commonplace among the Christians, with Justin Martyr (d. 165) and Irenaeus of Lyons (c.180) interpreting the "gods"

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argued, the roots of this belief runs deeper and echoes of it may be found in the earlier biblical texts, such as Isaiah 26 and 52:13-53.12. Jon Douglas Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven, Connecticut; London: Yale University Press, 2006), 200-1.

<sup>9</sup> Didymus the Blind, for example, regards both angels and human beings as gods – the former because of their immortality and the latter because of their participation in the Word. Ephrem the Syrian similarly regards Adam as an angelic being, whose disobedience was motivated by his desire to become a god. This desire, he adds, was ultimately fulfilled by God through Christ's salvation. Didymus the Blind, *In Zach.* 94.25, 28; 95.2; Ephrem, *Comm. Gen.* 2:14; *Virginité* 16:9; *Nisibene Hymns* 69.12; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 132-33, 156; Sebastian P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, Rev. ed., Cistercian Studies Series (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 86-87, 152.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1, pp. 63-65 for a more detailed discussion of Christian appropriation of the angelic life motif.

<sup>11</sup> *sacr.* 6, 8; QG 1.86; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 62.

of Psalm 82:6 as referring to Christians and the *Epistle of Diogenes* regarding those who imitate God's goodness as to have become a god (θεὸς γίνεταί) to their beneficiaries.<sup>12</sup>

A more thorough conception of Christian deification in the late second century is to be found in the writings of Clement of Alexandria (150-211). Earlier, in his *Questions on Genesis*, Philo had interpreted the Logos as the mediator between God and creation and the image of God itself. More importantly, he also regarded the Logos as the invisible image in which all rational human souls are created.<sup>13</sup> It is Clement, however, who brings these Philonic insights to bear upon Christian exegesis, by relating Christ's salvation work directly with Genesis 1:26 and Plato's understanding of divine likeness in *Theaetetus*.<sup>14</sup> On this basis, he affirms that only the devout Christian is "the image together with the likeness of God" (Gen. 1:26), since Christ Jesus has made him "righteous and holy with the help of practical wisdom."<sup>15</sup>

This Platonic theme is picked up again in Book II of Clement's *Stromateis*. This time around, Philo's ascetic conception of the soul's ascent to divine likeness is incorporated

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<sup>12</sup> This phenomena, as Schnurr suggests, is due largely to the secularization of the divine motif from the Hellenistic period onwards, which, in turn, opens the way for early Christians to adopt the divine title as "a descriptive shorthand for the end and goal of Christian life." Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 16-27; G.M. Schnurr, "On the Logic of the Ante-Nicene Affirmations of the Deification of the Christian," *Anglican Theological Review* 51 (1969): 103; Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 124; Irenaeus, *AH.* 3.6.1; *Epis. Diog.* 10.

<sup>13</sup> Philo does not consider the human body to be part of the image of God and suggests that it was created by the powers instead. *Op.* 137; *Fug.* 69; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 59.

<sup>14</sup> David T. Runia, *Philo in Early Christian Literature: A Survey*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum* Section 3 Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 156; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 129.

<sup>15</sup> This is a direct quotation from *Theaetetus* 176b, where Plato asserts that "a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming like God as far as possible (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν); and a man becomes like God when *he becomes just and pious, with the help of practical wisdom* (δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως)." *Pr.* 12.122.4-123.1.

into Clement's interpretation of the "gods" of Psalm 82:6.<sup>16</sup> Within this framework, Christians are taken as those "who are superior to pleasure, who rise above the passions, [...] who have detached themselves as far as possible (ὡς οἶόν τε) from everything human" – another clear allusion to Plato's ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν.<sup>17</sup> By the fourth century, Clement's distinction between the image and likeness of God, and his ascetic interpretation of the soul's journey to divine likeness would be assumed by many Christians, most notably Basil of Caesarea (329-379) and Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389). Basil, for example, takes for granted that every Christian should be "made like God, as far as it is possible for human nature" (ὁμοιωθῆναι Θεῷ, κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπου φύσει) through the cultivation of *apatheia*.<sup>18</sup> He also develops this idea further by emphasizing the importance of the Holy Spirit's aid in renewing a Christian and enabling him to imitate Christ's life and virtues, such as gentleness and humility.<sup>19</sup>

These early centuries also witnessed the development of a parallel and equally important deification concept, namely, the formula of divine and human exchange introduced by Irenaeus of Lyons. Like his second century contemporaries, Irenaeus

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<sup>16</sup> Philo conceives the soul's *telos* as a four stage ascent to God. This includes an ethical stage where one's journey to divine likeness must involve both the eradication of his passions, that is, to attain *apatheia*, and the cultivation of divine *aretai*. *Mig.* 9; *LA.* 1.108, 3.132; *Abr.* 52-54.

<sup>17</sup> *Strom.* 2.125.4-5.

<sup>18</sup> *De Sp.* S. I.2.

<sup>19</sup> A similar stance is taken by Gregory of Nazianus in his *Oration* 4.71. Basil, *De Sp.* S 15.35-36; *hom. Ps.* 33.3; 44.2 (*PG* 29.357C, 389C); Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 212.

readily affirms the possibility of Christians becoming like gods. Where he differs is his conception of this idea in terms of an exchange formula between God and man:<sup>20</sup>

He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God.<sup>21</sup>

For Irenaeus, the Incarnation means much more than the exaltation of human beings to divine sonship. More importantly, the Son has also assumed human nature, so that He can become the representative of all humanity and recapitulate, on their behalf, every aspect of human life perfectly.

He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness, and submission; a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, thus sanctifying them for the Lord. So likewise he was an old man for old men, that he might be a perfect master for all, not merely as respects the setting forth of the truth, but also as regards age, sanctifying at the same time the ages also, and becoming an example to them likewise. Then, at last, he came even to death itself, that he might be 'the first-born' from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence', the prince of life, existing before all, and going before all.<sup>22</sup>

It is Athanasius (293-373) who develops this concept of *communicatio idiomatum* more fully in his debates with the Arians.<sup>23</sup> Like Irenaeus, Athanasius affirms that the Son

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<sup>20</sup> This exchange formula finds its origins in 2 Corinthians 8:9 and Philippians 2:15, where Paul regards Christ as being rich, "yet for your sake became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." This idea would be picked up in the *Epistle to Diogenes*, where it is praised as "the sweet exchange." Interestingly, the concept is also prevalent among the Syriac Christians. Ephrem, for example, can assert that "Divinity flew down to draw humanity up, for the Son had made beautiful the deformities of the servant and so he has become a god, just as he desired." Ephrem, *Hymns on Virginity* 48:15-18. (Translated by Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 152-53).

<sup>21</sup> AH 3.19.1.

<sup>22</sup> AH 2.22.4 (ANF 1, 391).

<sup>23</sup> Clement is one of the earliest Alexandrian fathers to appropriate this exchange formula, by teaching that the "Logos of God had become a man (ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος), in order that you too may learn from a man how it is even possible for a man to become a god (ἄνθρωπος γένηται θεός) (Prot. 1.8.4). For circulation of *Against Heresies* in Alexandria, see C.H. Robert, *Manuscript*,

was made man, that we might be deified (ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν); and he manifested himself by a body (σώματος), that we might receive the idea of the unseen Father; and he endured the insolence of men, that we might inherit immortality.<sup>24</sup>

This he takes to mean that by the Incarnation of the Word, “what is naturally human is united to what is naturally of the Godhead.” Henceforth, humankind is able to assume the properties of divine through the flesh (σάρξ) of the Word and attain the deification and immortality of the human body (σῶμα), or indeed, the human nature.<sup>25</sup> For every individual, this is to be realized when he willingly cooperates with the Holy Spirit’s help.<sup>26</sup>

Like Justin and Irenaeus, Athanasius believes that every aspect of human life is contingent upon divine aid.<sup>27</sup> All creation, he asserts, has its “being out of nothing, so also, [... it] might look for corruption into nothing in the course of time.”<sup>28</sup> This is certainly the case for the human soul, which has an inherent mobility (εὐκίνησις), or instability, that

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*Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt. The Schweich Lectures 1977.* (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1979), 23.

<sup>24</sup> Following Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-c. 236) and Clement, Athanasius would frequently use the verb, θεοποιέω, to denote God’s deifying work with human beings. Nevertheless, the verb is used more sparingly by his theological successors, Basil and Gregory of Nazianus. Basil, for example, prefers to call human beings θεοί on a number of occasions, while Gregory adopts another similar term in its place, namely, θεόω (divinize) and its noun, θεώσις. *De Inc.* 54.3; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 208, 215.

<sup>25</sup> Athanasius often uses the words, *sōma*, *anthrōpos* and *sarx* interchangeably. *CA* 1.42, 2.70 (*PG* 26.296.24-26), 3.34 (*PG* 26.297.20-21).

<sup>26</sup> Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 172-73.

<sup>27</sup> Justin, his *Dialogue with Trypho* 4, argues that the human intellect cannot see God unless adorned by the Holy Spirit and illuminated by Christ and His Scriptures. Likewise, Irenaeus teaches that although the body is animated by the soul, “the soul herself is not life, but partakes in the life bestowed on her by God” (*AH* 2.34.4). As mentioned in Chapter 1, pp. 56-57, Chrysostom adopts a similar position by asserting that the human soul cannot become good without the decisive help of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>28</sup> *De Inc.* 4.4 (NPNF II.4, 38).

compels it to move either towards divine or debased things.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, it is necessary for a human being to participate (μετέχω) in the Holy Spirit before he can be knitted into the Godhead and become deified.<sup>30</sup>

Among the Cappadocian Fathers, it is Gregory of Nazianus who shows the greatest affinity to Athanasius' formulation of the exchange formula.<sup>31</sup> In *Epistle 101*, for example, he clearly reaffirms Athanasius' emphases on the co-existence of the Son's divine and human natures and the soteriological significance of this co-existence.

For we do not sever the Man from the Godhead, but instruct that [the former] belongs also to Him. In former times, He was not Man but God and the only Son and before the ages, unmingled with the body (σώματος) or anything corporeal. In the fullness of time [He] took on humanity (ἄνθρωπον) for our salvation, passible in the flesh (σαρκί), impassible in the Godhead, circumscribed in the body, uncircumscribed in the spirit, [...] perfect man and also perfect God, in order that the humanity that had fallen under sin might be renewed.<sup>32</sup>

As to how this renewal is to be understood, Gregory appropriates yet another Athanasian formulation by asserting that the Son was able to deify humanity through His Godhead (θεωθεῖσα διὰ τῆς θεότητος) because of His Incarnation. Indeed, it is in this way that the

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<sup>29</sup> CG 4.1-3. Steenberg, 172-73.

<sup>30</sup> This language of participation, as Russell points out, finds its roots in Origen, and is appropriated by Athanasius to not only denote a Christian's participation in the Spirit but also his participation in the deified flesh of Christ. CA 3.24 (NPNF II.4, 407, PG 26.373.30-35); Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 147-52, 180-82.

<sup>31</sup> Basil, in comparison, does not say much about the deifying work of the Incarnation, though he does assert the deifying work of the Holy Spirit. Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 212-13.

<sup>32</sup> Like Athanasius, Gregory clearly uses the words, *sōma*, *sarx* and *anthrōpos* interchangeably to denote the human nature. His indebtedness to Athanasius is also well demonstrated in his appropriation of the Athanasian exchange formula in *Oration 1. 5. Ep. 101.13-15*.

image, or humanity, can become leavened (ζῦμόω) and mingled (ἀνακεράννυμι) with God.<sup>33</sup>

This language of mingling (κεράννυμι), it seems, would prove to be popular in the fourth century, not only among the Cappadocians, but even with the Syriacs.<sup>34</sup> Ephrem, for example, can present the idea of the divine exchange by declaring that “Christ’s Body has newly been mingled with our bodies. [...] In His compassion the whole of Him has been mingled in with the whole of us.”<sup>35</sup> Among the Cappadocians, it is Basil who conceives this motif of *kerannumi* in terms of the Spirit’s deification work. Speaking of the human mind or *nous*, Basil remarks that it must incline itself towards God and become “mingled (ἀνακραθεῖς) with the Godhead of the Spirit,” in order that it can “behold the divine beauty [...] so far as grace imparts and its constitution receives.”<sup>36</sup>

In the case of Gregory of Nyssa, however, the same motif, along with the *communicatio idiomatum*, is appropriated sacramentally. Baptism, as Gregory declares in his *Oratio Catechetica Magna*, is the very means by which a Christian can attain an “affinity

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<sup>33</sup> In his *In laudem Athanasii*, Gregory similarly praises Athanasius for having “mingled (κραθεῖναι) himself with the purest light,” or God. *Ep.* 101.46; *Or.* 21.2.

<sup>34</sup> Irenaeus is one of the earliest to adopt the language of mingling to articulate the intimacy that humanity might share with the Son. Those who are enslaved in disobedience, as he puts it, have not yet been “mingled with the Word of God or participated in the freedom of the Son.” *AH* 3.19.1.

<sup>35</sup> Likewise in his *Hymn on Faith*, Ephrem praises the Lord for coming down to earth to mortal beings in order to recreate them to become “like the angels” by “mingling within them Fire and Spirit.” *Virginity* 37:2 (Brock, 106); *Faith* 10:9 (Brock, 105).

<sup>36</sup> Basil is, of course, concurring with Athanasius and others here that spiritual potential of the soul is contingent upon the grace and aid of the Spirit. *Ep.* 233.1.9-11, 32-36.

and likeness” with the Incarnate Son and the *sarx* that He deified.<sup>37</sup> By God’s grace, this mingling (καταμείγνυμι) between the divine and the human continues whenever the Eucharist is celebrated. The *sarx* of the Son, says Gregory, now “derives its subsistence from both wine and bread.” Consequently, when one partakes of the mysteries, the Son mingles (κατακιννάμενος) with his body anew and enables him to participate (μέτοχος) in incorruption.<sup>38</sup>

### Salvation as Deification in Chrysostom’s Writings

#### *Overview*

When examined in the context of these theological traditions, Chrysostom’s soteriology, as we shall see, is clearly indebted and, in many ways, similar to the Irenaean, Alexandrian and Cappadocian conceptions of salvation as deification. The fact that this is not often observed in contemporary scholarship is due mainly to two reasons. The first we have already mentioned, namely, the Western preoccupation with the so-called Pelagian tendencies in Chrysostom’s soteriology.<sup>39</sup> The second is the misconceived paradigm that scholars often bring to their analysis of patristic exegesis and theology, that is, the sharp distinction postulated between the Alexandrian and so-called Antiochene schools.<sup>40</sup> The

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<sup>37</sup> *Or. Cat.* 35 (NPNF 2.5, 502).

<sup>38</sup> *Or. Cat.* 37.122-24.

<sup>39</sup> A healthy departure from this is Pierson’s recent thesis on Chrysostom’s theory of Christ’s redemption in the Pauline Letters, which seeks to examine Chrysostom’s soteriology in its own historical and theological context and on its own merits. Pierson, “An Analysis of John Chrysostom’s Underlying Theory of Christ’s Redemption in the Letters of Paul,” 245-58.

<sup>40</sup> To be sure, there is a familial resemblance in the exegetical approaches adopted by all the Antiochenes. Nevertheless, the theologies that they actually develop are remarkably different, as is

effect of this distinction upon scholarly assessment of Antiochene and, therefore, of

Chrysostom's interest in deification is exemplified in Gross's remark:

The intellectual mysticism and allegorization of the Alexandrians greatly favoured the development of the doctrine of divinization. [...] the moralism and literalism of the Antiochenes hardly inclined them to share these views.<sup>41</sup>

On first glance, Chrysostom's writings seem to support Gross's assertion, since they generally lack the use of explicit deification vocabulary, such as θεοποιέω and θεόω.<sup>42</sup> This is perhaps why Gross would follow Meyer and conclude that Chrysostom's soteriology is centred on the motif of the angelic life instead.<sup>43</sup> Having said this, the

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the case for Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopseustia. As we shall see, there is much theological continuity between Chrysostom's soteriology and that of the Cappadocians and Alexandrians. It is only in the theology of Theodore do we find a clearer departure from Alexandrian theology. Consequently, the contrast is not so much between Alexandrian and Antiochene schools, but between the former and Theodore. Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, trans. John A. Hughes (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994, 2001), 59, 67. For a study of Chrysostom's exegetical method and the ways he differ from Theodore, see Bradley Louis Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis" (Ph.D., Fordham University, 1991). For the historical grounds against the Alexandrian versus Antiochene School paradigm, see Andrew Louth, "Why Did the Syrians Reject the Council of Chalcedon?," in *Chalcedon in Context: Church Councils, 400-700*, ed. R.M. Price and Mary Whitby (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 108-9.

<sup>41</sup> For Gross, this lack of interest seems evident in the general lack of explicit deification language in the Antiochenes' writings. Nonetheless, he acknowledges the presence of deification themes in Chrysostom's writings, especially in his teachings on divine filiation. Russell, in his breath-taking survey of Greek Patristic doctrine of deification, takes a similar stance. Like Gross, he draws attention to the absence of deification vocabulary among the Antiochenes. Nevertheless, he recognizes the presence of deification themes in Chrysostom's teachings, such as Chrysostom's emphasis on the "Irenaeian themes of divine sonship by grace and recapitulation in Christ" and his interpretation of the "gods" of Psalm 82:6 as referring to the baptized, though this is to be taken only in the titular sense. On the whole, Russell leaves us with the clear impression that the Antiochenes were disinterested in this subject, since he devotes less than half a page to these theologians. Jules Gross, *The Divinization of the Christian According to the Greek Fathers*, trans. Paul A. Onica (Anaheim, CA: A & C Press, 2002), 200, 206; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 237.

<sup>42</sup> For example, Chrysostom rarely uses θεοποιέω. When he does so, it is used exclusively in a pagan context to depict the idolatrous acts of making creatures gods (PG 57.19.37, 53.29.12; 61.163.43).

<sup>43</sup> Gross, 205; Meyer, *Saint John Chrysostome*, 192-206.

paucity of explicit deification language need not be tantamount to a lack of interest in this subject. On the contrary, we will argue below that Christian salvation, for Chrysostom, is understood primarily in terms of deification, that is, the attainment of divine likeness, as circumscribed by the image of Christ. This *telos*, in turn, is founded upon the Son's recapitulation and deification work as both God and Man. Having established the main contours of Chrysostom's deification doctrine, we will then consider how his exemplar portraits may reinforce and supplement our understanding of this doctrine.

### *Chrysostom's Deification Doctrine*

We begin with Chrysostom's teachings on the *imago dei*. Generally speaking, scholars have turned to his *Homilies on Genesis* for Chrysostom's understanding of this subject.<sup>44</sup> The *locus classicus*, it seems, is *Homily 8.9-10*, where Chrysostom interprets "image" (εἰκῶν) (Gen. 1.26) as referring to man's (ἀνήρ) authority over everything on earth. Here, as many have noted, Chrysostom follows his fellow Antiochenes, Diodore and Theodore, by not only delimiting the meaning of *eikōn* to the idea of rule (ἀρχή) and authority (ἐξουσία), but also by ascribing it exclusively to the *anēr*, or male.<sup>45</sup> Having said this, Chrysostom also recognizes that the woman, in some way, appropriates Adam's rule

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<sup>44</sup>Papageorgiou, "Theological Analysis of Selected Themes," 23-26; Nonna Verna. Harrison, "Women and the Image of God According to St. John Chrysostom," in *In Dominico Eloquio: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honour of Robert Louis Wilken*, ed. A.R. Christman P. M. Blowers, D.G. Hunter and R.D. Young. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002), 261-64.

<sup>45</sup> Interpreting Genesis 1:26 in the light of 1 Corinthians 11:7-12, Chrysostom argues that the woman is always subordinated to the man and, therefore, cannot be seen as having authority over all creation. Consequently, the woman cannot be the *eikōn* of God, which refers exclusively to rule and authority. *hom.* in Gen. 8.9-10 (PG 53.72); Diodore, PG 80:107-10; Ibid. 260-62; Frederick G. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 59-61.

over all creation and hints at this by rebuking Eve for not being satisfied with having “all the visible things under your [Eve’s] own authority and to exercise control over them all.”<sup>46</sup>

If *eikōn* delineates human similitude to divine authority, it is “likeness” (ὁμοίωσις), as Chrysostom clarifies later in *Homily 9*, that fully describes the human potential to become like God, according to its human power (κατὰ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην ὁμοίους ἡμᾶς γίνεσθαι Θεῶ), that is:

to become like (ἐξομοιοῦσθαι) him according to gentleness and mildness (κατὰ τὸ ἥμερον [...] καὶ παρῶν) and according to the principle of *aretē*.<sup>47</sup>

To be sure, Chrysostom’s earlier interpretation of the *imago dei* clearly differs from the Philonic tradition on this subject. Yet, by distinguishing between a human being as an *eikōn* of God and his potential for being *homoios* with God, it would appear that Chrysostom’s understanding is much closer to that of the Alexandrians and Irenaeus.<sup>48</sup> This suspicion, I think, can be confirmed on the following grounds.

The first is Chrysostom’s use of the formulation, κατὰ δύναμιν ἀνθρωπίνην, as a way of describing the human potential for divine likeness. Such terminology clearly echoes that of Clement of Alexandria and, more particularly, Basil’s formulation in his *De Spiritu Sancto*.<sup>49</sup> The second is his affirmation of the invisibility of the *imago dei* in his

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<sup>46</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 16.12 (PG 53.130c). For a more extensive treatment of the relationship between the female and the *imago dei*, see McLeod, *Image of God*, 198-211.

<sup>47</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 9.7 (PG 53.78b).

<sup>48</sup> See our above discussion of Clement of Alexandria’s distinction between these two concepts in pp. 135-36.

<sup>49</sup> Basil similarly speaks of a Christian as ὁμοιωθῆναι Θεῶ, κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν ἀνθρώπου φύσει. *De Sp. S.* I.2.

*Homily 3 on Colossians* and his corresponding conclusion that the human soul, being made in the *imago dei*, is also invisible.<sup>50</sup> This is a clear departure from his fellow Antiochene, Theodore, whose understanding of Christ as the *homo assumptus* assumed by the Word leads him to affirm that Christ and his type, Adam, must be visible and bodily images of God.<sup>51</sup> As for the third, it is evident in his apparent disregard of the *imago dei* distinctions that he develops in his Genesis homilies, in favour of the more common position of regarding both male and female as images of God. For example, when speaking of the training of children, Chrysostom not only regards the task as the adorning of the “image of the King of kings, for a human being is the image of God (εἰκὼν γὰρ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος),” but also conceives it as “rendering [the children] according to the [divine] likeness (τὸ καθ’ ὁμοίωσιν ἀποδιδόντες).”<sup>52</sup> A similar stance is observed elsewhere, where a human being is depicted straightforwardly as an “image of God” even though the referent can be either male or female.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> In *Homily 3*, Chrysostom argues that the Son, as the Image of the Invisible God, must also be invisible. He recognizes, however, that the attribute of invisibility alone does not make one an image of God. If this is the case, angels would also be counted as images of god. Nevertheless, in the case of the human soul, he believes that its invisible attribute is due to it being the image of God. It should be noted that McLeod has interpreted this passage incorrectly by taking it as an indication that Chrysostom is excluding “the possibility that image is spiritual in nature.” This, in turn, misleads him to conclude later that Theodore’s conception of the *imago dei* as bodily is not only similar to that of Chrysostom, but may be understood as a “fuller explanation than that put forward by the other Antiochenes.” *hom. in Col. 3* (NPNF I.13, 270); McLeod, *Image of God*, 61, 82.

<sup>51</sup> *Commentary on Colossians 1:15* [Translated by McLeod in Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopseustia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 123-24].

<sup>52</sup> *hom. in Eph. 21* (PG 62.154.43-50).

<sup>53</sup> In both *Homily 7* and *9* on Colossians, he unhesitatingly speaks of the poor as “the image of God.” Later, in *Homily 12*, he takes for granted that the child born out of marriage is “not a lifeless image, nor yet the image of anything upon earth, but of God Himself, and after his likeness.” When speaking of the use of gold in *Homily 7 on 1 Timothy*, he criticizes those who hoard it up or

More importantly, Chrysostom also grounds his understanding of the *imago dei* on a robust Christology by interpreting the first person plural of Genesis 1:26, “let us make” (ποιήσωμεν), as referring to the deliberation between the Father and the Son. By doing so, the Son is not only affirmed as the Creator of humanity but also conceived as the *imago dei* in which the first human being is made.<sup>54</sup> This assumption is made explicit in his *Homily 3 on Colossians*, where he takes Colossians 1:15-16 as asserting that Christ is the exact image of God (Θεοῦ δὲ εἰκὼν τὸ ἀπαράλλακτον) and it is *this* image alone which is fully divine.<sup>55</sup>

While discussing about the worthiness of the Son, Paul says these [words], even as we proclaimed, "Who is the image of the invisible God?" Therefore, whose image do you say he is? If of God, good - for the Son of God is also God; and he reveals the exact (ἀπαράλλακτον) image of God. Surely, he is exact according to this. [...] For an image, so far as it is an image, must necessarily be exact.<sup>56</sup>

If Christ the *imago dei* is the basis of human creation, then human salvation can only be understood as the renewal of humanity into this *imago dei*, that is, the image of Christ. This is expounded in detail in Chrysostom’s exegesis of Colossians 3:9-10.<sup>57</sup> With

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“form it into a chain for the image of God” and advise his listeners to use the gold to free him who is bound and not to bind her who is free. Here, the image of God is clearly associated with the female who wears golden jewellery. *hom. in Col. 7, 9* (PG 62.361.29-30); *hom. in 1 Tim. 7* (PG 62.539.1-4).

<sup>54</sup> This is, of course, a clear appropriation of the Philonic-Clementine conception of the *imago dei*.

<sup>55</sup> For a detailed exposition of Chrysostom’s teachings on Christ’s divinity, see Melvin Edward Lawrenz, III, “The Christology of John Chrysostom” (Ph.D., Marquette University, 1987), 41-79.

<sup>56</sup> *hom. in Col. 3* (PG 62.317.50-60, 62.318.44).

<sup>57</sup> “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old man with its practices and have put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” (Col. 3:9-10).

regard to the “old man” (παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον) in verse 9, he explains that it refers not to a different human nature but rather the human being who has exercised his deliberate choice (προαίρεσις) for evil and has therefore degenerated into deformity and hideousness. Clearly then, Chrysostom is attempting to distinguish between the actualized human nature and the human nature in itself, in order that the goodness of the latter may be safeguarded.<sup>58</sup> This anthropological assumption, in turn, informs his subsequent discourse about the new man or youth (νέος) that a Christian can become.

Such a *neos*

hastens (ἐπείγεται) not to old age (γῆρας), but [advances] to a youthfulness (νεότητα) greater than the former. For when he has received a fuller knowledge, he is both counted worthy (ἀξιούται) of greater things, and is flourishing (ἀκμάζει) exceedingly, is strengthening (ισχύει) exceedingly; and this, not from youthfulness alone, but from that “likeness” also, “after” which he is. Behold! The best way of life is a creation after the image of Christ: for this is the meaning of “after the image of Him that created him,” since Christ also did not arrive at an old age (οὐ πρὸς γῆρας ἐτελεύτησεν), but was so beautiful as it is not even possible to tell.<sup>59</sup>

Two motifs of human progression are mentioned in this passage. The latter and more important one is about Christ, who is spoken as οὐ πρὸς γῆρας ἐτελεύτησεν, a term that is not unlike the *neos* used to describe the Christian. More importantly, the spiritual progression of the Christian *neos* is presented here as an attainment of the “likeness” of Christ the *neos*, or as Chrysostom puts it, to become a “creation after the image of Christ.” There is, however, a noticeable difference between the two. The verb used to denote

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<sup>58</sup> A similar distinction is made in his *Homily 13 on Romans*, where Chrysostom asserts that the *ousia* of the soul and the body are not the same as that of the deliberate choice (προαιρέσεως). The former two are the “works of God” while the latter is “a movement (κίνησις) arising from ourselves and directed to whatever object we may wish to bring it.” *hom. in Rom.* 13.19 (PG 60.510.25-29).

<sup>59</sup> *hom. in Col.* 8 (PG 62.352.45-353.21; NPNF I.13, 294-95, modified).

Christ, ἐτελεύτησεν, is not only rich in recapitulative overtones, but, being in the aorist, also alludes to Christ's completion of his recapitulative work as a human being. This sharply contrasts the series of present tenses used to depict the Christian *neos* – “hastens” (ἐπείγεται), “is counted worthy” (ἀξιοῦται), “is flourishing” (ἀκμάζει) and “is strengthening” (ισχύει) – all of which serve to stress the on-going character of the Christian's spiritual progress. Thus, by setting the two side by side, Chrysostom is clearly implying that the Christian's journey towards spiritual progress is nothing less than a participation in Christ's work of recapitulation.

This brings us to what I think is the heart of Chrysostom's soteriology:

Through this name [of Christ], in fact, death was dissolved, demons imprisoned in bonds, heaven opened, gates of paradise thrown wide, the Spirit sent down, slaves made free, enemies become sons, strangers become heirs, human beings become angels. Why speak of angels? *God became man, and man became God* (Θεὸς ἄνθρωπος γέγονε, καὶ ἄνθρωπος Θεός); heaven accepted the nature from earth, earth accepted the one seated on the Cherubim along with the angelic host (*italics mine*).<sup>60</sup>

By speaking of Christian salvation in terms of the divine exchange - Θεὸς ἄνθρωπος γέγονε, καὶ ἄνθρωπος Θεός, Chrysostom is clearly indebted to not only the Irenaeus-

Athanasian traditions, but also that of the Syriac Christians, as exemplified by Ephrem.<sup>61</sup>

Like Irenaeus, Chrysostom believes that this divine exchange has taken place in order for

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<sup>60</sup> *exp. Ps. 8* [Translated by Hill in John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert C. Hill, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 155]. See also *hom. in John 12* (PG 59.83.52-59.84.18; FC 33, 115-16), where Chrysostom magnifies the salvation of Christ by asserting that He “did not merely rid souls of the worst evil, but also brought them to very pinnacle of virtue. [Thus,] the tax-collector became Apostle; the persecutor [...] was transformed into the world's herald [...] a thief was proclaimed a citizen of Paradise” and whoever abides by His Laws “immediately become angels and *like to God* (ὁμοίους Θεῷ), as far as is in our power, even if they happened to be the worst of men.”

<sup>61</sup> Chrysostom does not adopt the familiar Athanasian term, θεοποιέω, here, but prefers instead the verb, γίγνομαι. By doing so, he might be following Gregory of Nazianus, who uses the same verb in *Oration 1.5*.

Christ to complete His work of recapitulation.<sup>62</sup> As to the aims of this recapitulative work, this is spelt out clearly in Chrysostom's *Homily 13 on Romans*, where he discusses the relationship between the Law, sin and Christ's incarnation.<sup>63</sup>

According to Chrysostom, there are three aspects to Christ's work of recapitulation. The first is the fact that Christ has come to fulfil the decrees of the Law (νόμος) so that He may "lend it [the Law] a helping hand by condemning sin in [his] flesh (σάρξ)." In other words, Christ's fulfilment of the *nomos* vindicates its God-intended purpose, which is to become a guide for humanity. No longer is it derailed by human sin and compelled to oppose humanity instead. Second, Chrysostom believes that the "Only-Begotten" came not only to teach but, more importantly, to show, or make known (δειξαι), how the Law may be performed easily. What is involved here, however, is no mere exemplification of the Law. More importantly, Christ's achievement is also understood as delivering (ἀπαλλάσσω) humanity from "this difficulty" of obeying the Law or, as Chrysostom puts it elsewhere, "to free us in our sinful bondage from the curse."<sup>64</sup>

This brings us to the third and, for Chrysostom, the most wonderful aspect of the Son's recapitulative work: Christ won His victory by taking on "no other *sarx*, but this same one which was subdued." By leading a sinless life, the "Son of Man" is said to have stood by the *sarx*, condemned sin by smiting it greatly by "the blow of His death" and

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<sup>62</sup> Despite his different approach to Christology, Theodore similarly stresses the importance of Christ's recapitulative work for soteriology. According to Theodore, the disharmony that was caused by Adam's disobedience was made right by the obedient life of Christ the *homo assumptus*. Gross, 210; Rowan A. Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Exegete and Theologian* (London: The Faith Press, 1961), 22.

<sup>63</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 13 (PG 60.514.1-45).

<sup>64</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 3 (FC 74, 46-47).

rendered sin unable to smite the *sarx* thereafter. In this way, “sin did not conquer the *sarx*” but the contrary happened – sin was now “chastised” by the *sarx*. Chrysostom is presuming here, of course, that the *sarx* shared by Christ and the rest of humanity is a good creation of God.<sup>65</sup> More importantly, by living out his life sinlessly, Christ is also revealing the true potential of the *sarx*, which is to live a life of obedience to God, rather than being subdued by sin. When this is seen in conjunction with the two earlier points, Christ’s recapitulation work, as a whole, must surely be understood as a restoration of the *true order of humanity*, that is, the human *sarx* and the Law should cooperate to subdue sin, not vice-versa, in order that human life may be lived for the sake of God.

In view of the above, the soteriological significance of Christ’s *sarx* becomes clear. If Christ had assumed a *sarx* that is, in any way, different from the rest of humanity, His conquest over sin cannot be valid. This is because His victory must be gained *through* the human *sarx*, *for the sake of human sarx*. As Chrysostom puts it in his exegesis of Romans 8.3:

For Christ did not have sinful *sarx*, but [was] like indeed to our sinful [*sarx*], yet sinless, and in nature (φύσει) the same with us. So also it is clear, therefore, that the nature of the *sarx* is not evil. For Christ did not take the other in the place of the former, nor did he exchange this same one in true essence (οὐσίαν), when he prepared it to renew the

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<sup>65</sup> It is noteworthy that Chrysostom uses the titles, “Christ,” “Only-Begotten” and “Son of Man” interchangeably in this passage, thereby indicating that the three share the same referent. Moreover, both here and elsewhere, he also uses the words, *sarx* and *sōma* interchangeably as a short-hand for the human nature. Clearly then, the Incarnation is understood by Chrysostom as the Word’s assumption of human nature, rather than the theory of *homo assumptus* propounded apparently by Diodore and more explicitly by Theodore, his fellow Antiochenes. For a discussion of Chrysostom’s use of *sarx*, see J. H. Juzek, *Die Christologie Des Hi. Johannes Chrysostomus: Zugleich Ein Beitrag Zur Dogmatik Der Antiochener* (Breslau: 1912), 31; Camillus Hays, “St. John Chrysostom and the Integrity of the Human Nature of Christ,” *Franciscan Studies* 19 (1959), 298-317 and Lawrenz, 114. For a discussion of Diodore and Theodore’s Word-Man Christology, see Francis Aloysius Sullivan, *The Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, *Analecta Gregoriana* (Romae, Apud Aedes Pont: Universitatis Gregoriana, 1956), 182-84 and Greer, , 48-65. A more extensive treatment of Theodore’s understanding of Christ’s humanity is given in Frederick G. McLeod, *The Roles of Christ’s Humanity in Salvation: Insights from Theodore of Mopseustia* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

fight. Rather, he let it remain in its own nature [and] he made it bind on the crown over sin, and then after the victory, he raised it up and made it immortal.<sup>66</sup>

Having said this, it is crucial for us to recognize that Christ's Incarnation and victory over sin does not amount merely to the vindication of the human *sarx*. Rather, it is meant to transfigure human nature altogether. This is because Christian salvation is, ultimately speaking, a union with the Son who is now both divine and human.

For it was not as much as we must have to do away the sin only, that we received of His grace, but even far more. For we were at once freed from punishment, and put off all iniquity, and were also born again from above and rose again with the old man buried, and were redeemed, justified, led up to adoption, sanctified, *made brothers of the Only-begotten, and joint heirs and of one Body with Him, and counted for His Flesh, and even as a Body with the Head, so were we united to Him!* All these things then Paul calls a superabundance of grace, showing that what we received was not a medicine only to countervail the wound, but even health, and comeliness, and honour, and glory and dignities *far transcending our nature* (ὑπερβαίνοντα φύσιν) (*italics mine*).<sup>67</sup>

By conceiving union with Christ as the very means by which a Christian transcends his human nature, Chrysostom is, quite obviously, appropriating Athanasius' idea that the Incarnation has united what is naturally human with what is naturally of the Godhead and, thereby, enabled the former to attain the trans-human qualities of the latter. Elsewhere, in his *Homily 6 on Colossians*, he will conceptualize this union in a typically Basilian manner, by regarding it as a second creation by the Holy Spirit, not unlike Christ's Incarnation in the Virgin's womb by the same Spirit.

God takes up your soul above, He harmonizes it anew above, He places you near to the Kingly Throne. He [the Christian] is formed in the water, he receives Spirit instead of a soul. And after he is formed, He brings to him, not beasts, but demons,

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<sup>66</sup> To be sure, Chrysostom's insistence that Christ's humanity is exactly like ours need not imply that he has grasped its entire significance for the exegesis of Jesus' humanity, as given in the Gospels. This is clearly seen in his tendency to stress the pre-dominance of Christ's divinity, even as he "depicts the operations of [Christ's] emotion and will as genuinely human." *hom. in Rom.* 13 (PG 60.515.1-8); Lawrenz, 130.

<sup>67</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 10. (PG 60.477.5; NPNF I.11, 403).

and their prince, and says, "Tread upon serpents and scorpions." He says not, "Let Us make man in our image, and after our likeness," but what? "He gives them to become the sons of God; but of God," he says, "they were born." [...] He has set him no more to keep Paradise, but to have his citizenship in heaven. [...] The plain falls not on your sight, you see not tree, nor fountain, but straightway you are taken to the Lord Himself, you are mingled (ἀνακεράννυσαι) with His Body, you are intermixed (ἀναφύρη) with that Body that lies above, where the devil cannot approach.<sup>68</sup>

What Chrysostom does here is not merely appropriating Basil's conception of the Spirit's deifying work. By situating his discussion in the context of Christian baptism and adopting the language of mingling (ἀνακεράννυσαι), he has in mind also Gregory of Nyssa's sacramental formulation of the Christian's union with Christ.<sup>69</sup>

Yet, this is not where his similarity with the Cappadocians and the Alexandrians ends. In his homilies elsewhere, he also frequently stresses the need for Christians to cultivate *apatheia* and *aretai* in their lives, so that they may attain the life of the angels or divine likeness.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, he also readily agrees with Athanasius, Basil and Gregory that this angelic or divine lifestyle can be realized, at least to some extent, in this present age. This shall be made clear in our discussion of his Pauline portraits below and his monastic portraits in Chapter 4.

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<sup>68</sup> Chrysostom is alluding to the rite of baptism here, where the soul is washed anew by the coming of the Holy Spirit into one's life. As he puts it in *Homily 12 on Matthew*, this baptism was made possible by Jesus' baptism because it was only upon His baptism that "the heavens were opened" and that "the Spirit make His approach" to humanity. Henceforth, Christ "leads us away from the old to the new polity, both opening to us the gates on high, and sending down His Spirit" and make us not angels but "sons of God." *hom. in Col. 6* (NPNFI.13, 286-7, PG 62.342.52); *hom. in Matt. 12* (NPNF I.10, 78).

<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere in *Homily 82.5 on Matthew*, Chrysostom also follows Gregory by speaking of the Eucharist as a means by which Christ mingles Himself with Christians. For further details on the restorative work of the Spirit during baptism, see his "Ninth Instruction" and "Eleventh Instruction" (ACW 31, 139, 164).

<sup>70</sup> *hom. in Rom. 23, 24* (NPNF I.11, 516, 518); *hom. in 1 Tim. 13* (NPNF I.13, 452); *hom. in Heb. 24* (NPNF I.14, 477).

## Chrysostom's Pauline Portraits and His Soteriology

### *Exemplar Portraits and Meta-Narratives*

Thus far, our discussions of Chrysostom's Davidic portraits and Mitchell's analysis of Chrysostom's Pauline portraits have led us to conclude that a hermeneutical application of exemplar portraits must assume a correspondence between one's model of Chrysostom's didactic teachings and the exemplar portraits that supposedly embody these teachings. Essentially, the relationship here is one of *theoria* and *praxis* and the extent to which the two correlate is also the degree to which the *praxis* validates and reinforces the *theoria*. In the cases where the exemplar portraits yield more insights into the subject concerned than what is expounded in the didactic model, the *praxis* is, quite obviously, playing a supplementary role to the *theoria*.

With regard to Chrysostom's deification doctrine, its correspondence with his exemplar portraits, I believe, can be located in the meta-narratives that often occur in these portrayals. A meta-narrative, or masterplot, as Abbott puts it, is a narrative skeleton that governs the construction of particular stories. Although the use of such masterplots may not always be a conscious decision on the part of an author, it is, more often than not, ideologically nuanced.<sup>71</sup> It is my contention that if sufficient attention is paid to Chrysostom's exemplar portraits, two important meta-narratives will be readily identifiable in many of these portrayals. To verify this proposal, the rest of this chapter

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<sup>71</sup> Such masterplots, as Abbott explains, could be universal, e.g., the quest, the story of revenge, or seasonal myths of deaths and regeneration. More importantly, they often embody a moral force or ideology that is quite identifiable. H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Introductions to Literature. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 47-48.

will be devoted to the analysis of the meta-narratives intrinsic to Chrysostom's Pauline portraits, as given in his *De laudibus sancti Pauli*. The insights gathered here will then be supplemented by his non-Pauline portraits composed elsewhere. As we shall see, these meta-narratives will not only cohere remarkably well with Chrysostom's deification doctrine, but also enrich our understanding of his teachings on this subject.<sup>72</sup>

The first of these is the meta-narrative of transcendence, or *hyperbathmios*, where an exemplary figure is, generally speaking, presented as a human being who has transcended the limits of his human nature through the grace and power of God. Ultimately, this language of *hyperbathmios* is eschatological, since it seeks to accentuate the teleological possibilities that every Christian can have in God. The second meta-narrative is that of *imago Christi*, where the exemplar is exalted not merely as a faithful imitator of Christ's virtues, but more importantly, as one who demonstrates in his very life what it means to be deified, that is, to be created in the image of Christ who is both human and divine by the power of the Holy Spirit. For Chrysostom, one of the sure signs of this new creation must be a Christian's participation in Christ's victorious work of recapitulation.

#### *Paul and the Meta-Narrative of Transcendence*

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<sup>72</sup> This is not to say that meta-narratives or ideologies are lingering behind every exemplar portrait constructed by Chrysostom. Often, Chrysostom's portrayals can be so brief or ad-hoc in nature that one should *not* hazard an ideological interpretation of these portraiture. As such, Mitchell's remarks about Chrysostom's Pauline portraits remain largely applicable to his exemplar discourse in general: "although several emphases do emerge [in Chrysostom's portraits], both by volume and extent – such as Paul the prisoner for the gospel, Paul the teacher of the world, or Paul the man of sufferings, [...] Chrysostom's portraits of Paul do not constitute a single composite portrait, nor a search for the single most accurate portrait, but rather an extensive portrait series." Mitchell, 383.

Among the apostles, St. Paul is most certainly Chrysostom's favourite apostle and exemplar.<sup>73</sup> In his writings, Chrysostom's Pauline portraits are both varied and extensive, appearing most often in his voluminous homilies – whether commentary or panegyric, and also frequently in his ascetic treatises or letters. Of these, some of the most detailed portrayals of Paul are found in his *De laudibus sancti Pauli*.<sup>74</sup> Consisting of seven panegyrics, the *De laudibus* were most probably preached between the years 387-390 during the Antiochene period of Chrysostom's ministry.<sup>75</sup>

We begin with *Homily 1*, which is an encomium of Paul's soul and a declaration that the apostle is a human being *par excellence*, since his soul has brought together "all the virtues in humanity, and all of them to the highest degree – not only the human virtues, but even those of the angels."<sup>76</sup> Here, the apostle is presented, quite unmistakably, as an exemplar of Chrysostom's synergistic soteriology, since he had, on his own accord, prepared himself for the gift of the Spirit:

For he flowered forth in grace so abundantly that he gave proof that the philosophy of his soul was worthy of that grace. For when he became a vessel of election and cleansed himself so thoroughly, the gift of the spirit was plentifully poured into him.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> As Chrysostom puts it, "I love all the saints, but I love most the blessed Paul." *hom. in 2 Cor.* 11.1.

<sup>74</sup> Mitchell clearly recognizes this and relies heavily on these Pauline panegyrics for her analysis of Chrysostom's Paul. Mitchell, 137-72. 69-380.

<sup>75</sup> According to Piédagnel, at least the first sermon is preached before 388, while the last was probably composed around 390. Auguste Piédagnel, "Circonstances historiques," in SC 300, 9-20.

<sup>76</sup> *lau. Paul.* 1.1 (Translated by Mitchell, 442).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* (Mitchell, 442).

It is on this basis that Chrysostom asserts that Paul has not only attained all the virtues of the prophets, patriarchs, righteous ones, apostles and martyrs, but has indeed “possessed all these things together to a superlative degree that none of them attained.”<sup>78</sup> This is certainly a bold claim, to suppose that Paul has surpassed every single human being in virtue, presumably apart from Christ. Yet, it is interesting to observe how Chrysostom goes about justifying his case. Specifically, he compares Paul, not with the apostles, or any figure of the New Dispensation, that is, of Christ, but *only* with the saints of the Old Dispensation, that is, from Abel to John the Baptist. This is a surprising move, since one would expect Chrysostom to compare Paul with *both* the heroes of the Old and New Dispensation, in accordance to his earlier claims. Yet, the fact that the Christian saints are entirely absent in the rest of this homily is a strong hint of the panegyric’s rhetorical intent.

For Chrysostom, Paul is not simply an excellent example of a virtuous Christian. He is this and more. Specifically, Paul embodies what every Christian can and ought to be through the gift of the Holy Spirit. This makes him not only an exemplar of the ideal Christian life, but also an icon of the riches and glory of the New Dispensation, that is, the economy of Christ.<sup>79</sup> This is why, I think, whenever comparisons are made between Paul and the heroes of the Old Dispensation, the apostle always emerges as the superior party,

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 1.2 (Mitchell, 442).

<sup>79</sup> This conception of Paul as the icon of Christ and the New Dispensation is well-expressed in the conclusion of *Homily 3*. Chrysostom’s objective for *Homily 3* is to portray Paul as the embodiment of Christ’s instruction in Matthew 5:44-45, that is, to love one’s enemies. To this end, he summons numerous examples of how Paul excelled in this *agapē*, be they in spiritual or material matters. Having done so, he concludes by urging his listeners to walk Paul’s “walk of love,” since it is in this way that Christians would be able to “see Paul – or, rather, Paul’s master – and attain the undefiled crown.” Ibid. 3.10 (Mitchell, 457)

since the saints of the Old Dispensation, unlike him, did not have the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is most clearly hinted at in his *synkrisis* of Paul and Noah. Noah's ark, as he explains, took on beasts but did not change their beastly nature. Paul's ark or ministry, on the other hand, took on board wolves and made them sheep, "casting out [completely] all the irrationality and beastliness that belongs to human nature, in its stead he introduced the gentleness of the Spirit."<sup>80</sup> Being glued together by the Holy Spirit, Paul's ark also proved to be far better than Noah's in withstanding the "storm of wickedness."<sup>81</sup> Once this narrative intent is grasped, it should not surprise us then that Chrysostom, despite his earlier claim in Homily 1.2, does not compare Paul with any Christian saints. This is because these saints, like Paul, are also partakers of the Spirit.

A similar narrative strategy is observed when we turn to the last *synkrisis* in the homily, where Paul is now compared with the angels. The angels, says Chrysostom, are entirely obedient to God and do not transgress. Yet, even when compared with these heavenly beings, Paul emerges as the better of the two, since he "carried out not only God's word, but obeyed both the commands and things beyond the commands." Indeed, he even imitated the angels, by running "through the whole world just as though he were wind and fire, and purified the earth," despite the fact that he was a mere mortal.<sup>82</sup>

In the light of Chrysostom's deification doctrine, this *synkrisis* between Paul and the angels can no longer be construed as an indication of his so called Pelagian tendency.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.1.5 (Mitchell, 443).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 1.5 (Mitchell, 443-44).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 1.15 (Mitchell, 447).

Rather, this rhetorical device is clearly deployed by Chrysostom as a means for delimiting the spiritual heights that every Christian, like Paul, might attain through Christ by His Holy Spirit. This is because to speak of a Christian as not only superior to the Old Testament saints but indeed, greater than the angels is, at the end of the day, tantamount to saying that the Christian can attain the heights of divinity.<sup>83</sup> What we have here then is a clear meta-narrative of transcendence, or *hyperbathmios*, where a Christian exemplar is held up as an example of God's deifying work by laying stress on the ways in which he has transcended human nature or even the heavenly realms.<sup>84</sup> This, however, is only the first element in Chrysostom's meta-narrative of transcendence.

The second element is to be found in Chrysostom's frequent attempts to demean Paul's human background in *Homily 4*. Unlike the first three panegyrics, which are focused primarily on the apostles' virtues and achievements, the present Pauline portrait takes its place as part of Chrysostom's overall argument that God, from the past until the present time, has given humanity numerous marvels (θαύματα) and signs (σημεῖα) to persuade us to salvation. According to Chrysostom, these *sēmeia* are evident not only in the biblical stories, but also in recent days – as it is the case with the temple of Apollo being struck by lightning after Emperor Julian's attempt to disinter St. Babylas' body from

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<sup>83</sup> This same principle should inform our interpretation of Chrysostom's comparisons between the Paul and the angels in homilies 2 and 3. In *Homily 2.8*, Paul is spoken of as exhibiting "the purity of the angels" even though he was "bound up in the mortal body." Then, the apostle is quickly declared as the superior of the two, since "quite often angels are given charge of different nations, not a single one of them so managed the nation with which he was entrusted as Paul did the whole world." Likewise in *Homily 3.1*, Paul is portrayed as a man who, by his will to act (προθυμία), has by-passed the angels and archangels. Ibid. 2.8, 3.1 (Mitchell, 451, 453).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. 2.1, 3.8.

the temple vicinity.<sup>85</sup> Having said this, the greatest *sēmeion* of all remains the fact that Christ's Gospel has triumphed over all its enemies, both human and demonic, and prevailed over the whole world.<sup>86</sup> It is in this context that Paul is introduced: as one upon whom Christ has breathed "a large measure of power."<sup>87</sup>

Chrysostom's Pauline portrait here clearly conforms to the *enkōmion* paradigm, with its emphasis on the exemplar's origins, upbringing and deeds. Where Chrysostom departs from the Greco-Roman tradition is the fact that he does not highlight the apostle's impeccable background but rather his humble origins and upbringing. Paul, as Chrysostom puts it, is mere "tentmaker," a "man standing in the marketplace," one who was not only ineloquent, but also "unlearned, to the lowest degree of poor learning."<sup>88</sup> Such attempts to demean Paul's human background and talents, as Mitchell points out, are not unique to this panegyric, but are frequently found in Chrysostom's Pauline portraits elsewhere.<sup>89</sup> Mitchell is certainly correct to suggest that such an emphasis, that is, "to present the lowly origins of the one who was later to earn great fame," is a "commonplace of the epideictic genre." Nonetheless, it is unlikely that this is the sole explanation for Chrysostom's rhetorical move. Instead, I would argue that Chrysostom's

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<sup>85</sup> This lightning strike, as Chrysostom puts it elsewhere, was clearly understood by the Antiochenes as a sign of God's vindication of the martyr and judgment against Julian and his temple of Apollo. *Ibid.* 4.1-2, 6; *hier. Bab.* 8.

<sup>86</sup> *lau. Paul.* 4.7, 9 (Mitchell, 460-61).

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 4.10 (Mitchell, 462).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 4.10.

<sup>89</sup> For example, in *Homily 15.5 on 1 Corinthians*, Chrysostom would unhesitatingly remark that Paul's father was an undistinguished and unknown man. Mitchell, 234-48.

rhetorical strategy is theologically motivated. Specifically, by stressing the lowliness of Paul's human stature and background, Chrysostom would be able to accentuate the spiritual heights to which Paul ascended. In other words, the human nature is demeaned, in order that grace might be magnified. Or, even as Mitchell puts it, the juxtaposition of the portrayals of Paul as lowly and exalted "forces the spectator to contemplate the causality that links the two [...]: direct divine intervention."<sup>90</sup>

This brings us to the third element of Chrysostom's meta-narrative of transcendence. Seen within the apologetic framework of *Homily 4*, Chrysostom's demeaning of Paul's human nature clearly allows him to reconceive the apostle as a *sēmeion* of God's "divine and ineffable power," which triumphs despite the weaknesses of its human agents.<sup>91</sup> It is with this in mind that Chrysostom, in the remaining homily, would declare that Paul, despite all his human weaknesses, was not only able to "teach and practice such a great philosophy," but also able to "persuade nations, both cities and countryside," and to lead "the entire human race – Romans, Persians, Indians, Scythians, Ethiopians, Sauromatians, Parthians, Medes and Saracenes - singly to the truth; and in less than thirty years."<sup>92</sup> Indeed, the wonder of this divine power is accentuated by the fact that, by conventional wisdom, the apostle's message and the challenging circumstances of his ministry should have made it impossible for him to win any disciples at all. Yet, the contrary happened and the most remarkable thing of all is the fact that his converts were

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<sup>90</sup> Mitchell, 226.

<sup>91</sup> *lau. Paul.* 4.13.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* 4.10 (Mitchell, 462).

mostly the “poor, unskilled, uneducated, living in famine, [and] undistinguished folk born of undistinguished stock,” that is, unlikely candidates for philosophy.<sup>93</sup>

There is yet a final element in Chrysostom’s meta-narrative of transcendence. Ultimately speaking, Paul, the lowly apostle who has triumphed by God’s power, is not merely understood by Chrysostom as a *sēmeion* of divine power. More importantly, Chrysostom is also convinced that this portrayal of Paul as both lowly and exalted is iconic in nature, in that it holds out God’s promise of empowerment by the Spirit to every Christian, namely,

God does not show partiality. [...] he who formed Paul ... [is also] he who created you; just as he is Paul’s Lord, so also is he yours; just as he proclaimed Paul, thus also he wishes to crown you. Therefore, let us submit ourselves and purify ourselves, so that having received the grace which is so abundant, we might attain the same goods [as Paul].<sup>94</sup>

When all these elements of Chrysostom’s meta-narrative of *hyperbathmiosis* are considered together, the eschatological dimensions of Chrysostom’s soteriology becomes clear. Essentially, Christian salvation is a transcendence of one’s human nature, where a person surpasses the limits of his humanity, be it his natural talents, weaknesses or sins, by the grace and power of God’s Spirit, so that he might ascend to spiritual levels higher than that of the angels, namely, deification.

At this juncture, it is important to note that the plausibility of this meta-narrative is grounded not only on the present Pauline portraits. As a matter of fact, similar portrayals

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<sup>93</sup> To emphasize this marvel, Chrysostom immediately compares Paul’s accomplishments with those of the renowned Greek philosophers like Plato and Anaxagoras. Despite the fact that “there was nothing to impede them, no danger, no lack of training, but indeed they were proficient speakers, and they were rich in possessions, and had the fortune to belong to a universally celebrated native land,” they achieved very little in their lives. The reason for this, as he puts it, is simple: “they had no power at all.” Ibid. 4.11-13, 19 (Mitchell, 465-66).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 4.21 (Mitchell, 467).

are also plentiful in his voluminous homilies elsewhere, whether it is his depictions of the primitive Christian communities, the twelve apostles, converted prostitutes or even Jewish Maccabean martyrs. His *Homilies on Acts*, for example, clearly presents the apostles in a similar fashion. In *Homily 1*, these disciples of Christ are spoken of as a people who were once timid and devoid of understanding. Yet, suddenly, they became “quite other than they were [...] and [were] raised above glory and passion and concupiscence” – a transformation which Chrysostom directly attributes to their receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>95</sup> In *Homily 13*, he, once again, glories in the fact that the apostles were once people of lowly stature, e.g., fishermen and publican. Nevertheless, these men have not only overcome their limitations by performing numerous miracles and converting countless people within a short span of time, but have also established a heavenly community on earth:

for in a little moment, at a single turn of the scale, such have been the effects produced by the fisherman and by the publican! Earth was become a heaven, for manner of life, for boldness of speech, for wonders, for all besides; like angels were they looked upon with wonder: all unconcerned for ridicule, for threats, for perils: they were compassionate, and beneficent; some of them they succoured with money, and some with words, and some with healing of their bodies and of their souls; no kind of healing, but they accomplished.<sup>96</sup>

The same meta-narrative of transcendence is observed when we turn to Chrysostom’s portrayal of the apostle Peter in the same homiletical series. Commenting on Peter’s Pentecostal speech in *Homily 4*, Chrysostom begins by noting that the apostle had previously been a timid man, who could not even withstand “the questioning of a poor girl.” However, he now stands confidently preaching before an audience of antagonistic

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<sup>95</sup> *hom. in. Acts 1.1.*

<sup>96</sup> *hom. in Acts 12* (NPNF I.11, 78-79).

men, because he has been empowered by the Holy Spirit, who is capable of making "men of gold out of men of clay." To develop this point, Chrysostom employs the rhetorical device of the *ekphrasis* to highlight the challenges that Peter and his fellow apostles were up against. His emphasis here, once again, is the weaknesses of Peter and the apostles. These apostles, explains Chrysostom, had to struggle against much poverty, hunger, infamy, mockery, persecutions and countless other forms of animosity. Despite these obstacles, they triumphed entirely over their more fearsome, powerful and talented opponents.

With bare body, they [the apostles] took the field against all the armed, [...] the terrors of rulers, force of arms, in cities and strong walls: *without experience, without skill of the tongue, and in the condition of quite ordinary men*, matched against juggling conjurors, against impostors, against the whole throng of sophists, of rhetoricians, of philosophers grown mouldy in the Academy and the walks of the Peripatetics, against all these they fought the battle out. *And the man [Peter] whose occupation had been about lakes, so mastered them, as if it cost him not so much ado as even a contest with dumb fishes: for just as if the opponents he had to outwit were indeed more mute than fishes, so easily did he get the better of them! (italics mine)*<sup>97</sup>

To drive home his message, Chrysostom immediately introduces a *synkrisis* between Peter and Plato. Both parties are compared in terms of their origins and training. Although Plato is supposedly superior in both aspects, he has been outshone entirely by Peter, since the apostle's message has now reached the entire world.

And Plato, that talked a deal of nonsense in his day, is silent now, while this man [Peter] utters his voice everywhere; not among his own countrymen alone, but also among Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and in India, and in every part of the earth, and to the extremities of the world. Where now is Greece, with her big pretentions? Where the name of Athens? Where the ravings of the philosophers? He of Galilee, he of Bethsaida, he, the uncouth rustic, has overcome them all. Are you not ashamed — confess it — at the very name of the country of him who has defeated you? But if you hear his own name too, and learn that he was called Cephas, much more will you hide your faces. This, this has undone you quite; because you esteem this a reproach, and account glibness of tongue a praise, and want of glibness a disgrace. You have not followed the road you ought to have chosen, but leaving the royal road, so easy, so smooth, you have trodden

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<sup>97</sup> *hom. in Acts 4* (NPNF I.11, 29).

one rough, and steep, and laborious. And therefore you have not attained unto the kingdom of heaven.<sup>98</sup>

The normality of this meta-narrative of transcendence in Chrysostom's exemplars is further demonstrated by the fact that it is also pervasive in his portrayals of other categories of saints. Take his praise of the former Phoenician prostitute turned ascetic, for example.<sup>99</sup> Prior to her conversion, she was one of the most notorious harlots in the region. Compared to his audiences, says Chrysostom, her ancestry, nature and upbringing could not be worse. Yet, after her conversion, this same vile woman transcended her human weaknesses and embraced asceticism to such an extent that she "mounted up to heaven" and was "counted worthy [by God] of the unutterable mysteries."<sup>100</sup>

Interestingly, the same meta-narrative also operates in Chrysostom's depiction of the Jewish Maccabean mother-martyr. The mother-martyr, says Chrysostom, had much that was naturally against her: "the weakness of her gender," "the maturity of her years," and the "fragile state of her compassion [for her children]." This is only worsened by the fact that the devil had sought to weaken her further by first having her seven children tortured and executed before her.<sup>101</sup> Yet, despite all these trials, she courageously entered the contest of martyrdom and resisted her persecutors, before she was finally martyred.

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Scholars, like Sebastian Brock, have speculated, quite plausibly, that Chrysostom is referring here to the famous female ascetic, Pelagia. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and Sebastian P. Brock, *Holy Women of the Syrian Orient, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 10.

<sup>100</sup> *hom. in Matt. 67* (NPNF I.10, 412).

<sup>101</sup> *macc. 1.5* [Translated by Mayer in Wendy Mayer and John Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, trans. Wendy Mayer, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, New York: St Valdimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 139-40].

For this reason, Chrysostom counts her as one of those who enjoyed “the generosity and ineffable power of the one who set up the contest.” Indeed, “whenever children and old people [the mother included] exhibit unnatural strength, the grace of God who works through them is brilliantly revealed in every respect.”<sup>102</sup>

### *Meta-narrative of Imago Christi*

As an embodiment of Chrysostom’s soteriology, the meta-narrative of *hyperbathmiosis* clearly validates his conviction that the deifying work of Christ by the Holy Spirit is efficacious in helping a human being transcend the limitations of his nature and become like God as far as it is possible. Having said that, the question remains, not only for us, but certainly for Chrysostom’s audiences also, is to what extent does Chrysostom’s Paul exemplify his ideals for a deified human being?

To begin, it is beyond contest that Chrysostom regards Paul as an exemplary role model, worthy of Christian imitation. Ample examples for this can be found in both his *De laudibus* and other homilies elsewhere.<sup>103</sup> Undoubtedly, such a conception of Paul as an example of *imitatio Christi* also coheres entirely with the Greco-Roman ideals for exemplary figures. As we have shown in our survey of the history of deification discourse, the same idea was readily adopted by Christians, almost from the onset, as a valid expression of their faith and practice, and a means of deification.

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<sup>102</sup> To be sure, Chrysostom does not mention the presence of the Spirit’s aid for the mother, since this would be anachronistic. As a substitution, he highlights the fact that God, through his abundant grace, had invested in her an unnatural amount of spiritual strength and power. *mac. 1.3* (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 139).

<sup>103</sup> *lau. Paul.* 1.16, 2.10, 3.10, 4.21.

Having said this, this understanding does not exhaust what Chrysostom has in mind for the role of Christian exemplar. This is because to regard Paul as an example of *imitatio Christi* remains vastly different from regarding him as a *paradeigma* of the *imago Christi*. Earlier, in our analysis of Chrysostom's deification doctrine, we concluded that the deifying work of the Holy Spirit is aimed at renewing humanity into the image of Christ. For Chrysostom, Christ denotes two realities. The first is the humanity that the Word has assumed in the Incarnation, a human nature that, as Chrysostom repeatedly points out, is exactly the same as ours.<sup>104</sup> The second is the fact that the Word, as the "the exact Image of God," is entirely divine, like the Father. Consequently, to speak of a Christian as becoming a "creation after the image of Christ," as he puts it in his *Homily 8 on Colossians*, must imply that the Christian must be concurrently human and also a participant in the divine nature.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, as Chrysostom argues in the same homily, this renewal into the image of Christ is to be understood as a participation in Christ's recapitulative work as a perfect human being. If this is true, an exemplar portrait that validates such a soteriological ideal must surely embody these concepts, that is, a Christian as being fully human and yet possessing divine qualities in his life, which is evidenced in the way that his life parallels Christ's victorious recapitulation. This is exactly what we find depicted in Chrysostom's portrayal of Paul in *Homily 2* of his *De laudibus*.

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<sup>104</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 13 (PG 60.51-515).

<sup>105</sup> *hom. in Col.* 8 (NPNF I.13, 295).

*Homily 2* begins by not only exalting the human nature but also identifying Paul as the best example of this humanity.

What a human being is, and how great is the noble birthright of our nature and what degree of virtue this creature is capable of showing – these things were demonstrated more by Paul than all others.<sup>106</sup>

In view of Paul's spiritual and moral achievements, there may be some who contest that Paul has a different, or indeed, superior nature than the rest of humanity – a claim which Philostratus and Iamblichus have made for Apollonius and Pythagoras respectively.<sup>107</sup> It is with this in mind, I think, that Chrysostom asserts a few lines later that

Paul did not obtain another nature, nor share a different soul, nor inhabit another world, but, having been reared on the same earth, and land, and laws, and customs, he exceeded all human beings who have existed from the time there have been human beings.<sup>108</sup>

Having said this, it is interesting to note that sandwiched between these two discussions of Paul's humanity is also Chrysostom's insistence that Paul has demonstrated in his life that "the gap between angels and humans is not so great" – a depiction that is clearly aimed at denoting the trans-human quality of the apostle.<sup>109</sup> When these claims are considered in tandem with Chrysostom's conception of the *imago Christi*, stark similarities emerge. Just as in the case of Christ, Paul's humanity is staunchly safeguarded here. Yet, by presenting Paul as possessing a trans-human angelic quality, Chrysostom is obviously attempting to denote the divine like qualities that are found in the apostle. This, in turn, strongly

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<sup>106</sup> *lau. Paul. 2.1* (Mitchell, 448).

<sup>107</sup> *VA 1.1-2; VP 6.31*.

<sup>108</sup> *lau. Paul. 2.1* (Mitchell, 448).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

parallels the divine nature that is intrinsic to the Incarnate Word.<sup>110</sup> In other words, by emphasizing Paul's angelic quality, the common humanity that he shares with us and the clear distinction that exists between both the two, Chrysostom clearly has in mind Paul as an exemplar of the *imago Christi*.

This is to be confirmed by the recapitulation themes implicit in the rest of his narration of Paul's life in this homily. In *Homily 2.2*, Chrysostom continues by asserting that Paul had pursued virtue out of his love for this good, rather than the prizes that are entailed in it. Moreover, the apostle accomplished this with "complete ease over the things supposed to be an obstacle to it." He

did not offer as an excuse weakness of body, or the crisis of circumstances, or the tyranny of nature, or anything else. Although he had been entrusted with a greater object of care the generals and kings on the earth, nonetheless he flourished in virtue every day. And when the dangers to him grew more intense, he acquired fresh will to act (προθυμίαν). [...] When dangers and abuses and all dishonour were at hand, again he leapt for joy.<sup>111</sup>

What we have here is a clear assertion of how Paul lives out his life as a perfect human being – by not succumbing to bodily weaknesses or passions and by growing in virtue through a proper exercise of the unimpaired human faculty of *prothumia*. Yet, what is important for Chrysostom here is not Paul, the example of *imitatio Christi*, but Paul the *imago Christi* and therefore the participant in Christ's victorious recapitulation.

Thus, when Chrysostom speaks of Paul as taking pride in his sufferings, and pursuing "the discredit and insult suffered for the gospel more than we do honour; death more than we do life; poverty more than we do wealth," he takes this as Paul having

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<sup>110</sup> See our earlier discussion of the motif of the angelic life in the history of deification discourse, pp. 133-34.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* 2.2 (Mitchell, 448).

“overturned the order of things,” which, besides being a direct contrast to the ways of sinful humanity, is also a clear allusion to Christ’s victorious recapitulation.<sup>112</sup> It is

we who have overturned it [the cosmic order], whereas he was the one who kept to the order just as God had legislated it. For all the latter actions [that is, Paul's] are in accord [with nature], whereas the former [that is, "ours"] are the opposite. What is the proof of this? Paul, as a human being, ran after these afflictions more than he did those pleasures.<sup>113</sup>

This ability to conform to the true order of human life, as Chrysostom recognizes, is not motivated by a moralistic love for virtue or divine laws but rather by the love of God, or indeed, the love of Christ.

There was only one thing that was fearful and to be avoided- offending God, [...] just as there was no other thing to be desired than to please God. [...] This [love] is life, this is creation, this an angel, this present things, this things to come, this a kingdom, this a promise, this the goods beyond counting.<sup>114</sup>

For Chrysostom, such obedience to the true order of humanity for the sake of Christ is nothing less than living an angelic life “while walking on the earth.”

Although bound up with a mortal body he exhibited the purity of the angels, and even when subject to such great constraints, he made it his fervent ambition to appear in no way inferior to the powers above. For he ran around the world like a bird, and like an incorporeal being disdained sufferings and dangers. He had contempt for earthly things as though he had already attained heaven; he was as continually vigilant as if he were dwelling with the incorporeal powers themselves. Indeed, quite often angels are given charge of different nations, not a single one of them so managed the nation with which he was entrusted as Paul did the whole world.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> See our earlier exposition of Christ’s recapitulation in Chrysostom’s *Homily 13 on Romans*, pp. 149-51. *Iau. Paul. 2.3* (Mitchell, 449).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid. 2.3* (Mitchell, 449).

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid. 2.4-5* (Mitchell, 449).

<sup>115</sup> As mentioned earlier, Chrysostom’s claim that Paul has transcended even the angels is also made in *Homilies 1 and 3. Ibid. 2.8, 3.1* (Mitchell, 451).

In line with his conceptions of salvation as “creation in the image of Christ,” Chrysostom concludes his panegyric by insisting that Paul did not attain this trans-human life through his human nature alone. On the contrary, the apostle’s ability to recapitulate the true order of humanity and, therefore, participate in Christ’s victory is grounded in the abundant grace and power that God has bestowed on him through the Holy Spirit.<sup>116</sup>

Therefore, I am astonished by the power of God, [and] because of these things I marvel at Paul’s will to act (προθυμίαν), since he had received so great a share of grace, [and also] because he had prepared himself so well.<sup>117</sup>

It is on this note that he concludes his panegyric by urging his listeners to imitate “this archetype of virtue,” or indeed to participate likewise in the *imago Christi*.<sup>118</sup>

Having established the presence of the meta-narratives of transcendence and *imago Christi* in Chrysostom’s portrayals of Paul, and that these narrative structures clearly validate Chrysostom’s conception of salvation as deification, a final question remains, namely, whether Chrysostom’s Pauline portraits reinforce or even supplement our understanding of his deification ideals. Considered as a whole, Chrysostom’s portrayals of Paul in his *De laudibus*, I believe, both reinforce and supplement his didactic teachings on

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<sup>116</sup> The Spirit’s role is not mentioned here in the concluding section of this homily. Nevertheless, we can presume this to be so as Chrysostom often speaks of Paul or a Christian’s exercise of his human freedom and actions as cooperation with the Spirit’s aid. This is well-expressed in his *Homily 19 on Ephesians*, where he argues that “when we have driven away lying and bitterness, and fornication, and uncleanness, and covetousness, from our souls, when we are become kind, tendered-hearted, forgiving one another, when there is no jesting, when we have rendered ourselves worthy of it, what is there to hinder the Holy Spirit from coming and lighting upon us. And not only will He come to us, but He will fill our hearts; and when we have so great a light kindled within us, then will the way of virtue be no longer difficult to attain, but will be easy and simple.” *lau. Paul.* 1.1; *hom. in Eph.* 19 (NPNF I.13, 138).

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* 2.9 (Translation mine).

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* 2.10.

deification by particularizing the ways in which we can understand the deified Christian life. For example, his repeated insistence that Paul has overcome his bodily passions and was thus able to attain the angelic virtues clearly reinforce his similar views of asceticism found elsewhere in his homilies and monastic treatises.<sup>119</sup> With regard to supplementation, this is to be seen in Chrysostom's frequent declarations that Paul had evangelized the most barbaric tribes, endured the worst persecutions and attained other achievements, in spite of his ineloquence, his poor education and other human limitations.<sup>120</sup> By doing so, Chrysostom does not only widen the breadth of what is conceivable as a deified life in the eyes of his audiences but also create a rich pool of analogies that his audiences can identify with and, hopefully, can appropriate for their lives.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that Chrysostom's soteriology is firmly grounded upon, and to a large extent appropriates, the deification discourse of the Irenaean, Alexandrian and Cappadocian traditions. Specifically, Chrysostom conceives salvation as the re-creation of a Christian into the image of Christ who is both divine and human. Two primary ideas are involved here. The first is the recognition that a Christian, through his union with Christ, can transcend the limitations of his human nature. It is on this account that a Christian is called angelic or even a god. The second is the insistence that the Christian, while attaining divine like qualities, nevertheless, remains resolutely

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<sup>119</sup> His emphasis on the ascetic cultivation of *aretai* as a means of attaining divine likeness is, of course, in line with the Alexandrian and Cappadocian ideals of deification.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.* 2.2, 4.10-16.

human. At the same time, his spiritual progress also consists in his participation in Christ's victorious recapitulation of the human life.

When we examined Chrysostom's Pauline and non-Pauline portraits, we found that these two ideas are clearly present in his exemplar portraits in the forms of the meta-narratives of transcendence and *imago Christi*. Such coherence between his deification *theoria* and *praxis* clearly demonstrates the validity of the former. In addition, it confirms for us the important role that meta-narratives play in a proper hermeneutical application of exemplar portraits.

By way of conclusion, we considered the different ways in which Chrysostom's exemplar portraits may reinforce or supplement his deification ideals. Here, we argued that Chrysostom's exemplar portraits not only reinforce but also supplement his *theoria*. By particularizing the tenets of his deification doctrine, Chrysostom's exemplar portraits effectively widen the breadth of what is conceivable as a deified life and therefore facilitate his listeners' appropriation of this doctrine for their lives.

CHAPTER 4  
ASCETIC PORTRAITS AND THE CONSTRUCTION  
OF CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

**Introduction**

By the time Chrysostom succeeded to the see of Constantinople (397), the Christian ascetic was already recognized by many as the successor of the Christian martyr and the embodiment of all the traits that are entailed with this identification, such as the belief that both were participants in the angelic life. Henceforth, the Christian monk would take his place beside his spiritual predecessor and, along with the biblical saints, be exalted as one of the shining lights of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Like his pagan counterpart, the Christian ascetic's ascent to the pedestal of the spiritual elite was not without contest.<sup>2</sup> Just a few decades earlier, Chrysostom's teacher, Libanius, had decried that the lives of Christian ascetics were entirely "opposed to Hellenism" while the Emperor Julian went so far as to label them as being "given over to evil demons."<sup>3</sup> Even in the Christian quarters, there were some, as Chrysostom tells us, who were so enraged by the fact that "the free and well-born" were embracing "this harsh life" that they threatened to apostatize.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> When used in a Christian context, the terms, ascetic and monk, would be used here interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 128-29.

<sup>3</sup> Libanius, *Or.* 62.9-10| Julian, *Ep.* 89b.288b.

<sup>4</sup> *oppug.* 1.2.

It is in the midst of these debates about the role of Christian monasticism in Late Antique society and religion that the first literary portraits of the Christian ascetics emerged. Apart from defending monasticism, these portraits also constitute powerful vehicles by which a variety of Christian ideals may be communicated to the community at large. This is certainly the case for Chrysostom's monastic portraits, which are recognized as some of the most ardent defences of this lifestyle and, as we shall argue, also play an important role in elucidating his teachings on a variety of subjects. This interpretive role, in particular, will be the focus of this chapter, as we apply the hermeneutics of exemplar portraits that we have developed to a spectrum of Chrysostom's ascetic portraits. Prior to this, however, we must first set our discussion within the context of contemporary ascetic portraiture.

### **Monastic Narratives in the First Five Centuries**

The roots of Christian asceticism are both Jewish and Greek, and its beginnings may be traced to as far back as the advent of the Christian community itself.<sup>5</sup> With regard to Christian ascetic literature, the first to be counted as such would be the attempts by Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and others to re-conceptualize martyrdom spiritually,

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<sup>5</sup> Scholars generally agree that the Qumran community is one of the earliest Jewish ascetic communities. Jewish asceticism, as it seems, was to continue among the early Christians, as may be seen in their high esteem for figures such as John the Baptist and the prophetess, Anna (Matt. 3:4, Luke 2:36-37). It is Philo's re-conception of Hellenistic *askēsis* as the means of obeying the Torah and attaining divine likeness, however, which will prove to be the most influential among Christian ascetic circles from the late second century onwards – thanks to its appropriation by Clement of Alexandria. Philo, *LA* 1.108, 3.132; *Abr.* 52-54; Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 19-20.

along the lines of ascetic practice.<sup>6</sup> Such interest in the ascetic lifestyle would gain momentum by the fourth century, giving rise to a variety of ascetic literary genres, such as apologies for monasticism, rules for communal living and epistolary exchanges about the ascetic practice. In the case of narratives and portrayals of ascetic figures, these remain generally terse right up to the end of the third century, though stories of ascetic figures or groups are not unheard of, such as the seven virgins martyred at Ancyra.<sup>7</sup>

It is to Athanasius that we are indebted for the first narrative portrait of the ascetic. Written initially for the edification of a certain community of Egyptian monks, the *Vita Antonii* (c. 357) has far exceeded the Alexandrian bishop's expectations, having been translated into Latin twice and read by like-minded ascetics in the far corners of the Roman Empire in less than half a century.<sup>8</sup> Modelled after Late Antique biographies, the *Vita Antonii*, by and large, relates the life of Antony in terms of the *enkōmion* paradigm.<sup>9</sup> As a child, we are told, Antony was already ascetic, having loved the Scriptures and refrained from childish games and pagan learning. When he was eighteen, he became a monk and was soon excelling in every ascetic discipline and virtue. When Antony moved into a deserted fortress later on, he was to maintain a harsh ascetic regime and continue

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<sup>6</sup> Edward E. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr: The Monk as the Successor of the Martyr*, ed. Johannes Quasten, *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, vol. 12 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 5-40.

<sup>7</sup> Susanna Elm, *'Virgins of God': The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 53-56.

<sup>8</sup> In Milan, the biography was to play an important role in Augustine's conversion, while in Antioch it would be praised by John Chrysostom in a sermon on the Gospel of Matthew. *V. Ant. proem*; Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 3; *Conf.* 8.6.15; *hom. in Matt.* 8.7 (NPNF I.10, 54).

<sup>9</sup> Harmless, 71-73.

his battles with countless demonic temptations with God's aid. Twenty years later, he emerged victorious, looking as youthful as ever and being entirely virtuous.<sup>10</sup> Thereafter, Antony became well-known as a wonder-worker, capable of prophecy, healing the ill, exorcising demons and even prevailing over nature and its animals.<sup>11</sup> As a pastoral figure and teacher, he also reconciled the hostile, counselled the mourning and taught the Word of God.<sup>12</sup> In his later years, he became so famous that even the Roman emperors sought his counsel.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, he also proved himself to be a martyr figure, having ministered to the confessors relentlessly during the Maximian persecution and, more importantly, regarded his ascetic practice as yet another form of martyrdom.<sup>14</sup> Having said this, it appears that Antony was never at ease with his public ministry and fame. In fact, his preference for the anchoritic life was to drive him frequently into the wilderness and away from human contact.<sup>15</sup>

When compared with the *Lives* of Late Antique philosophers like Philostratus' Apollonius and Iamblichus' Pythagoras, the *Vita Antonii* clearly shares several similarities with these biographies. Like his pagan counterparts, Antony is marked out as holy by his ascetic practice, preference for solitude, ability to perform wondrous works of healing and

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<sup>10</sup> As Athanasius reminds us later, Antony's contest with demonic temptations was to be a life-long affair. *V. Ant.* 1-15, 51-53.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 48, 50, 54, 57-65, 84, 86, 88-89.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, chapters 15-44 are essentially an extended ascetic discourse by Antony. *Ibid.* 14, 16-44, 55-56.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 81.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 46-47.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 45, 49.

miracles, prophecies, philosophical teaching, spiritual guidance and the esteem that rulers show him. Nevertheless, there are also stark differences between the two since Antony is also recognizably Christian in his reliance on divine aid, his imitation of Christian martyrdom, the Christian content of his teachings and his clear disdain for pagan philosophy and religions.<sup>16</sup>

In the hands of a skilful biographer like Athanasius, the above narrative motifs are also amenable to a variety of pastoral and political aims. This is clearly the case for Athanasius' Antony, who is presented not merely as a teacher of Christian philosophy, but more importantly as a champion for Nicene orthodoxy. Thus on two occasions, we find Antony's prophetic gifts mustered against Arians, the first of which is his prophecy of an impending Arian persecution and the second is his judgment of Balacius, an Arian persecutor of ascetics.<sup>17</sup> Another ecclesiastical agenda is also apparent in the account of Antony's death, where the monk is said to have given Athanasius his sheepskin. Implicit to this allusion to Elijah's gift of his mantle to Elisha is clearly Athanasius' assertion that all monks, like Antony, should give proper deference to the clergy.<sup>18</sup>

In the decades to come, the above literary topoi would become stock-in-trade motifs for the different genres of monastic narratives that followed, such as Jerome's *Lives* (c.370s) and the pilgrimage histories composed at the end of the fourth and in the early fifth centuries: the anonymous *History of the Monks* (c.400) and Palladius' *Lausiaca History*

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 74-80.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 82, 86.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 91-92; David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, Oxford Early Christian Studies. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 245-47.

(420).<sup>19</sup> Generally speaking, the monastic figures that we encounter in these works are remarkably similar to that of Athanasius' Antony. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that the monastic motifs deployed in these portraits have been readapted as means of articulating the distinct ideals of their authors. This is clearly evident when we compare the two histories mentioned above. Despite the similarity of their subjects, Palladius' *historia*, explains Harmless, is intended to illustrate a Christian's spiritual journey and progress.

One begins the journey to holiness through conversion and renunciation [...]; then one enters, through disciplined asceticism and discipleship, into an ever-deepening purgation of habit [...] and opens oneself to a life of contemplation; and this in turn leads one to a life of selfless charity.<sup>20</sup>

For this reason, the narrative topoi that Palladius highlights are primarily those that depict the monks' ascetic struggle, prayer, monastic virtues and lapses into sin.<sup>21</sup>

In the case of the *History of the Monks*, however, it is the miraculous acts of these ascetics that predominate.<sup>22</sup> Like the *Vita Antonii*, the monk's miracles define him primarily as a mediator of divine power and presence, and attest to his Christ-like virtues.<sup>23</sup> Yet, by setting each miracle within a specific historical and social context, each miracle is reconceived frequently as an occasion for moral instruction. Such is the case for

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<sup>19</sup> As Leclercq points out, the *Vita* will become the archetypal hagiography by the Middle Ages. Carolinne White, *Early Christian Lives* (London: Penguin, 1998), 73, 87; Palladius, *Hist. Lau.* 8.6; Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, trans. C. Misranhi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 125; Benedicta Ward, "Introduction," in *Lives of the Desert Fathers*, Cistercian Studies Series (Kalamzaoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Harmless, 286.

<sup>21</sup> William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)286-89.

<sup>22</sup> Ward, 39.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence S. Cunningham, *The Meaning of Saints* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 65, 73.

the miraculous bread that several monks received from God. For one of them, the bread was to become a sign of his spiritual health by becoming increasingly stale and mouldy as the monk deteriorated in his spiritual conceit.<sup>24</sup>

### **Chrysostom's Ascetic Portraits**

#### *Chrysostom's Ascetic Background: An Overview*

Like its Egyptian counterpart, Syrian asceticism had its coenobitic and anchoritic strands.<sup>25</sup> Both of these would have been familiar to Chrysostom, since he had spent the first decade of his adulthood living with an urban ascetic community and later as an anchorite in the Syrian mountains (c.368-378).<sup>26</sup> Although Chrysostom was to return from the mountains only after a two year stint, his enthusiasm for asceticism clearly did not diminish.<sup>27</sup> Over the next two decades of his ecclesiastical career, first, as a deacon (378-386) and a priest (386-397) of the Antiochene Church and, later on, as the Bishop of Constantinople (397-404), he would defend asceticism frequently and commend it

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<sup>24</sup> *hist. mon. Aeg.* 1.45-51, 8.5-6, 10.8; Ward, 39-45.

<sup>25</sup> The former is well-illustrated in Theodoret's *Religious History* while the latter is frequently described in Chrysostom's homilies. Cf. *hom. in Matt.* 55.8, 68.3-4, 69.4, 72.3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 14-30.

<sup>27</sup> According to Palladius, Chrysostom's health was impaired so badly by his severe ascetic regime that he was compelled to return to Antioch. Pleasants, however, has drawn attention to the fact that Chrysostom's anchoritic life and return to Antioch coincided with both Meletius's exile and reinstatement to his see. Hence she suggests, not implausibly, that Chrysostom's anchoritic period was due probably to his disillusionment with ecclesiastical politics rather than a desire for a more severe asceticism, and his return to Antioch was motivated primarily by Meletius' reinstatement. Palladius, *dial.* 5; Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants, "Making Antioch Christian: The City in the Pastoral Vision of John Chrysostom" (Ph.D., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1991), 104.

earnestly to both ascetics and laity alike. Indeed, his ascetic fervency was probably one of the factors that contributed to his eventual downfall and exile in 404.<sup>28</sup> This same ascetic vision, however, would also have informed his numerous portraits of the ascetic figure, as given in his monastic treatises and the several hundred homilies that he preached in Antioch and Constantinople. It is to these writings that we turn now for a better understanding of his ascetic portraits and the role that they played in communicating his teachings to his audience.

### *Homilies on Genesis: Adam and Eve*

Seen from the point of view of sacred history, the first Christian ascetics, for Chrysostom, are clearly Adam and Eve. For this reason, our study of Chrysostom's ascetic portraiture must begin with his expositions of their story, the most comprehensive of which are found in his *Homilies on Genesis*. Preached from 385 – 387,<sup>29</sup> this homiletical series devotes a total of eleven sermons to the primal couple and, in this process, presents a very elaborate and comprehensive paradigm of their ascetic life in Paradise.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 191-227.

<sup>29</sup> The dates for these homilies are tentative. Although Quasten confidently dates the homilies to the Lent of 386, De Montfaucon argues for the contrary and, in fact, leaves open the question of dating. Nevertheless, De Montfaucon is certain that the provenance is Antioch, which, in turn, limits the date to no later than 397. Hill, on the other hand, proposes that the date could be as early as 385, when Chrysostom was still a deacon. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 74 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1985) 5-6; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2000), 434.

<sup>30</sup> Chrysostom's conception of Adam and Eve as a paradigm of the ideal Christian life is a sentiment that is shared by many fourth century church fathers, such as Ephrem and Augustine.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Chrysostom introduces the story of Adam and Eve in his eighth homily by declaring that only Adam was created in the “image” of God (Gen. 1:26) and that he and his male successors alone, not the female, would have authority over all the creation.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, what is more important for Chrysostom is the fact that Christ has called all humanity, both male and female, to “be like your father in heaven.” The corollary of this, of course, is that Adam and Eve were originally created in the “likeness” (ὁμοίωσις) of God and, therefore, had the potential to become virtuous like God according to their human ability.<sup>32</sup>

For Chrysostom, this human potential for divine likeness resides entirely in the soul, a point that he clearly makes in his interpretation of the second account of human creation in Genesis 2:7. Here, he notes that the first man was created from dust, a substance “more lowly” than even the earth, and was therefore no different from “the plants and the irrational beings.”<sup>33</sup> Yet, out of His loving-kindness, God had also decreed that this same creature would be “a rational being by reason of a soul, by means of which this living thing emerged complete and perfect.” This was accomplished by God breathing “a vital force,” or the human soul, into this “lifeless shell” so that the body can “respond to this vital force and obey its will.”<sup>34</sup> It is for this reason that

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<sup>31</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 8.9-10 (PG 53.72).

<sup>32</sup> Chrysostom is interpreting Genesis 1:26 in the light of Matthew 5:43-48 and Luke 6.27-36. A similar notion is affirmed in *Homily* 15.1, where the woman is spoken of as “like man in every detail – rational, capable of rendering him what would be of assistance in times of need and the pressing necessities of life.” *hom. in Gen.* 9.7.

<sup>33</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 12.12-14.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 12.15 (PG 53.103.49-51; Hill, FC 74, 166).

because of the soul's being, we who are intertwined with a body can, if we wish and under the influence of God's grace, strive against disembodied powers, can walk on earth as though coursing across heaven, and pass our lives in this manner, suffering no inferiority. [... This happens] when people prove, despite entanglement with a mortal body, to live the same life as those supernal powers, how will they not be deemed worthy of grace from God for keeping untarnished the soul's nobility, though subject to the body's necessities.<sup>35</sup>

For Chrysostom, the fact that the creation of humanity was a two stage process speaks much regarding human ontology and *telos*. As a creature of the earth, a human being is like an animal and, therefore, shares its lowly stature. Yet, unlike the animal, an *anthrōpos* does not obtain his life directly from the body. Rather, he is animated by a divine breath, or the "incorporeal and immortal" soul. Thus from the onset, a human being is never meant to be beast-like and live a mere bodily existence. Rather, his *telos* is always transcendental, that is, to surpass the desires of the body so as to attain his potential of becoming like God.<sup>36</sup>

It is with this in mind that Chrysostom likens the relationship between the human soul and body to that of a musician and his lyre.

This body created in the Lord's design was [meant to be] like an instrument needing someone to activate it, rather like a lyre that needs someone who can by his own skill and artistry raise a fitting hymn to the Lord through his own limbs, as though by the strings of the lyre.<sup>37</sup>

This psychosomatic framework would significantly nuance Chrysostom's appropriation of the ascetic conception of deification adopted by many of his contemporaries.<sup>38</sup> Gregory of

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 12.17 (Hill, FC 74, 167).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 13.10.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 13.9-10 (Hill, FC 74, 173).

<sup>38</sup> Like Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, Chrysostom believes that the practice of asceticism, with the aid of the Spirit, is the sure way by which one develops the divine virtues and becomes like God. Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 211-13, 216; *hom. in Gen.* 12.16.

Nazianzus, for example, would understand deification in terms of the Christian ascetic's union with Christ through self-mortification and, ultimately, a release from his body.<sup>39</sup> Chrysostom, on the other hand, does not see a conflict between the Christian's need to have mastery over his flesh's desires and the goodness of his human flesh. Rather, in the human journey towards deification, the body has an enduring feature, albeit an instrumental one. By God's design, it is to be the lyre played by the soul and the very means by which the soul can exercise virtue and live a life like "those supernal powers." Human perfection, therefore, is the soul and body operating in tandem in the likeness of God and not the negation of the body.

Such a conception of the role of the body in human deification, I believe, is derived from a Christological and soteriological reading of Adam's creation. As we mentioned in Chapter 3, a major aspect of Chrysostom's soteriology is his emphasis on Christ's victorious recapitulation of human life in the body.<sup>40</sup> The incarnate Word's recapitulation as the second Adam, in turn, must mean that the first Adam should have lived out his perfect life in the flesh in the first place. In other words, the incarnation confirms the necessity of the flesh in the human attainment of divine likeness. Moreover, a human being is never passive in his salvation. Instead, each human person must also, by the power of the Holy Spirit, participate in the *imago Christi* through a recapitulation of Christ's victory. When this is read in conjunction with Chrysostom's portrayal of Adam's life in Paradise as "complete and perfect," it should also be clear that any portrayal of

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<sup>39</sup> *Or.* 4.71.

<sup>40</sup> *See* Chapter 3, pp. 149-51.

Adam's life by Chrysostom cannot be understood as a mere attempt in historical re-enactment.<sup>41</sup> Rather, to speak of Adam's perfect life in Paradise is to speak of Christian eschatology. This is because the perfect Adam is also the archetypal Christian and a representation of what a Christian ought to attain and enjoy at the *eschaton*. As we shall see in homilies 13-15, this somatic emphasis in his soteriology would be played out in his portraits of Adam and Eve through his conception of the primal couple as angelic beings in human bodies who thoroughly enjoy the bodily pleasures that God has given them in Paradise.

After creating Adam, observes Chrysostom, God placed him immediately in the garden (παράδεισος) and ordered him to live there,

in order that what he saw and his way of life should give him much pleasure (πολλήν ... τὴν ἡδονήν) and should awaken him to an expression of thanks in consideration of all the kindness he had received without ever doing anything to deserve it.<sup>42</sup>

A similar stance is observed in *Homily 14*. Here, this *paradeisos* is conceived in the words of Genesis 2.15 as "the garden of delight (τῷ παραδείσῳ τῆς τρυφῆς), where humankind is meant to enjoy a life of "exceeding pleasure" (ὑπερβάλλουσιν ἡδονήν), one that is filled with every delight, a pleasure to behold and a thrill to enjoy.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the significance of

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<sup>41</sup> *hom. in Gen. 12.15* (PG 53.103.49-51; Hill, FC 74, 166).

<sup>42</sup> *hom. in Gen. 13.14* (Hill, FC 74, 176).

<sup>43</sup> While the word, Eden, clearly denotes the name of a place in Scripture (e.g., Gen. 2:8, 2 Kgs 19:12, Ezek. 27:23), Kugel notes that it also seems "to some ancient readers to derive from the Hebrew root 'dn, 'delight'." Hence, although the Septuagint treats "Eden" as a proper name in Genesis 2:8, 10 and 4:16, it translates the word as "delight" (τρυφή) in Genesis 3:23-24. *hom. in Gen. 14.7-8* (PG 53.113.23-5; Hill, FC 74, 184); James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 110-11.

this hedonistic conception of life in Paradise cannot be understated, since it is a theme that runs through virtually all of Chrysostom's expositions of Adam's idyllic life – a point well demonstrated in his *ekphrasis* of God's plan for humanity.<sup>44</sup>

Provision had been made for his spending life in the garden, for enjoying the beauty of visible things, for gladdening the eye from that experience, and gaining much pleasure from that enjoyment. Consider, after all, how great a thrill it was to see the trees groaning under the weight of their fruit, to see the variety of the flowers, the different kinds of plants, the leaves on the branches, and all the other things you would be likely to chance upon in a garden, especially a garden planted by God. [...] passing his time in that garden like a king, he [Adam] could revel in its enjoyment, and like a master he had no occasion to mix with those ministering to him but had a life all to himself.<sup>45</sup>

Interestingly, it is in this hedonistic conception of Adam and Eve's life in Paradise that we also find one of the most detailed expositions of the primal couple's angelic life.<sup>46</sup> God, says Chrysostom, had intended the first man to "pass his days on earth like some terrestrial angel," to live "an angelic way of life in a human body."<sup>47</sup> Like the angels, the primal couple did not have any "need of shelter or habitation, clothing or anything of that kind."<sup>48</sup> "Created incorruptible and immortal, [...] they had no need to wear clothes."

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<sup>44</sup> The importance of hedonism as a mark of the ascetic life will be elaborated later on. What is noteworthy, however, is the fact that Chrysostom's affirmation of hedonism as a distinctive mark of the angelic life, or Christian *eudaimonia*, resonates well with the Aristotelian, Cyrenaic and Epicurean conceptions of the role of pleasure in *eudaimonia*.

<sup>45</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 14.12 (Hill, FC 74, 186-87).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 13.14 (Hill, FC 74, 177).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 15.15 (PG 53.124a; Hill, FC 74, 204).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* 16.2 (Hill, FC 74, 207).

Instead, “they were clad in that glory from above,” and thus felt no shame about their nakedness.<sup>49</sup>

Like the angels, they were virgins who “were not burning with desire (ἐπιθυμίας), not assaulted by other passions (παθῶν), not subject to the needs of nature.”<sup>50</sup>

Consequently, they had no need of marriage and sexual intercourse, both of which as he explains in *Homily 18*, were instituted *after* the Fall:

From the beginning the practice of virginity was in force; but when through their indifference disobedience came on the scene and the ways of sin were opened, virginity took its leave for the reason that they had proved unworthy of such a degree of good things, and in its place the practice of intercourse took over for the future.<sup>51</sup>

Chrysostom’s presumption that Adam and Eve were similar to the angels in their *apatheia* towards sexual intercourse obviously runs into difficulties with Genesis 2:24, which speaks of a future sexual union between the primal couple immediately after the account of Eve’s creation. This problem he overcomes by conceiving verse 24 as Adam’s prophecy of God’s institution of marriage after the Fall. In fact, this actually becomes for Chrysostom a leverage to further argue that Adam “had a share in prophetic grace and saw everything through the eyes of the Spirit.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This notion of Adam and Eve as being clad in glory is common among early Jewish and Christian interpreters. The *Apocalypse of Moses* 20.2, whose sources date back to first century A.D, speaks of Adam as lamenting the loss of the glory which he was clothed with. 3 Baruch 4.16 similarly attests that Adam was stripped of the glory of God. Ephrem’s hymns also regularly speak of the pre-lapsarian Adam as having a robe of glory. *hom. in Gen.* 15.14 (Hill, FC 74, 202-3); Kugel, 115-7, 920, 924; Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 85-97.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 15.14 (Hill, FC 74, 202-3; PG 53.123.31-33).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 18.12. (Hill, FC 82, 10-11).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 15.14 (Hill, FC 74, 203).

Despite the similarities between the lives of the primal couple and that of the angels, the fact that Adam and Eve are meant to be terrestrial angels, or angelic beings in a human body, also means that there are distinctive ways in which they differ from their heavenly counterpart. The first is already mentioned, which is the hedonistic and carefree character of their life in Paradise. The second is a derivative of the first, namely, that Adam and Eve's carefree life is grounded upon their utter dependence on God's providential care for their needs. As for the third difference, it is the natural outworking of Adam's status as the image of God, namely, he too must reign as a king in Paradise. As Chrysostom puts it:

Like some angel, in fact, man lived this way on earth, wearing a body, yet being fortunately rid of any bodily needs; like a king adorned with sceptre and crown and wearing his purple robe, he revelled in this life of freedom and great affluence in the garden.<sup>53</sup>

As to the final difference, it is to be found in the work that God has instituted for Adam. According to Chrysostom, a life of "exceeding indulgence" that is relieved of all work is a formula for disaster, since Adam "would immediately slip into negligence (ῥαθυμία)."<sup>54</sup> Consequently, God also decreed

the task of tilling and guarding for Adam so that along with all those delights, relaxation and freedom from care he might have, by way of a stabilizing influence, those two tasks to prevent him from overstepping the limit.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Presumably, it is in the context of Eve's participation in Adam's position as an image of God that she would also reign as a queen. Ibid. 15.14 (Hill, FC 74, 203).

<sup>54</sup> As Chrysostom explains in *Homily 14*, it is Adam's "great lack of self-control and negligence" (πολλὴν ἀκρασίαν καὶ ῥαθυμίαν) that, ultimately, caused Adam to trample underfoot the instruction given him [by God]. In other words, these were the causes of his Fall. Ibid. 14.8 (PG 53.113.39), 14.12 (Hill, FC 74, 186-7, modified).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 14.10 (Hill, FC 74, 185). See also Ibid. 14.8, 14.12.

Despite God's generous love and favour, laments Chrysostom, Adam and Eve were to heed the serpent's advice, disobey God's command and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>56</sup> For Chrysostom, this disobedience was due entirely to their "negligent will and contempt (ἡ προαίρεσις ἢ ὀάθυμος καὶ ἡ καταφρόνησις) displayed for God's command."<sup>57</sup> For Eve, in particular, it began with her discontentment with her present enjoyment and unwillingness "to remain within her own proper limits," and ended with her trusting the serpent, not God.<sup>58</sup> In the case of Adam, it arose from his *rathumia*, or his negligent disobedience of God, for the sake of a "brief pleasure."<sup>59</sup> As a punishment for their disobedience, the couple was exiled from Paradise, condemned to a life of suffering and death and became partakers of marriage, rather than virginity. Moreover, they were also "stripped of grace from above" and disrobed of their garment of glory, which previously hid their nakedness.<sup>60</sup>

For a better understanding of the state of the human soul after the Fall, we must return to an analogy that Chrysostom drew earlier between the physical world and the human soul.

Just as on this wide and spacious earth some animals are tamer and others more ferocious, so too in the wide spaces of our soul some of our ideas are more irrational and resemble brute beasts, others more ferocious and savage. So there is a need to have mastery over and tame them and submit them to the rule of reason.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 13.15.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. 16.20 (PG 53.134.5; Hill, FC 74, 220).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. 16.10 (Hill, FC 74, 213-4).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 16.13 (PG 53.130.57).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 16.12-14 (Hill, FC 74, 215-17).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. (PG 53.78.26-32; Hill, FC 74, 120-121, modified).

By likening the irrational aspects of the soul to the savage beasts of the world, Chrysostom is clearly appropriating the Stoic view of the physical world as a macrocosm of the human soul.<sup>62</sup> For Chrysostom, this same analogy remains operative even after the Fall. This is in view of the strong parallels between his description of post-lapsarian humanity's rule over the animals a few homilies later, and his discussions of humankind's control over its own *epithumia* in his homilies elsewhere.

Unlike Adam in Paradise, humankind has now lost control of the beasts for the most part. With Adam's disobedience, "we now have fear and dread of the wild animals and have lost control of them." For "once sin came on the scene, there was evidently loss of esteem and of authority." All that is left is our authority over the "most necessary and useful creatures which perform great service to our living." These things have occurred, explains Chrysostom, out of God's "providential care," since the loss of control over most animals should remind humanity to "recover from [our] evil," while the retention of our authority over the remaining beasts enables us to preserve our lives.<sup>63</sup>

This human loss of control over the animals is analogous to the present state of affairs for the soul. Just as Adam's disobedience has led to the wild beasts running rampage in the land, so also has it given rise to "thongs of passion" in humanity, so much so that these irrational aspects of soul now ever threaten to overcome their rational

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<sup>62</sup> Chrysostom's fellow Antiochene, Theodore, would take this analogy much further by teaching that God has willed Adam to be a constitution of both the invisible soul and mortal body so that "creation might be gathered into this one bond." Quotation from McLeod, *Theodore of Mopseustia*, 27.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 9.8-10 (Hill, FC 74, 121-23).

counterpart.<sup>64</sup> Just as God has allowed humanity to retain control of only some useful animals, so also has He enabled humanity to retain the soul's ability for reason. As is in the case with the rampaging beasts, God's introduction of "throngs of passion" into the soul is also an act of providence, intended to instruct human beings in their reliance on God and to discourage them from further evil. It is for these reasons then that Chrysostom can insist, on the one hand, that it is "quite within your capabilities to be meek and mild and gentle, if you are willing (θέλης)," while emphasizing, on the other, the need for human reliance on "the fear of God, and many other advantages from other sources."<sup>65</sup>

The ascetic overtones and narrative motifs used to depict Chrysostom's Adam and Eve clearly find a strong correspondence in the monastic narratives contemporary to Chrysostom. Like the monks of the *Vita Antonii* and the histories, Chrysostom's Adam is angelic, celibate, dependent on divine providence, a ruler over animals, able to prophesy, rational, dispassionate and engages in the *askēsis* as a means of subjugating *rathumia*. Like Antony, he even takes delight in the wonders of God's creation.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, there are also clear differences between the two. To be sure, Chrysostom concurs with many of his ascetic contemporaries that the *telos* of humanity is

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<sup>64</sup> *hom. in Rom.* 13 (PG 60.507.54; NPNF I.11, 427).

<sup>65</sup> This conception of post-lapsarian anthropology coheres remarkably well with his anthropological assumptions elsewhere, such as his discussions of the relationship between the soul and the Holy Spirit (see Chapter 1), and his portrayal of Paul's humanity (see Chapter 3). *hom. in Gen.* 9.7 (PG 53.78b-d).

<sup>66</sup> In *Vita Antonii* 50, Antony, we are told, was led by God to a secluded hill watered by a pleasant river and surrounded by the plains, which he immediately "fell in love" and chose as his hermitage.

to transcend the desires of the body so that one may attain the life of the angels.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, this transcendence is to be understood within the framework of his Christology and soteriology, with their high regard for the *sōma*. Consequently, this angelic life is to be lived out through that lyre of the soul, that is, the *sarx* and not in denial of it. It is for this reason that Chrysostom can speak of Adam's life in Paradise as not only utterly dependent upon God's provision but more importantly as one that thoroughly delights in the *hēdonai* that these provisions yield. Within this hedonistic context, work is to be understood not merely as a means of combating the passions but also as a way of moderating the potential indulgence that may arise from such *hēdonai*.

This portrayal of the ascetic Adam, or the eschatological Christian, as a virgin, a practitioner of work or *askēsis*, a dispassionate person, a dependent on God's providence, a hedonist who is contented with and thoroughly enjoys this providence, and a participant in angelic and divine fellowship, would be a paradigm that Chrysostom generally adopts for the ascetic portraits composed elsewhere in his writings. For example, in Book III of his *Adversus Oppugnatores*, his *ekphrasis* of the idyllic monastic life similar presents the monks as living

in tranquility, in the harbor, in great security, observing the shipwrecks of others [in the city], as if from heaven. For they have chosen a way of life which befits heaven, and they have attained a state inferior in no way to that of angels. Just as among the angels there is no inequality, nor do some enjoy prosperity while others experience misery, but all of them share one peace, one joy, one glory, so it is likewise in the monasteries. [...] All things are held in common-food, housing, clothing. [...] All are noble with the same nobility, all are servants with the same servanthood, all are free with the same freedom. There you find one wealth for all, the true wealth-one glory, the true glory. For in that life the goods are present, not in name, but in reality. One pleasure, one desire, one hope for all; indeed everything is perfectly regulated as if by a norm and rule. There is no inequality, but order, proportion, harmony, deep

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<sup>67</sup> *hom. in Gen.* 16.1, 17.1 (Hill, FC 74, 222).

and exact agreement, and constant grounds for contentment. Thus everything that they do and suffer is a source of joy and contentment.<sup>68</sup>

In his *Homilies on Matthew*, which are preached to a predominantly lay Antiochene audience, Chrysostom even explicitly likens the lives of the Syrian monks to that of Adam in Paradise before his Fall. In *Homily 68*, he remarks that the monks have chosen the life of tranquillity in the mountains and are now leading a life of *apatheia*, with “none of the ills of man, no worldly sorrows, no grief, no care so great, no dangers, no plots, no envy, no jealousy, no lawless lusts, nor any other thing of this kind.” “Here,” he adds,

they meditate upon the things of the kingdom, holding converse with groves, and mountains, and springs, and with great quietness, and solitude, and before all these, with God. And their cell is pure from all turmoil, and their soul is free from every passion and disease.<sup>69</sup>

On this basis, Chrysostom concludes that

their work is what was Adam’s also at the beginning and before his sin, when he was clothed with the glory, and conversed freely with God, and dwelt in that place that was full of great blessedness. For in what respect are they in a worse state than he, when before his disobedience he was set to till the garden? Had he no worldly care? But neither have these. Did he talk to God with a pure conscience? These also do these; or rather they have a greater confidence than he, inasmuch as they enjoy even greater grace by the supply of the Spirit.<sup>70</sup>

Later in *Homily 72*, he further observes that this similarity between Adam and the monks extends even to the nature of their work. Just as work was instituted in Paradise as a means of preventing Adam from lapsing into indulgence and *rathumia*, so also is the monks’ work of “digging in the earth, and watering, and planting, or making baskets, or

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<sup>68</sup> *oppug.* 3.11 (Hunter, 147).

<sup>69</sup> *hom. in Matt.* 68.3 (NPNF I.10, 417).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

weaving sackcloth, or practising any other handy works,” meant to help them cultivate the virtues of humility and moderation.<sup>71</sup>

Having said this, this vision of the eschatological Christian as an ascetic who is not only dispassionate, but also *celibate* clearly presents problems of appropriation for Chrysostom’s lay audience, since most of them would be married and, presumably, cannot practise celibacy. This being the case, how does Chrysostom envisage the Christian ascetic to be an exemplar figure for his lay audiences? This question will be taken up later when we discuss Chrysostom’s ascetic portraits in his *Homilies on Matthew*. Prior to this, a more pertinent question must be addressed, namely, how does Chrysostom understand the role of celibacy in the life of Christians? To answer this, we must turn to his most systematic and comprehensive exposition of virginity, namely, his *De Virginitate*. What we shall discover here is a conception of virginity that is both rich and varied.

### *De Virginitate*

Composed about a decade earlier than the Genesis homilies and not long after Chrysostom’s return from the Syrian mountains, the *De Virginitate* is addressed to the Antiochene virgins and composed with a clear objective: to defend the virtues of celibacy.<sup>72</sup> The treatise begins by distancing itself from ascetics who denounce marriage as

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 72.3-4 (NPNF I.10, 438-9).

<sup>72</sup> Scholars have differed on the dating of this treatise. Following Bernard Grillet, Shore dates this treatise to 382-86, even though Musurillo suggests a much later date of 392. The argument for the earlier dating is based on the premise that it could only be written by a more youthful Chrysostom who was still enthusiastic about monasticism. Sally Ann Shore, “St. John Chrysostom’s *De Virginitate* and *De Non Iterando Coniugio*: Translation and Commentary” (Ph.D., The Catholic University of America, 1980) 25, 28; John Chrysostom, *La virginité*, ed. Bernard Grillet and Herbert Musurillo, SC, vol. 125 (Paris: Cerf, 1966), 21-25.

impure, most likely the Marcionites, and arguing instead that marriage is a good ordinance of God and “the harbour of chastity for those who desire to use it well,” that is, marriage has an instrumental value.<sup>73</sup> Having done so, Chrysostom then asserts that “virginity is much more honourable than marriage” and whoever embraces it out of her own deliberate choice (προαίρεσως) is worthy of greater praise.<sup>74</sup> This is because “that which is better than what is acknowledged as good [marriage] is exceedingly good.”<sup>75</sup>

By doing so, Chrysostom is clearly deploying here the common Platonic distinction between an external good and what is truly good and regards marriage as the former. As he sees it, this deduction is corroborated by both Jesus and Paul’s teachings on virginity in Matthew 19:10 and 1 Corinthians 7 respectively.<sup>76</sup> In the case of Paul, Chrysostom believes that the apostle did not teach the virtue initially because Paul recognizes that celibacy demands “much effort and a great struggle” and can only be prescribed to the Corinthians when they have demonstrated their readiness for it, as it is the case with their enquiry about the subject.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *virg.* 8.1, 9.1.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.* 8.3, 9.1.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* 10.1 (Shore, 75).

<sup>76</sup> Chrysostom takes Christ’s remark in Matthew 19:12, “there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs (εὐνούχισαν) for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” as a straight forward endorsement of the superiority of virginity over marriage. With regard to Paul’s admonition that “a man is better off having no relations with a woman” (1Cor. 7:1), Chrysostom similarly interprets it as a divine command and a clear indication of Paul’s esteem of virginity over marriage (1Cor. 7:6-8). *virg.* 12.1-4, 6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* 13.1.

To be sure, Chrysostom's interpretations of these passages are highly contestable, especially in an age like ours, where historians generally "have no experience of, or sympathy with, Christian (and other) traditions of spiritual analysis and ascetic effort."<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, they confirm for us that virginity, in Chrysostom's view, is a greater good than marriage and also a sure sign of a Christian's spiritual progress. What is left open, however, is the question of whether Chrysostom regards virginity as a good and an end in itself. To answer this question, we must turn to the first ascetic portrait that he constructs in this treatise, namely, his series of rhetorical *synkriseis* between the angel and the virgin.

"Virginity," declares Chrysostom, "is as much superior to marriage as heaven is to earth, as the angels are to men."<sup>79</sup> The vast gulf that exists between heaven and earth, and angels and men is, of course, familiar to his readers. The difference between virginity and marriage, however, is by no means self-evident. Yet, by juxtaposing these three polar opposites, Chrysostom's *synkrisis* effectively transposes the vast distance evident in the latter two to the first and thus secures for virginity its superiority over marriage. A more important rhetorical move, however, is also at work in these comparative analogies. By associating virginity with heaven and the angels, and marriage with earth and humanity, Chrysostom is inadvertently conceptualizing two distinct sets of sociological markers here. Accordingly, the life of virginity is a mark of life in heaven and that of the angels, while marriage is to be associated with life on earth and one that is merely human. In other

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<sup>78</sup> Gillian Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 68.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 10.3 (Shore, 75-76).

words, virginity is set up here as a sign of the *eschaton* while marriage as the sign of the present life.

A more elaborate conception of virginity as a mark of the eschatological Christian life follows immediately, with Chrysostom's portrayal of the angelic life and his subsequent *synkrisis* of this angelic life with that of the virgin. "For the angels," says Chrysostom,

if they do not marry and are not given in marriage, [they] are not a mixture of flesh and blood. They do not pass time on earth and endure trouble from the desires (*ἐπιθυμιῶν*). They require neither food nor drink. Sweet song cannot appease them, nor can a radiant face win them over, nor any other such thing. Their natures of necessity remain transparent and brilliant, with no desire (*ἐπιθυμία*) troubling them, like the heavens at high noon clear and undisturbed by any cloud.<sup>80</sup>

Here, Chrysostom takes as a starting point Matthew 22:30 and deduces from the angels' non-marital status that they are spiritual beings.<sup>81</sup> This then leads him to conclude that the angels are not troubled by the *epithumia* of the flesh, since this is an exclusively somatic phenomenon. Thus far, Chrysostom's deductions are not far-fetched and do plausibly demonstrate angelic *apatheia* and celibacy as proper marks of the Christian's eschatological participation in the angelic life. This, of course, should also caution us against the popular opinion that the early Christians' asceticizing of biblical figures is the mere result of Hellenistic ascetic influence. On the contrary, it is more accurate for us to say that these angelic conceptions are *Christian* beliefs that cohere with the Hellenistic ascetic tradition.

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<sup>80</sup> Whenever relevant, changes are made to Shore's translation to alter her translations of *ἐπιθυμία* and *πάθη* to "desires" and "passions" respectively. *virg.* 10.3 (Shore, 76, modified).

<sup>81</sup> In Matthew 22:30, Jesus declares that "at the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (TNIV). See also Luke 20:35-36.

For Chrysostom, the compatibility between these two traditions also convinces him that these angelic traits are not only realizable at the *eschaton*, but are also qualities that can be enjoyed in the here and now, despite the inferiority of our human nature.<sup>82</sup> This is achievable, or shall we say, imitable whenever one willingly embraces a life of virginity and ascetic practice:

Angels neither marry nor are given in marriage; this is true of the virgin. The angels have stood continuously by God and serve him; so does the virgin. [...] If they are unable for a time to ascend to heaven as the angels can because their flesh holds them back, even in this world they have much consolation since they receive the Master of the heavens, if they are holy in body and spirit. Do you grasp the value of virginity? That it makes those who spend time on earth live like the angels dwelling in heaven? It does not allow those endowed with bodies to be inferior to the incorporeal powers and spurs all men to rival the angels.<sup>83</sup>

When this *synkrisis* between the angel and the virgin and the earlier angelic portrait are compared, it is remarkable that among the many characteristics mentioned in the angelic portrait, only one is reiterated in the *synkrisis*, namely, the trait of celibacy. Furthermore, while much is made here about the virgin's participation in the angel's service and fellowship with God, nothing is mentioned about the *apatheia* that the virgin obviously shares with the angel. What can we make of these then? First of all, although it is unclear whether the absence of reference to the shared *apatheia* is accidental or intentional, one can safely presume that celibacy, for Chrysostom, is a already focal point of a virgin's struggle against her passions and is therefore a sufficient summarizing symbol for the *apatheia* that she shares with the angel. This, along with Chrysostom's emphasis on virginity in both portraits, most certainly lends weight to our earlier

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<sup>82</sup> *virg.* 11.1.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.1-2 (Shore, 76-77, modified).

argument that Chrysostom regards virginity as a unique sociological marker for the eschatological life.

A more important observation, however, is to be found in his concluding remarks on this *synkrisis*. Here, virginity is clearly understood by Chrysostom as playing an instrumental role in “making those who spend time on earth live like the angels dwelling in heaven.” As he sees it, virginity has within itself a transcendental power that allows a person to surpass his inferiority to these “incorporeal powers.”

Considered as a whole, the above *synkrisis* evidently portrays virginity as a multivalent motif. Sociologically speaking, virginity is not only a powerful sign of the eschatological Christian life, but is also a summarizing symbol, a focal point, for the ascetic’s combat with her passions in general. Moreover, virginity also plays an instrumental role by helping the virgin surpass her humanity and attain the life of the angel. As we shall see, these multi-faceted notions of virginity will be validated and further clarified by the ascetic portraits that Chrysostom constructs in the rest of this treatise.

With regard to virginity as a sign of the eschatological life, this is best expressed in Chrysostom’s story of Adam and Eve, which he reiterates to rebut those who claim that virginity contradicts the divine institution of marriage (Gen. 2:24). As in the case of his *Homilies on Genesis*, Chrysostom contends that the primal couple were virgins to begin with and entirely devoid of “desire for sexual intercourse, conception, childbirth and every form of corruption.”<sup>84</sup> Indeed, if they had continued in their obedience, their

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<sup>84</sup> Chrysostom’s conception of the primal couple as virgins is, of course, popularly held by many of the fathers, such as Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome. Despite their agreement on this point,

propagation would have followed the way of the angels, that is, without the need of childbirth.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, they disobeyed God and “this kingly robe [of virginity]” was stripped of them. In its stead, marriage, “a garment befitting mortals and slaves,” was introduced, along with “the decay of death, ruin, pain and a toilsome life.”<sup>86</sup> Once again, by positing Adam and Eve as exemplary figures for Christians, Chrysostom’s present portrait is not so much so a reiteration of history, but another exercise in eschatology, that is, the representation of the archetypal Christian. Within this eschatological framework, his emphasis on Adam and Eve’s virginity is most certainly aimed at confirming celibacy as the defining mark of the Christian *eschaton*.

This conception of virginity as a sociological symbol is, by and large, corroborated in the rest of the treatise by Chrysostom’s repeated comparisons of the celibate lifestyle not with sexual intercourse in general or sexual promiscuity in particular, but with the institution of marriage itself – a sociological edifice that is sacrosanct in Greco-Roman society.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, it is noteworthy that what Chrysostom repeatedly highlights in

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Chrysostom’s treatise, as Shores notes, differs from that of Gregory (c.371), which contains more “Platonic overtones.” *virg.* 14.3 (Shore, 85); Gregory of Nyssa, *virg.* 12; Shore, 8-9; Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 164; Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 304-6.

<sup>85</sup> *virg.* 14.5-6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* 14.5 (Shore, 85-86, modified).

<sup>87</sup> Peter Robert Lamont Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 20th anniversary ed., Columbia Classics in Religion. (New York ; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2008), 307.

these juxtapositions is not the benefit of continence vis-à-vis the ill of sexual intercourse.<sup>88</sup> Rather, the point that he frequently emphasizes is the fact that virginity, or the ascetic life that it represents, releases the virgin from the burden of marital responsibilities and civic life in general, such as the troubles arising from an uncouth spouse, the pains of childbirth and the tremendous care involved in the management of one's household or business.<sup>89</sup> In short, virginity plays an instrumental role in a virgin's spiritual progress because it releases the virgin from her otherwise marital responsibilities and offers her the freedom to participate in the *apatheia* and heavenly life of the angels.

As Chrysostom recognizes, however, this freedom that virginity offers is far from within easy reach. Rather, it can be gained only through much ascetic struggle – a point that is well-illustrated in his attempt to empathize with the virgin's combat with sexual passion through his disclosure of what appears to be his own struggles with the same *epithumia*.

I know the strength of the deed, I know the intensity of these feats, I know the burden of the battle. It is necessary to have a soul fond of strife, one that is both strong and desperate against the desires. You must walk over coals without being burned, and walk over swords without being slashed. The power of desire is as great as that of fire and sword. If the soul happens not to have been prepared in this way to be indifferent to its suffering, it will quickly destroy itself. We need iron will, eyes always open, much patience, strong defenses, external walls and barriers, watchful and high-minded guards, and in addition to all of these, divine help. For "unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> As we have already mentioned earlier, sexual intercourse, as Chrysostom envisages it within the sanctity of marriage, is an instrumental good, capable of cultivating the virtue of chastity in a couple. Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 158.

<sup>89</sup> *virg.* 37, 40, 44, 52, 57.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* 27.1 (Shore, 103-4, modified).

The intensity of this struggle, as he puts it a few chapters later, can be readily appreciated when one remembers how sexual passion is dealt with by the married and the celibate. In the case of the married, "if at times the flames of passion struggle in them to reach a climax, sexual intercourse follows and swiftly represses it." For the virgin, however, she has

no remedy to extinguish the fire. She sees it rising to a crescendo and coming to a peak, but she lacks the power to put it out. Her only chance is to fight the fire so that she is not burnt. Is there, then, anything more extraordinary than carrying within one all of this fire and not being burnt?<sup>91</sup>

Generally speaking, the elaborate descriptions that Chrysostom uses in his first *ekphrasis* of the virgin's struggle with her sexual desires can well be applied to the description of the virgin's struggle with every foreseeable passion. Through this rhetorical move then, Chrysostom is most probably recasting virginity as a summarizing symbol and focal point for Christian *askēsis* in general and thus confirms for us its unique importance as a symbol of the eschatological life.

These three fold conceptions of virginity as a mark of the eschatological life, a summarizing symbol of *apatheia* and possessing an instrumental value would find their fullest expressions in the biblical exemplars of Elijah, Elisha, John the Baptist and Abraham, whom Chrysostom introduces in the concluding sections of his treatise. With regard to the first three, Chrysostom declares that these "genuine lovers of virginity" do not differ from the angels at all "except in so far as they had been bound to a mortal nature"

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 34.4 (Shore, 116-7).

and still “inhabited the earth.”<sup>92</sup> For Chrysostom, this is due entirely to the instrumental function of virginity:

if they had wives and children, they would not have lived in the desert so easily or despised houses and the other conveniences of life. As it was, released from all these ties, they passed their lives on earth as if they were in heaven.

In his *ekphrasis* of the prophets’ angelic life that follows, what we have is an ingenious recasting of the prophets’ stories in terms of his paradigm of Adam’s life in Paradise.

They had heaven for a ceiling , the ground for a bed, the desert for a table. And the very thing that seems to others to be the cause for hunger, the barrenness of the desert, was for those holy men a place of plenty. They had no need for vines or wine-vats or cornfields or harvests. Plentiful and sweet drink was supplied them from streams. [...] An angel laid out for one of them a wondrous and fabulous table grander than men are accustomed to. [...] The grace of the Spirit often nourished another of them who performed miracles, and not only him but others through him. And John, who was more than a prophet. [...] required no human nourishment. Neither food nor wine nor olive oil sustained his physical being, but grasshoppers and wild honey did.<sup>93</sup>

The Edenic themes of dependence upon divine providence and the enjoyment of the pleasures that this providence offers are unmistakably clear in this *ekphrasis*. Like the Adamic portraits, this vivid picture of the prophets’ angelic life is also iconic, in that it is aimed at evoking the imagination of Chrysostom’s virgin readers and stirring in them a sense of awe, so that they too may be inspired to persevere in their ascetic vocation. Besides, the *ekphrasis* also enables Chrysostom to draw attention to another important aspect of his view of virginity, namely, virginity as the promotion of “decorum and

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 79.1 (Shore, 211).

<sup>93</sup> To be sure, Chrysostom’s ascetic re-enactment of the prophets’ stories does not cohere entirely with the biblical account of these prophets. This is especially the case for Elisha, who most likely conducted his prophetic ministry among the Israelites in the city (2 Kgs. 5:9). Ibid. 79.1-2 (Shore, 211-12).

devotion” – a clear allusion to 1 Corinthians 7:35. As a reference to the prophets, “decorum and devotion,” explains Chrysostom, should be taken to mean that

everything was superfluous to them, not only what truly is more sufficient, such as luxury, riches, power, reputation and all the other objects of our dreams, but also what is ostensibly essential such as houses, cities and crafts.<sup>94</sup>

By interpreting “decorum and devotion” as not merely non-attachment to the world, but also to regard necessities as superfluous or redundant, it would seem that Chrysostom has gone beyond the apostle’s injunction in 1 Corinthians 7:25-34 here.<sup>95</sup> Yet, as a message to his implied reader, namely, the virgins, this is perfectly understandable and, indeed, even appropriate, since it aptly affirms their ascetic vocation and all that is entailed with it, that is, their forsaking of luxuries and necessities for the sake of *apatheia*. Furthermore, this equation of “decorum and devotion” to *apatheia* in general also allows Chrysostom to nuance his view of virginity. “The virtue of virginity,” explains Chrysostom, lies not merely in one’s ability to “prevail over raging lust and curb a frenzied nature.” As a matter of fact, “virginity is weak and insufficient to save those possessing it.” What is more important about the celibate life is the practice of “decorum and devotion,” that is, *apatheia*. Indeed “if you take away ‘decorum and devotion,’” that is, a life of *apatheia*, “you cut out the very heart of virginity.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid. 80.1 (Shore, 213).

<sup>95</sup> In 1 Corinthians 7:25-34, we have Paul exhorting both the married and celibate to lead a life that is unattached to the world. “Let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7.29-31, NRSV).

<sup>96</sup> *virg.* 80.1-2.

This brings us back to our earlier question on whether Chrysostom regards virginity as merely an instrumental good or a good in itself. As we have demonstrated by now, virginity plays two instrumental roles in the life of the virgin. The first is its ability to release the virgin from the obligations of married and civic life, which, in turn, grants her the freedom to pursue a life of *apatheia*. As for the second, it is celibacy's potential for cultivating the virgin's ability to overcome her passions in general through the training that she receives from her struggles with her sexual desires, such as learning how to rely on God's aid.<sup>97</sup> This second function is clearly what Chrysostom has in mind in his conception of "decorum and devotion" as *apatheia* above. If the virgin's struggle with her sexual desires does not yield any benefits in terms of her ascetic ability and reliance on God in general, it would bring her no closer to the life of *apatheia*, or indeed, the angelic life.

With regard to whether virginity is a good in itself, the question can be approached on two levels. As a predicate of the eschatological angelic life, celibacy is clearly a *necessary* good in itself and therefore a valid sociological symbol of a Christian's participation in this heavenly life in the here and now. Having said this, virginity alone is an *insufficient* representation of the angelic life. As Chrysostom puts it, if the "heart of virginity," or *apatheia*, is cut out from the virgin's life, the value of celibacy would cease immediately. This being the case, virginity, as a proper symbol of the *eschaton*, is meaningful only to the extent that it summarizes within itself all the aspects of the angelic life, that is, *apatheia*.

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<sup>97</sup> This ascetic principle is corroborated by Chrysostom's discussion of fasting in his *Homily 10 on Genesis*. Here, fasting is regarded as a means by which God heals human indulgence. *hom. in Gen.* 10.2.

Having grasped these multi-faceted aspects of virginity's nature and symbolism, we are now poised to examine the last major ascetic narrative in the treatise, that is, Chrysostom's portrayal of Abraham. As in the case of the three prophets above, Chrysostom's Abraham is, essentially, a virgin-like figure.

Abraham, though married was eager to achieve the virtues of virginity, by which I mean 'decorum and devotion'. [...] More than those practising poverty, he spurned wealth and possessions even with a wife, and he triumphed over pleasure more than those observing virginity. For they burn with sexual desires each day but he had so extinguished this flame and had been so free of any passionate inclination that he not only abstained from having a concubine but also banned her from his house to remove every reason for quarrelling and discord. It is not easy to find such behaviour today.<sup>98</sup>

As a start, it is hard to deny that this Abrahamic portrait borders on the implausible, especially when we take into account the entire Genesis story of the patriarch.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, it is also an obvious attempt to asceticize Abraham or to render him according to the expectations of fourth century monastic ideals. Having said this, more is involved here than simply a reconception of Abraham as another exemplary figure for the present day Christian ascetic.<sup>100</sup> Once we bring to bear the significance of virginity as a summarizing symbol of "decorum and devotion" and the angelic life in general, it should be obvious that Chrysostom is effectively Christianizing the figure of Abraham here by applying to the patriarch what he understands to be the unique symbols of the angelic life:

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 82.3-4 (Shore, 216-17).

<sup>99</sup> For instance, the book of Genesis, generally speaking, does not present Abraham as a figure who spurns wealth and possessions. Rather, wealth and riches are often presented in this account as indications of God's favour towards Abraham and his descendants. Moreover, there is also little evidence for Abraham living a quasi-celibate life. Instead, what we are told is that Abraham, even as an old man, married a second wife after Sarah's death, and begot several children through her (Gen. 25.1-4), a deed which hardly reflects well on Chrysostom's ascetic Abraham.

<sup>100</sup> Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 156.

celibacy and *apatheia*. For it is only when Abraham is reconceived as a proto-Christian, or more accurately, as an archetype of the eschatological angelic life, that he can become, for Chrysostom's readers, a valid and relevant *Christian* exemplar.

*Adhortationes ad Theodorum Lapsam*

Thus far, our analysis has demonstrated that Chrysostom's ascetic portraits generally conform to a paradigm that is well-exemplified by his portrayal of the Edenic Adam in his Genesis homilies. This Adamic paradigm, as we have also seen, does not only reinforce the unique attributes of Chrysostom's Christology and soteriology, with their emphases on the role of the *sōma* in human salvation, but more importantly, also establishes for us the main contours of Chrysostom's vision for the eschatological Christian. Within this ethical framework, virginity, as it turns out, is a very important symbol of a Christian's participation in the *eschaton*.

With regard to the origins of this ascetic paradigm, its earliest notions are most certainly those presented in the two letters (368-372) that Chrysostom wrote to his fellow ascetic and future bishop of Mopsuestia, Theodore (c.350-428).<sup>101</sup> For our purposes, what is interesting about these letters is the fact that they reveal to us three further insights into Chrysostom's monastic ideals, two of which are less often emphasized in his ascetic portraits elsewhere.

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<sup>101</sup> Scholars generally agree that the two letters constituting the *adhortationes* were both addressed to Theodore. Internal evidence for an early dating of the treatise is based on the rationale that Chrysostom could not plausibly persuade Theodore to return to the *asketerion* if he himself had left it, which was what he did later on. For this reason, the two letters are dated to 368-372, when he was still practising a monastic lifestyle. Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 18; Quasten, 463.

Theodore, it seems, had changed his mind about his ascetic vow and returned to the world instead. In fact, he was even contemplating marriage with a certain Hermione, with whom he had fallen in love.<sup>102</sup> Hence, when Chrysostom composed his *adhortationes*, he had two clear objectives in mind. The first was to convince Theodore not to continue with this worldly life, especially with his plans to marry Hermione, since the latter not only violates his vow of celibacy, but is also tantamount to adultery against Theodore's heavenly Bridegroom, Christ.<sup>103</sup> The second and more important objective was to persuade Theodore to repent of his lapse and return to his former ascetic lifestyle.

To substantiate his appeal, Chrysostom begins, first of all, by highlighting the immense "loving-kindness" (φιλανθρωπία) of God, and reminding Theodore that this is always available for the sinner who repents sincerely and desires to return towards the path of virtue, even if he is the most depraved of all humanity.<sup>104</sup> "If we so order our conscience as to hate our former wickedness, and choose the contrary path with as much energy as God desires and commands," assures Chrysostom, "we shall not have anything less on account of the short space of time." The corollary here is, of course, "to have fallen is not a grievous thing, but to remain prostrate after falling, and not to get up again."<sup>105</sup>

The rest of the treatise is then devoted to the demonstration of this point. Among the arguments that he summons are three ascetic portraits, which shed much light upon his ascetical ideals at this stage of his life. The first is his portrayal of the monastic life,

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<sup>102</sup> *Thdr.* 1.4-6, 14.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 2.3 (NPNF I.9, 113-4).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* 1.4; 1.6.22.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.* 1.6 (NPNF I.9, 95)

which is presented as a *synkrisis* with the worldly life. After denouncing the worldly life as perishable and futile, Chrysostom goes on to praise the blessedness of the ascetic lifestyle.

Pain and sorrow and sighing [...] have fled away [...] It is not possible there to fear poverty and disease: it is not possible to see any one injuring, or being injured, provoking, or being provoked, or angry, or envious, or burning with any outrageous lust, or anxious concerning the supply of the necessaries of life, or bemoaning himself over the loss of some dignity and power: for all the tempest of passion in us is quelled and brought to nought.<sup>106</sup>

When this happens, “all will be (ἔσται) in a condition of peace, and gladness and joy, all things serene and tranquil, all will be daylight and brightness, and light.” “Greater than all these things is the perpetual enjoyment of intercourse with Christ in the company of angels, and archangels, and the higher powers,” along with participation in the “the transfiguration of the whole creation” that is to come, with all its brilliance, beauty and incorruptibility.<sup>107</sup>

Like his Adamic paradigm, the present portrait clearly stresses the absence of passion as a defining characteristic of the ideal ascetic lifestyle. What is unclear, however, is whether Chrysostom has, by now, perceived asceticism in terms of his mature Christology and soteriology, with its emphasis on the salvific significance of the body. Notwithstanding this, the present ascetic portrait is unique in terms of its clear eschatological focus. This is evident in Chrysostom’s gradual shift from an initial account of the ideal ascetic morality to a description of the ascetic as dwelling in the splendour of heavenly light and tranquillity, communing with Christ and the angels, and participating

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. 1.11 (NPNF I.9, 99-100).

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 1.11.21; 25-34.

in a future transfiguration and incorruption.<sup>108</sup> Undoubtedly, what Chrysostom has in mind here is the post-resurrection bliss that would be enjoyed by the Christian ascetic – a fact that is confirmed by his use of the future tense, ἔσται, in his discussion of “the transfiguration of the whole creation.”<sup>109</sup> Nevertheless, the ease with which Chrysostom’s presentation moves from the ascetic’s *apatheia* to him being bathed in a heavenly glory and later to his participation in a heavenly communion with Christ and His angels, strongly suggests that, for Chrysostom, some aspects of this eschatological vision are already realizable in the present lives of the ascetics.

Such a conception of the monk as realizing the angelic life in the present life is, of course, not unique to Chrysostom. A similar emphasis can also be found among the Cappadocian Fathers, whose teachings, as we have argued in Chapter 3, play a formative role in Chrysostom’s theology.<sup>110</sup> As we shall see, Chrysostom will continue to allude to this narrative motif or use it explicitly in his writings elsewhere, though less often than the motifs found in his Adamic paradigm.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, as is the case with his Pauline

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. 1.11.12-14, 21.

<sup>109</sup> This is also evidenced in Chrysostom’s use of the future tense, ἐπιδείξεταί, to speak of the future beauty and incorruptibility of the transfigured creation (1.11.34). Ibid. 1.11.25-30.

<sup>110</sup> In his *De Spiritu Sancto*, Basil similarly speaks of the Christian who has been illuminated by the Spirit as having “foreknowledge of the future, understanding of the mysteries, [...] the heavenly citizenship, [and] a place in the chorus of angels.” In his *Oration 4*, Gregory of Nazianzus likewise declares that Christian ascetics are those “to whom belongs the fountain of light and who enjoy even now its radiance; to whom belong the angelic psalmodies [...] and the departure of the intellect to God.” *De Sp. S.* 9.23; *Or.* 4.71.

<sup>111</sup> His *De Virginitate*’s portrayal of the three prophets, with its emphasis on the angelic provision of food to Elijah, clearly alludes to this motif. A more explicit reference to it, however, can be found in his *Homily 69 on Matthew. hom. in Matt.* 69.4.

portraits, this motif of realized eschatology will become for Chrysostom an important means of articulating a Christian's recapitulation of Christ's victory in his very life.

With regard to the second ascetic portrait, it is presented towards the end of the first letter as a cycle of three stories. Here, we encounter three separate ascetics who, after departing from their ascetic lifestyle, were to later repent and attain a more excellent life subsequently.<sup>112</sup> The first ascetic is a young Phoenician who, after abandoning his rich inheritance, had embraced a life of asceticism in the mountains. Thereafter, he exhibited so much philosophy and virtue that he was even counted worthy of initiation into the sacred mysteries.<sup>113</sup> Later on, the young man was dragged back to his luxurious lifestyle by his guardians. Certain holy men, however, did not give up on him but continued to keep watch over and meet up with him. Ultimately, the lad was not only convinced to return to his "former solitude and philosophy" but was to attain an even higher level of virtue.<sup>114</sup>

The second story follows a similar narrative structure. This time, the main character is an aged ascetic, who had already endured "great toils during his sojourn in the deserts, with only a single companion," and was "leading an angelic life." He too fell into lust and eventually visited a brothel. When he emerged, however, he found his companion receiving him warmly and exhorting him to return to his ascetic life. Shamed by this "great clemency," the old man returned to the mountain

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 1.17.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 1.18.14-26 (NPNF I.9, 107-8).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 1.18.63-71 (NPNF I.9, 108, modified).

immediately and shut himself in a hut continually “with fasting and prayers and tears, wiping off from his soul the defilement of his sin.” Later, when requested by others to intervene for a drought, the monk discovered, to his surprise, that his prayers were efficacious for ending the drought. The third narrative is the traditional story of how a disciple of the apostle John had lapsed and became a robber chief for a long time, only to be won back by his master’s love.<sup>115</sup> Like the previous two characters, the disciple also returned to his former condition.<sup>116</sup>

By starting with the Phoenician ascetic and ending with apostle John’s disciple, Chrysostom is clearly abiding by the principles of *paradeigmata* rhetoric here, where the recent and, therefore, more plausible example is first summoned to reinforce his argument, before examples from a more distant past are appealed to. The argument to be made here is simply this: just as the *philanthrōpia* of God and the love of fellow Christians have enabled the three ascetics to repent and, later on, attain a higher level of virtue, so also is the same divine *philanthrōpia* always available to restore Theodore to greater spiritual heights, as long as he heeds Chrysostom’s advice to repent from his lapse.<sup>117</sup>

These two themes of Christian repentance and divine *philanthrōpia* are reinforced in the beginning of the second letter, where Chrysostom narrates the story

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<sup>115</sup> This story is first found in Clement of Alexandria’s *Who is the Rich Man that is Saved* and later re-told by Eusebius in his *historia ecclesiastica* 3.23.

<sup>116</sup> *Thdr.* 1.19 (NPNF I.9, 119-120).

<sup>117</sup> Of the three stories, the one that best illustrates the efficacy of God’s *philanthrōpia* and restoration is probably the second, where the monk discovers that he was not only forgiven but has become, once again, an agent of God’s power. Thus, on this occasion, the miracle motif is recast as a sign of divine *philanthrōpia* and forgiveness.

of David's repentance. In this third and final ascetic portrait, the Psalmist is clearly presented as an exemplar of repentance, who, having repented from his adultery and murder, "immediately hastened to the physician, and applied the remedies, fasting, tears, lamentation, constant prayer, frequent confession of sin; and so by these means he propitiated God." Indeed, the efficacy of David's repentance was so great that even "after adultery and murder, the memory of the father was able to shield the idolatry of [his] son," Solomon.<sup>118</sup> Like the previous cycle of stories, the point to be made here is not the efficacy of David's repentance *per se*, but what it demonstrates to all repenting sinners, namely, God's positive response to the sinner, whether it is towards the sinner's prayers or children, is sure evidence of His promised forgiveness and *philanthrōpia*.

To summarize, the *adhortationes* clearly suggest that Chrysostom, from the beginning of his ascetic journey, was already convinced of the possibility of realizing the angelic life, at least to some degree, in the present life. This belief, as we have already pointed out, may well be due to the influence of the Cappadocian Fathers. Interestingly, even though Chrysostom was to maintain this conviction in his later years, he would differ from Gregory of Nazianzus by reinterpreting the motif in terms of his own Christology and deification ideals, with their somatic emphasis.

With regard to the latter two ascetic portraits discussed above, they clearly draw attention to two aspects of Chrysostom's monastic ideals that are, generally speaking, less emphasized in his ascetic portraits elsewhere, namely, the monk as a

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid. 2.2 (NPNF I.9, 112).

model of repentance and one who restores sinners lovingly.<sup>119</sup> The life of a monk, as Chrysostom recognizes, is never simply a story of ascetic triumph over the human passions and the enjoyment of divine bliss. In reality, it is often plagued by spiritual dangers and moral lapses, such as that of Theodore or those described in the stories above. Consequently, an attitude of repentance and willingness to restore fellow monks must always be close at hand, in order for every monk to successfully complete his ascetic journey to heaven. More importantly, it is in the midst of this willing repentance and loving restoration that the monk also becomes for his readers an icon for God's *philanthrōpia* for humankind.

#### *Homilies on Matthew*

Having considered the different ways in which the Christian ascetic embodies Chrysostom's ethical ideals, or his vision of the eschatological Christian, we return to the question that we asked earlier, namely, how does Chrysostom assist the laity's appropriation of the monastic exemplar? To answer this question, we turn now to Chrysostom's ascetic portraits, as given in his *Homilies on Matthew*.

On the whole, the ascetic figures depicted in these ninety homilies are very similar to those we have discussed thus far. *Homily 1*, for example, speaks of the monks as those who live "in the summits of the mountains" and esteemed as "choirs of angels shining

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<sup>119</sup> Among the ascetic portraits discussed, the only account that explicitly mentions Christian repentance is *Comparatio 4*.

forth in a human body, and the way of life of heaven manifested here on earth.”<sup>120</sup> In *Homily 2*, we are reminded again that these ascetics are also fervent readers of Scriptures.<sup>121</sup> Later, in *Homily 55*, the monks and virgins are praised as “citizens of heaven” who engage constantly in the singing of hymns and psalms, tearful compunction, self-denial and the “overcoming [of] the weakness of their nature by the abundance of their zeal.”<sup>122</sup> In *Homilies 68* and *72*, as we mentioned earlier, the monks are even regarded as Christians who have recapitulated Adam’s idyllic life in Paradise.

Often, the ascetic exemplar, as portrayed in these Matthean homilies, is held up by Chrysostom as an exemplar of particular Christian *aretai*. *Homily 72*, for example, draws attention to the fact that many of the monks were formerly “illustrious from their rank in the world” or even people with great wealth. Nevertheless, they forsook these worldly riches and chose, instead, to serve one another, without regard for their former status or wealth. As such, they exemplify, in a concrete manner, the virtue of humility.<sup>123</sup> More frequently, however, the monk is conceived by Chrysostom as an iconic figure, who embodies, in his very life, the eschatological hopes of the Christian. This is well illustrated in *Homily 69*, where Chrysostom employs the *ekphrasis* to describe the monks living in the nearby Syrian mountains.

“Let us go away,” invites Chrysostom, “to the tents of those men.” There, we see that nothing in their dwellings is inferior to the heavens. Indeed, both the angels and the

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<sup>120</sup> *hom. In Matt.* 1.12 (NPNF I.10, 5).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* 2.9-10 (NPNF I.10, 13).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.* 55.8 (NPNF I.10, 344).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* 72.3 (NPNF I.10, 438).

Lord of the angels lodge with them. These, continues Chrysostom, are men who have been “delivered from the body, and in the flesh disregarding the flesh,” being “pure from all covetousness, and full of self-denial.”<sup>124</sup>

If any time they should be minded to feast more sumptuously, their sumptuousness consists of fruits, and greater is the pleasure there than at royal tables. There is no fear there, or trembling; no ruler accuses, no wife provokes, no child casts into sadness, no disorderly mirth dissipates, no multitude of flatterers puffs up; but the table is an angel’s table free from all such turmoil.

And for a couch they have grass only beneath them, like as Christ did when making a dinner in the wilderness. And many of them do this, not being even under shelter, but for a roof they have heaven, and the moon instead of the light of a candle, not wanting oil, nor one to attend to it; on them alone does it shine worthily from on high.<sup>125</sup>

Among the monks, adds Chrysostom, there is no distinction between master and slave.

“All are slaves, all are free men.” Moreover,

They have no occasion to be in sadness when evening has overtaken them, [...] they have no occasion after their supper to be careful about robbers, [...] neither to dread the other ills. [...] And their conversation again is full of the same calm. [...] [They speak] always about the things to come and seek wisdom; and [...] as though they had migrated unto heaven itself, as living there, even so all their conversation is about the things there.<sup>126</sup>

What we have here then is an idealized picture of the monastic lifestyle, where, in the company of angels, the monks enjoy much pleasure, despite the simplicity of their lives, and where the malice, social rivalry and worries that usually accompany life in the *polis* are entirely absent. Clearly, this *ekphrasis* is iconic in the sense that it particularizes, in the imagination of his listeners, the idyllic heavenly life that every Christian is meant to attain. Chrysostom, however, takes the *ekphrasis* further by recasting it immediately as a

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 69.4.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid. 49.4 (NPNF I.10: 424–25).

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. 69.4 (NPNF I.10, 425).

*synkrisis* between the monks and his listeners. Compared to these angelic men, his audience are 'worse than the brutes', since much of their time is spent in covetousness and the pursuit of things superfluous to their lives.<sup>127</sup> In other words, the iconic function of the monk here is primarily cathartic, in that, it deconstructs or, indeed, purifies the laity of their spiritual delusions, so that they may be awakened, on the one hand, to repentance from their spiritual lethargy and indulgence, and on the other to a deeper desire to imitate the monks' angelic virtues and lifestyle.<sup>128</sup>

### *Comparatio and Adversus Oppugnatores*

When we turn to Chrysostom's monastic apologies, that is, his *Comparatio regis et monachi* and *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monastic*, a similar view of the monk as the embodiment of Chrysostom's eschatological ideals is also clearly present. Yet as we shall see, these rhetorical defences of the emerging monastic movement in Syrian Antioch would also become, for Chrysostom, some of his earliest articulations of his vision for Christian leadership.

Taken usually as the earlier of the two works, the *Comparatio* deploys the rhetorical genre of the *synkrisis* to exalt the monastic vocation by comparing it favourably to that of a king.<sup>129</sup> Like *De Virginitate*, Chrysostom begins his treatise by appropriating the Platonic

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> A similar cathartic effect is observed in *Homily 68.4*, where Chrysostom compares the monastic lifestyle with the theatres and concludes that while the latter yields nothing but temptations and sins, the sight of the former is efficacious in transforming the heart of a lay person and making him a more sober, meek and gentle person to his family. Ibid. 68.4 (NPNF I.10, 419).

<sup>129</sup> The dating of the *Comparatio* is contestable with some scholars putting it at 363-371, while others preferring a later date of 378-379. Scholars, however, generally agree that the *Adversus*

distinction between external goods and those “which are by nature beneficial and truly good.” On this basis, he relegates the vocation of a king to the former while exalts “the life of philosophers and of those who have chosen the solitary way of life” as the latter.<sup>130</sup> How he goes about justifying his case, however, is through an innovative adaptation of the literary motifs used traditionally to characterize the monastic vocation. Instead of demarcating the solitary life of the monk, these narrative devices have now become, for Chrysostom, a way of highlighting the strengths of Christian asceticism and, more importantly, a means of articulating the rudiments of a new concept of leadership.

Chrysostom commences by drawing attention to the primary objective of monasticism, which is to cultivate the fear of God and a proper use of reason (λογισμός) so that a monk is able to gain mastery over his passions, as anger, envy and pleasure, and to “command all things under the law.” As he sees it, these same traits also make for a better leader and a monk endowed with these virtues is definitely more suitable than a king to rule over cities and men.<sup>131</sup>

A similar approach is observed in how he uses the stereotypical motifs of the monk’s battle with the demons and reading of Scriptures. Seen from Chrysostom’s apologetic perspective, the monk’s spiritual battle has become a compelling evidence for his superiority, since the monk’s battle is for the sake of a greater cause (God’s) and

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*oppugnatores*, with its stylistic sophistication, is a later work than the *Comparatio*, and that both works were composed during the period of Chrysostom’s deaconship. See Hunter’s introduction in John Chrysostom, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/ against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, trans. David G. Hunter, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 17, 25-29, 38-41.

<sup>130</sup> *comp.* 1 (PG 47.387.10-11, 21-23; Hunter, 69).

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* 1-2 (PG 47.388.25; 47.388.36).

assisted by greater powers, namely, “divine help” and the “heavenly arms.”<sup>132</sup>

Furthermore, his foes are no longer mere flesh and blood but the very demons themselves.<sup>133</sup> As for the motif of Scripture reading, its present significance, for

Chrysostom, is not so much so a reflection of the monk’s grasp of divine knowledge.

Instead, it now brings into relief the role models that the monk associates himself with and presumably imitates, namely, the exemplary characters of the Scriptures.<sup>134</sup>

The same can be said for the monk’s angelic life. Not unlike the Edenic Adam and virgin prophets that we discussed earlier, the monk is also presented here as one who engages in an intimate fellowship with God and the angels, and is moderate in his appetites for food and sleep, so much so that he can enjoy his “drinking water with greater pleasure than others drink marvellous wine.” Such an angelic life serves only to contrast the inferior character of the king, whose nocturnal habits consists, more often than not, in indulgence, debauchery and ill companionship.<sup>135</sup>

Against those who argue that a king is equally capable of monastic philosophy, Chrysostom argues that the king, practically speaking, is always a huge burden to his people, since he can trouble them by simply dwelling in the city, waging war from it or

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<sup>132</sup> The word ὁσπηζ, which is translated as “help” here, essentially refers to God’s intervention during critical moments by ‘tipping the scales’ for the monk. As mentioned in Chapter 1’s discussion of *Homily 5 on Ephesians*, the same word is used to describe the Spirit’s aid for the soul’s battle against its passions (See Chapter 1, pp. 56-57). *hom. in Eph. 5* (PG 62.41.11-12).

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* 2 (PG 47.389.9-11).

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* 2 (Hunter, 71-72).

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.* 3 (Hunter 72-73).

imposing taxes that privilege the rich while despoiling the poor.<sup>136</sup> This, however, is not the case for a monk. Whenever he appears in the *polis*, the monk benefits both the rich and the poor, by “freeing the former from sins through a good warning, [while] relieving the latter's poverty.” Endowed by “the grace of the Spirit,” the monk’s prayers also “set free souls who are tyrannized by demons.”<sup>137</sup> Moreover, if one should see a monk “walking alone, meek and humble and tranquil and gentle,” he would also gain much by imitating his philosophy and justice.<sup>138</sup> In other words, the monk is set up here as not only a mediator of divine power, but essentially an icon of divine presence and rule, and a stark contrast to the rule and presence of the earthly king. Unlike the king who becomes only a burden for the *polis*, what the monk offers is sheer benefit to the people.

Should both a monk and a king ever fall, the former, declares Chrysostom, would remain the better of the two, since he can erase his sins “through prayer and tears and grief and care for the poor,” and, therefore, “will have his salvation immediately consequent upon his own will, zeal and conversion of heart.”<sup>139</sup> Moreover, when it is time for both to die, the monk, with his despise for wealth, pleasure and luxury, would “bear more easily the departure.” Indeed, if the monk should die for the sake of piety, his death becomes even more efficacious since it will motivate his admirers to imitate his virtues.

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<sup>136</sup> The allusion to Emperor Julian’s stay in Antioch is unmistakable here. During the course of his short reign and war with the Persians, Julian lived in Antioch for more than a year and proved to be more than a resource drain for the Antiochenes. J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 3-4.

<sup>137</sup> *comp.* 3

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* 4 (Hunter, 76).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* 4 (PG 47.391.41-42; Hunter, 75).

The same cannot be said for the king, who must necessarily depend on the aid of others for his restoration and face his death with perpetual fear.<sup>140</sup>

Chrysostom's *Comparatio*, as Hunter demonstrates, is clearly composed to refute Libanius's claims that a pagan education is essential for the cultivation of character and leadership, as shown in Socrates or, more recently, in the Emperor Julian.<sup>141</sup> The way Chrysostom rejects the claims of his former teacher is to take the traditional traits associated with the solitary monk, such as his ascetic cultivation of virtues and his role as a mediator between God and men, and to reconceive them as the characteristics of a figure that is more familiar to Greco-Roman society, namely, the philosopher-king, who is both the archetype and superior of the ordinary king. On its own, the *Comparatio's* conception of the monk as a philosopher-king might well be taken as simply the result of apologetic exigency. However, once we take into account the ideals of the *asketerion* where Chrysostom first received his training, it would be evident that this cannot be the case.

Led by Diodore and Carterius, the Antiochene *asketerion* was characterized by a moderate ascetic regime, the study of Scriptures and its intimate links with the Church.<sup>142</sup> The latter feature is not only attested by Diodore's influential status in the Antiochene Church – the ascetic was a close advisor to bishop Meletius, a staunch advocate for Nicene orthodoxy and a subsequent bishop of Tarsus, but also the number of bishops that the *asketerion* was to produce in the future, such as Chrysostom, Theodore, Maximus and

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid. 4 (Hunter, 75-76).

<sup>141</sup> See Hunter's Introduction in John Chrysostom, *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/ against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, trans. David G. Hunter, *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, vol. 13 (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen 1988), 26-28.

<sup>142</sup> Socrates, *hist.* 6.3; Sozomen *hist.* 8.2.

Basil.<sup>143</sup> In all likelihood, the *asketerion* was probably the model or indeed modeled after a parallel form of Syriac asceticism known as the *bnay qyama* or “sons of the covenant.” Like the *bnay qyama*, the Antiochene ascetics were “expected to assist the clergy in liturgical, administrative and pastoral functions,” and constitute “a pool to which local bishops readily turned when they needed new clergy for their churches.”<sup>144</sup>

For Chrysostom, the formative influence of this *asketerion* upon his future ministry cannot be understated. This is evident, first of all, in the similar exegetical approach that he presumably learnt from Diodore and shared with his fellow student, Theodore, which tends to stress a literal interpretation of Scriptures and avoids the allegorical excesses of many Alexandrians.<sup>145</sup> The same, I believe, is to be said about his understanding of the relationship between the ascetic communities and the Church, namely, the ascetics are uniquely poised to provide both ecclesiastical and spiritual leadership to the Church.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Stephen K. Black, “Paideia, Power and Episcopacy: John Chrysostom and the Formation of the Late Antique Bishop” (Ph.D., Graduate Theological Union, 2005), 48-50.

<sup>144</sup> The *asketerion*'s intimate links with the Church is by no means unique in the Roman Empire. Similar ascetic communities also exist in Caesarea and Sebaste, led by Basil and his mentor, Eustathius, respectively. Brock, *Luminous Eye*, 134-135; Augustine Holmes, *A Life Pleasing to God: The Spirituality of the Rules of St Basil* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2000), 28-39; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 18-20.

<sup>145</sup> Bradley Louis Nassif, “Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis” (Ph.D., Fordham University, 1991), 54-62.

<sup>146</sup> With regard to how Chrysostom conceives the relationship between the ascetics and the Church, there are three dominant hypotheses. The first is what I call the Disillusionment hypothesis. Furthered by Meyer, Hartney and others, this theory posits Chrysostom as an ascetic enthusiast, who began his priestly ministry by advocating monasticism as the ideal way of life for *all* Christians. Over the years, however, he was to compromise these ascetic ideals in face of an indulgent lay congregation. The second and complementary hypothesis is that of Chrysostom the inept bishop. Accordingly, Chrysostom is regarded as a priest whose ascetic enthusiasm made him politically naïve, harsh in his treatment with his fellow clergymen and laity, and ultimately a less than suitable candidate for ecclesiastical leadership. A more moderate version of these theories is to be found in Hunter, who suggests that Chrysostom was, after all, a realist in his expectations for

Seen from this perspective then, the *Comparatio* cannot simply be a polemical tract against pagan critics but should be recognized also as one of Chrysostom's earliest articulations of his vision for Christian leadership.<sup>147</sup> This will be made clear when we examine his ascetic portraits in his *Adversus Oppugnatores*.

The *Adversus Oppugnatores* is divided into three books, the first of which is a general defence of monasticism against its critics, including those who "pretend to be pious and call themselves Christians," while the second and third are aimed at the concerns of the hypothetical pagan and Christian parent respectively. In Book I, the overarching assumption is clearly the instrumental value of monasticism for cultivating virtue in a Christian. Since the advent of Constantine, says Chrysostom, life in the cities and especially the churches has deteriorated greatly. "A wicked demon," he laments,

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the monk. Chrysostom, says, Hunter, "was aware of the limitations of monastic life, particularly the failure of monks to undertake an active ministry in the church." Nonetheless, he maintained that "the monastic life while deficient to some degree in its value for the entire Christian community, still represented a viable, and indeed exemplary path towards virtue." The first two theories have been challenged in recent years. Mayer, for example, has drawn attention to the similarities between Chrysostom's patronage relationships in both Antioch and Constantinople and concludes that he was probably groomed by Flavian to be the future bishop of Antioch in the first place. Hence, he was more than ready for his role as Bishop of Constantinople. In his *Paideia, Power and Episcopacy*, Black further argues that Chrysostom was actually working out an alternative model of Christian life and ecclesiastical leadership, one where the Christian life is regarded as a philosophical-ascetic life to be practised by *all* Christians and that the bishop is to be understood as the philosopher master and spiritual guide for these Christians. It is inevitable that such a model will come into conflict with other competing models of ecclesiastical leadership in the same period but this should not be taken as a sign of Chrysostom's naiveté. Black, 5-13, 221-25; Hartney, *John Chrysostom and the Transformation of the City*, 29-32; David G. Hunter, "The Young Chrysostom and Monasticism," in *A Comparison between a King and a Monk/ against the Opponents of the Monastic Life*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1988), 17, 38-41; Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 115-27; Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops*, 166; Wendy Mayer, "Patronage, Pastoral Care and the Role of the Bishop at Antioch," *VC* 55 (2001): 62-69; Meyer, *Saint John Chrysostome*, 186-206.

<sup>147</sup> Black, 61, 193.

has seized the entire world like a savage tyrant and with his entire phalanx has invaded human souls. From there, [...] each day he sends forth his polluted and accursed commands to all, not only tearing apart marriages, [...] but also much worse deeds than these. He snatches souls which were once betrothed to God away from their union with Him and hands them over to his impure minions, forcing them to share in wicked intercourse.<sup>148</sup>

Consequently, those who seek to cultivate a virtuous life have no recourse but to retreat into the refuge of the wilderness. Yet, as Chrysostom understands it, such a retreat to the solitary life is intended only as a means to an end. Indeed, what he wishes and prays for is that, one day, the city “would enjoy such peace and freedom from the tyranny of these evils that not only would the city dwellers have no need to flee to the mountains, but also that those who inhabit the mountains, like fugitives returning from a long exile, would return to their native cities.” Unfortunately, since such a day has not yet arrived, one must refrain from calling the monks back, lest they lapse and “fall from philosophy and tranquillity.”<sup>149</sup>

Book II is addressed to the hypothetical pagan parent, who is tormented by the fact that his son has become a monk and has gone on to:

put on a rough cloak, flee to the mountains, and there to plant and irrigate and carry water and do all the other things which monks do which appear to be both low and shameful. [...] he also goes barefoot and sleeps on the ground, and that this beautiful young man becomes thin and pale.<sup>150</sup>

Despite his apparent poverty, argues Chrysostom, this young monk is actually richer than the wealthy. Aided by divine grace, the monk experiences *apatheia* and is endowed with the wealth of virtues. Living in the wilderness, he also enjoys “the pure air

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<sup>148</sup> *Oppug.* 1.7 (Hunter, 90-91).

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* 1.8 (Hunter, 92).

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* 2.2 (Hunter, 97).

and healthy streams and flowers and groves and pure, sweet smells” and thus develops a healthy and vigorous body which, in turn, enables him to enjoy “superior pleasure as well.”

<sup>151</sup> Such pleasure, adds Chrysostom,

keeps the soul completely free of disturbance; it produces no tumult or confusion, but rather a kind of happiness, pure, chaste, honorable, endless, and much more powerful and robust than the pleasure which you [the pagan parent] have. [...] even if someone could inflict a thousand deaths, he would not persuade us to despise this pleasure, but we would laugh all the more.<sup>152</sup>

More importantly, the monk’s ascetic lifestyle also prepares him to be a benefactor to others, whether it is by speaking words of comfort to those suffering from “a terrible calamity,” or praying for the good of his pagan father.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, whenever he returns from the mountain to the city, he would amaze everyone with his glory so much so that they would regard him as having surpassed human nature and to have become an angel.<sup>154</sup>

Once again, Chrysostom’s portrayal of this young monk, with its emphasis on his angelic lifestyle, ascetic cultivation of virtue and enjoyment of the pleasures of nature, coheres remarkably well with ascetic paradigm discussed earlier. His present polemical concern, however, compels him to trace the lines of similarities between the Christian monk or, philosopher, and those esteemed by the pagans, such as Socrates and Diogenes of Sinope, so that he may prove the former to be equally illustrious as the latter.<sup>155</sup> As in

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. 2.3-5, 7, 10 (Hunter, 100-4, 110-11).

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. 2.10 (Hunter, 118).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. 2.8-9 (Hunter, 113, 5).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. 2.6, 8 (Hunter, 108, 114).

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. 2.5 (Hunter, 105-7).

the case of the *Comparatio*, a major claim that Chrysostom summons to justify the solitary life is the fact that such training will ultimately yield a greater good to others by enabling the monk to become a benefactor to those in the *polis*.

Book III is directed at the hypothetical Christian parent who is similarly traumatized by his son's decision to become a monk.<sup>156</sup> First of all, it is important to recognize that what Chrysostom is attempting here is not to narrow the road to salvation to only monasticism. As he puts it, "there is not one way of salvation, but there are many and varied ways."<sup>157</sup> Rather, his present aim is to encourage the Christian parent to support his son's decision instead.

Chrysostom begins by establishing a common point of agreement, that is, a Christian parent's responsibility of nurturing his children in the way of the Lord. Having done so, he then introduces a series of arguments that essentially juxtaposes life in the *polis* to the life of a monk, so as to demonstrate the superiority of the latter in cultivating Christian character. The first aspect that Chrysostom addresses is the esteem that parents have for rhetorical studies over ascetic training. Contrary to their belief, he argues that rhetorical training without the guide of Christian philosophy leads only to the corruption of the youths and ultimately to the detriment of the city, the community and even the Church – a point that he powerfully puts across through a *synkrisis* between the supposed vices of rhetorical training and the virtues of the monks living in the monastery.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid. 3.1.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 3.5 (Hunter, 133).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. 3.11. See pp. 191 for the full quotation of his *ekphrasis* of the monastic lifestyle.

Consequently, philosophical training, he argues, should commence at one's youth, rather than when one is an adult or much older.<sup>159</sup>

Having heard Chrysostom's repeated criticisms of rhetorical studies, his readers might, at this point, conclude that he is guilty of anti-intellectualism. To forestall such accusations, Chrysostom immediately introduces the story of a young urban ascetic, where we encounter a youth who, having been influenced by his ascetic pedagogue, began to adopt a philosophic life even though he continued to live in the city and studied rhetoric. Unlike the monks, the youth "had no wild and rough demeanour, nor did he wear an unusual cloak, but he was like the rest in clothing, expression, voice, and all other respects." At home, however, he practised a discipline that is very much like "those who live in the mountains":<sup>160</sup>

His house was arranged according to the discipline of every monastery, where there is nothing but the essentials. All his time was spent in reading the holy books; although he was quite sharp in his studies, he spent only a brief part of his day in pagan learning and devoted the rest to frequent prayer and the sacred scriptures. He spent the entire day without food-and not only one or two days, but many days. His nights were spent in the same way: in tears, prayers, and such reading. [...] he had made for himself a garment out of hair and that he slept in it at night, having found that this was a clever way to [ensure that] he arose quickly.<sup>161</sup>

More importantly, it is in this very context that he proved to be an influential person with his fellow students, many of whom "profited so much from his company that they came to share his zeal."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 3.5-6, 9-111 (Hunter, 134-36, 144, 146, 149).

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 3.12 (Hunter 151-54).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. (Hunter, 154).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid. (Hunter, 153).

Having said this, Chrysostom is doubtful whether such pedagogical arrangements can ever work out *en masse* in reality:

So, then, if someone even now should show me such a soul, if he should provide such a pedagogue, if he should promise that everything else will be taken care of in the same way, I would pray a thousand times that this might happen, even more than the parents themselves. An even greater booty would be ours, since through their life, their age, and their constant company such youth would be able to capture their companions. But there is no one who can promise this, no one who will do it. Since there is no one, it would be the ultimate cruelty to allow someone who is unable to defend himself [...] to be cut down in the midst of the battle, when he should have been allowed to retreat.<sup>163</sup>

Given their apologetic intentions, these reservations are understandably hyperbolic and should not be taken straightforwardly as Chrysostom's rejection of the possibility of urban ascetics living among the people and influencing them positively. On the contrary, in view of his earlier experience as an urban ascetic who continued to live with his mother and the strong links that his *asketerion* had with the Church of Antioch, this same story can well be taken as his implicit recognition of the possibility of this ascetic model and its potential for future adoption by others.<sup>164</sup>

We now move on to Chrysostom's comparison of monasticism and that second and more important aspect of *polis* life, namely, marriage. Both married and ascetic Christians, says Chrysostom, are called by God to imitate Christ and to attain the same standards of perfection. Contrary to popular expectations, both must also face the same divine judgment.<sup>165</sup> For this reason, one should expect the life of the married to be no different

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid. (Hunter, 154).

<sup>164</sup> In the *De sacerdotio*, Chrysostom mentions that he started his ascetic practice at home, in obedience to his mother's wishes. *sac.* 1.3-4.

<sup>165</sup> *oppug.* 3.14 (Hunter, 156-58).

from that of the monk, apart from the fact that the former is in a better position to nurture chastity since he has recourse to his wife. Having said this, Chrysostom believes that married life, with its household responsibilities and troubles, ultimately poses a greater burden on the Christian. This stands in sharp contrast to the monastic life, which, because of its freedom from such responsibilities, enables the monk to attain a higher degree of *apatheia*.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, those who pursue the heavenly life earlier must inevitably attain greater crowns from God in the end.<sup>167</sup>

For these reasons then, Christian parents ought to support their children's desire for the monastic life and not compel them to return to the *polis* until this philosophy has taken root in their lives. Once this has happened, they "will [then] be a profit shared by father, mother, home, city and nation." Returning to the *polis*, they will be able to "render service to others" by "heal[ing] people suffering with incurable diseases" and becoming "benefactors, patrons and saviours to all." Everyone who turns to look at them will see them as living "like angels among people on earth."<sup>168</sup>

To underscore the importance of this public ministry of the monk and the role that a parent may play here, Chrysostom concludes his treatise by summoning two biblical exemplars: Anna and Abraham. In the case of Anna, her willingness to give up Samuel to the service of the temple led ultimately to the salvation of her people, since Samuel was to win back God's favour for the Hebrews through his virtue. Similarly, it was only when

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid. 3.15, 17 (Hunter, 160-61, 165).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. 3.16 (Hunter, 166).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 3.18 (Hunter, 167).

Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac that he “received his son back with greater glory.” Likewise, a parent who encourages his child’s pursuit of monasticism will ultimately find himself nourishing an angel and participating in his glory.<sup>169</sup>

Generally speaking, the ascetic portraits presented in the *Comparatio* and *Adversus Oppugnatores* concur with Chrysostom’s ascetic paradigm that the central goal of Christian asceticism is the development of angelic *apatheia*, so that a monk can participate in the heavenly pleasures of fellowship with God and the angels. Having said this, this angelic lifestyle, as Chrysostom emphasizes time and again, is not necessarily a total rejection of life in the *polis*. Rather, it represents an opportunity for rejuvenating or transforming the *polis*, since the monk, when fully trained, is expected to engage in an active life of ministry in the *polis*, whether it is in the capacity of a healer, exorcist, spiritual guide, teacher or benefactor.

Interestingly, these early notions of the monk as a spiritual leader strongly parallel Chrysostom’s later conception of the priesthood in his *De Sacerdotio*.<sup>170</sup> Here, we find Chrysostom describing the ideal priesthood in terms of the traditional ascetic motifs found in the above apologies. The Christian priest, says Chrysostom, “needs great wisdom and, even before wisdom, the grace of God in good measure, and an upright character and a

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 3.20-21 (Hunter, 171-74).

<sup>170</sup> The terminus *ad quem* for *De sacerdotio* is 393, when Jerome referred to the work in his *De viris illustribus*. Black argues quite plausibly that Chrysostom was likely groomed to be the successor of Bishop Flavian and conceives the treatise as Chrysostom’s way of advertising of his credentials or his familiarity with the demands of priesthood. This puts the composition date to 386-391. Black, 184, 190.

pure life, and more than human goodness.”<sup>171</sup> As Chrysostom sees it, what is demanded of the priest is far greater than that of a solitary monk. Such a priest must not only be a practitioner of the ascetic lifestyle and a master over his passions, but must do so while participating in the life of the *polis* and away from the refuge of solitude. Moreover, he must have the wisdom to teach and apply such Christian philosophy to the care of his flocks and exemplify its angelic virtues in his very life.<sup>172</sup> Seen from this angle, his criticism of monks in the same treatise and elsewhere should not be regarded as his disillusionment with monasticism *per se*. Rather it is his rebuke of a certain strand of monasticism that privileges the solitary life to the neglect of the other and equally important aspect of the monastic vocation, which is the service of others.<sup>173</sup>

### **The Ascetic Figure and Christian Identity**

By now, it should be clear that even though Chrysostom’s portrayals of Christian ascetics are both numerous and diverse, they, nevertheless, adhere closely to the paradigm that is exemplified in his portraits of the Edenic Adam, as given in his Genesis homilies. What we encounter in this paradigm is an ascetic figure that, in many ways, is remarkably

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<sup>171</sup> *sac.* 3.7 [Translated by Neville in John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, trans. Graham Neville (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 76].

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* 2.2-3.12, 3.16-4.8, 6.1, 4 (Neville, 54-83, 94-103, 114-26, 137, 141).

<sup>173</sup> According to Chrysostom, monks who engage exclusively in the solitary life often find themselves ill equipped for the priesthood. This is because their mastery of the ascetic practice or even their own passions does not necessarily prepare them for the responsibility of shepherding, judging, teaching and other pastoral duties. A similar recognition of this monastic weakness is also echoed in his *De Compuitione* 1.6. In the same treatise, we also find Chrysostom affirming a similar ascetic leader model through his exposition of the David’s life and leadership. *Sac.* 6.5-9 (Neville, 143-49); *compunct.* 1.6, 2.2-3 (PG 47.403, 413-14); Black, 193.

similar to the Christian monks presented in the hagiographies and histories contemporary to Chrysostom's time, that is, a Christian who is in fellowship with God and the angels, celibate, dispassionate, a practitioner of asceticism and quite often a wonder-worker. By and large, these narrative traits also conform to Chrysostom's ethical vision, as articulated in Chapter 1, and therefore serve well as reinforcements of his didactic ethical teachings.

Interestingly, most of these narrative motifs are the same traits that Chrysostom emphasizes whenever he upholds the ascetic figure as an exemplar for *both* his ascetic and lay listeners alike. Clearly then, by calling *all* Christians to abide by a similar exemplar paradigm, Chrysostom is taking seriously his expressed conviction in Book III of the *Adversus Oppugnatores*, that is, God expects the same spiritual standards for both the monk and the lay person.<sup>174</sup>

Having said this, the pedagogical function that Chrysostom envisages for the Christian ascetic can vary quite significantly, depending on his implied audience. When presented to an implied audience of virgins and monks, an *ekphrasis* of the monk's ascetic lifestyle is intended more as an icon that affirms his readers' vocation, reinforces their spiritual convictions and inspires them to persevere in their ascetic struggle. When presented before a lay audience, however, the same *ekphrasis* takes on an additional role. Here, the monastic icon is clearly meant to challenge or, indeed, deconstruct the worldly assumptions of the laity. It is only when this cathartic effect has taken place can such ascetic *ekphrasis* play the positive role of inspiring the laity towards greater spiritual progress.

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<sup>174</sup> *oppug.* 3.14.

Despite his similarities with his hagiographical counterparts, Chrysostom's Christian ascetic also differs from these contemporaries in a few distinct ways. First of all, Chrysostom's ascetic exemplar, like its Pauline counterpart, is often illustrative of how a Christian may realize, at least to some degree, his eschatological life in this present age. For this reason, Chrysostom's Christian ascetic is uniquely poised as a reinforcement of his deification doctrine, by embodying in his very life the Christian's recapitulation of Christ's somatic victory. Secondly, one may even say that Chrysostom's soteriology, with its somatic emphasis, may be said to be fully summed up in his Adamic portraits, since his Edenic Adam is not only fully dependent on God's providence for his bodily needs but also takes great pleasure in these provisions. As a matter of fact, apart from these Adamic portraits, the hedonistic implications of Chrysostom's soteriology may well have remained implicit in his didactic teachings.

A similar supplementary role is observed in the variety of ascetic portraits that Chrysostom constructs in his *De Virginitate*. When read in conjunction with one another, these portraits helpfully elucidate Chrysostom's multi-faceted understanding of virginity's role in the Christian life, whether it is its symbolic functions or instrumental value. The same can also be said for the ascetic portraits found in his *adhortationes*. Here, what is drawn to our attention is not so much so the idyllic life of the ascetic but aspects of this paradigm that are less often emphasized, namely, the Christian monk as a model of repentance and restorer of sinners, and, ultimately, the icon of divine *philanthrōpia*.

Although Chrysostom's ascetic portraits are intended primarily for the reinforcement and supplementations of his ethical vision, they also frequently become for him occasions for deliberating on the relationship between Christian asceticism and

leadership.<sup>175</sup> As Chrysostom emphasizes time and again in his *Comparatio* and *Adversus Oppugnatores*, even though the solitary life is a necessary aspect of the ascetic calling, the vocation in itself is only complete when the monk, as he frequently puts it, returns from the mountains after his training and participates actively in the life of the *polis*. Indeed, the ideal ascetic, as his *De sacerdotio* tells us, is not the solitary monk hiding in the safety of the mountains, but the ascetic who is able to practice his vocation in the midst of and for the sake of the people.

To bring our reflections to a close, we turn now to a final question, that is, whether Chrysostom regards the monk to be *the* ideal Christian exemplar who is superior to his married counterpart, whether it is a biblical saint like David or Abraham, or a lay person in fourth century Antioch and Constantinople? Judging from his discussions about virginity and *apatheia* in general in his *De Virginitate*, it should be clear that Chrysostom takes seriously these traits as the necessary sociological and ontological traits of the Christian life in the *eschaton*. For this reason, whosoever imitates *both* traits in the here and now, as it is the case with the ascetic, is in a unique position to exemplify this transfigured humanity before his fellow Christians. Seen from this angle then, married exemplars, be they biblical or contemporary saints, can never fully embody these eschatological expectations.

Having said this, Chrysostom's ideal ascetic exemplar is not the solitary monk in the desert, despite their usefulness as icons of Christian simplicity and *apatheia*. Rather, the ideal ascetic-Christian exemplar is the ascetic-priest serving in the *polis* and playing the

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<sup>175</sup> This is, of course, not surprising in view of the fact that Late Antique leadership discourse is founded primarily on the Greco-Roman ethical framework.

crucial role of transforming life in the city. It should not, therefore, surprise us then that some of the most favoured exemplars of Chrysostom are the apostles, especially St. Paul. It is for the same reason that some of Chrysostom's portrayals of David, as we have examined in Chapter 2, are no less than portraits of the ascetic-priest writ large and glorified. Considered from this perspective then, whosoever practises a similar ascetic life and service among the people, even if he or she is married, would prove to be no less inferior as an exemplary figure for the present day Church.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHRYSOSTOM'S RHETORIC OF MARTYRDOM

#### Introduction

In the summer of 362, Julian (361-63) relocated to Syrian Antioch to prepare for his war against the Persians. It was here, in this predominantly Christian city, that the emperor composed his *Against the Galilaeans*, where he attempted to refute the chief tenets of Christian faith and practice.<sup>1</sup> Among these are his scathing criticisms of the growing popularity of the Christians' veneration of the saints:

You have filled the whole world with tombs and sepulchres, and yet in your scriptures it is nowhere said that you must grovel among tombs and pay them honour. But you have gone so far in iniquity that you think you need not listen even to the words of Jesus of Nazareth on this matter.<sup>2</sup>

Despite his disdain for this apparent 'perversion' of Jesus' teachings, Julian, nonetheless, took the challenges posed by this growing cult seriously. When he visited Antioch's famous oracle of Apollo at Daphne, he discovered, to his dismay, that the oracle had been silenced, due apparently to the presence of corpses in the vicinity.<sup>3</sup> To restore the oracle, Julian immediately ordered the Christians to disinter the body of their local martyr, St. Babylas, whom they had buried in a martyrium nearby.

For Chrysostom, this was only the beginning of the Apostate's encounter with the martyr. Not long after this, a conflagration consumed the sanctuary of Apollo and the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 177-79

<sup>2</sup> *Against the Galileans* 335C. Translated by Wright in Julian, *The Works of the Emperor Julian*, ed. E Capps, T. E. Page, and W. H. D. Rouse, trans. Wilmer Cave France Wright, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 3 (London: Heinemann, 1923), 415-17.

<sup>3</sup> *hier. Bab.* 5.

incident was immediately taken by the local Christians as a sign of divine judgment. This conviction is poignantly expressed by Chrysostom when he recalls these events during a festival for the martyr:

And so the martyr was moved, but the demon didn't in this fashion enjoy indemnity. Instead he immediately learnt that while it's possible to move a martyr's bones around, it's impossible to escape a martyr's hands. For at the same moment that the coffin was being dragged toward the city a bolt of lightning flew from heaven onto the head of the wooden cult statue and incinerated the lot. [...] Indeed the walls [of the temple] now stand in place of a trophy, uttering a sound clearer than a trumpet, [...] the contest, the struggle, the martyr's victory (τὴν πάλην, τὴν συμπλοκὴν, τὴν νίκην τοῦ μάρτυρος).<sup>4</sup>

By describing the encounter in terms of “the contest, the struggle and the martyr's victory,” Chrysostom is clearly conceiving it as a martyrdom narrative not unlike the *Acta* composed in the previous centuries. Yet, what he gives us in this homily is a rather different sort of martyr story. To be sure, the antagonist remains the same, that is, the demonic forces – this time represented by Julian.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, there are a few narrative features in this homily that set it apart clearly from the traditional *Acta Martyrorum*.

To begin, what Chrysostom draws attention to is not the original account of Babylas' victorious death and triumph over his enemies. In fact, almost nothing can be learnt here about the story itself. Rather, what we are told is an entirely new martyr act.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Translated by Mayer in Johan Leemans, *'Let Us Die That We May Live': Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (C. Ad 350-Ad 450)* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), 146-47.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 8 (PG 50.532.18).

<sup>6</sup> One obvious reason why he does not narrate the original story of Babylas' martyrdom is given by Chrysostom himself, namely, it will be retold by the “more senior preachers and our common father [probably Flavian].” Nonetheless, he also seems to presume a certain degree of audience familiarity with the martyr's story since he alludes to “how he [Babylas] led the church in out community, then, and saved this holy ship in storm and choppy sea [...] and how bold the speech was that he exhibited towards an emperor.” Ibid. 2 (Mayer, *Let us Die*, 142).

This time round, the combatant is not so much so the martyr himself, but his relics, which are resting before Chrysostom and his audience in the martyrium even as he speaks.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, interweaved with this first martyr act is a second martyrdom narrative, where the martyr and the spiritual *palē* that he is engaged in is altogether different. This second martyr, as Chrysostom declares, is none other than their former bishop (most likely, Meletius). As to the nature of his contest, it is to be found in his love of Babylas, as expressed through his construction of a martyrium for the saint, and his imitation of the martyr's many virtues in his life. It is in this way then that Meletius proves himself to be a shepherd "worthy of the martyrs."<sup>8</sup>

Clearly, what we have here is no mere retelling of Babylas' story. Instead, it is a series of rhetorical attempts by Chrysostom to render the figure of the martyr, whether it is perceived through Babylas' relics or Meletius, a real and present *persona* to his listeners, so that they too may identify with the saint and appropriate his virtues for their lives. In this thesis, we will argue that this rhetorical approach is not unique to this homily, but is a prevalent strategy that Chrysostom adopts for his martyr homilies in general.<sup>9</sup> As we shall see, Chrysostom's attempts to appropriate the stories of the martyrs for his audience are

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<sup>7</sup> Chrysostom alludes to the fact that he is preaching in the Church of St Babylas in the conclusion of his homily. See Mayer's introduction to the homily in Mayer, *Let us Die*, 141.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 10-11 (Mayer, *Let us Die*, 141, 147-8).

<sup>9</sup> There are two main sources for Chrysostom's teachings on the martyrs. The first are his 24 homilies, or panegyrics, on the lives of the martyrs. The second are his references to these saints in his homilies or treatises elsewhere. These have been identified by Christos in his thesis on this subject. Gus George Christos, "The Notions of Martyrdom According to St. John Chrysostom" (Thesis (M A) - University of Durham 1984, 1984), 25-28. Our present study will focus primarily on the martyr panegyrics. English translations of Chrysostom's martyr homilies may be found in Wendy Mayer and John Chrysostom, *The Cult of the Saints*, trans. Wendy Mayer, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, New York: St Valdimir's Seminary Press, 2006) and Leemans, 115-57.

greatly indebted to both Greco-Roman epideictic oratory and the rich Christian traditions of the martyrs. Nonetheless, what emerges from his martyr homilies is a rhetorical approach that is, in many ways, different from both traditions but is well-suited for his objective of re-conceptualizing the Christian martyr as an exemplary figure capable of reinforcing and enriching his unique vision of Christian life and identity.

## Christian Martyrdom Narratives: A Historical Overview

### *Biblical Precedents*

We begin, first of all, with the Christian martyrdom traditions that Chrysostom is indebted to. While scholars differ on the roots of 'Christian' martyrdom discourse,<sup>10</sup> or

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<sup>10</sup> As Boyarin observes, there are two major theses to the question of origins. The first is represented by Frend, who argues that the roots of Christian martyrdom are unmistakably Jewish. In direct opposition to this is Bowersock, who contends that Christian martyrdom "had nothing to do with Judaism or Palestine and everything to do with the Greco-Roman world, its tradition, its language, and its cultural tastes." Although Frend occasionally overstates his case, his overall argument, I think, remains valid, especially in view of the significant parallels between the post-exilic Jewish literature and the Christian martyr texts that follow (cf. Lampe and van Henten). The main weakness of Bowersock's thesis is its failure to account for the significant influence that Second Temple Judaism has for Christianity. Having said this, his thesis does helpfully illuminate the important role that Late Antique culture plays in Christian martyrdom discourse. Other prominent hypotheses that supplement this debate are those of Droge and Tabor and Dehandschutter and van Henten. These draw attention to the formative role that Greco-Roman notions of noble death has in Christian martyrdom reflections and the New Testament's conception of μαρτύριος as referring to the idea of witnessing as an important starting point for understanding Christian martyrdom. Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 93-7; W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church: A Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 31; G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 28; G. W. H. Lampe, "Martyrdom and Inspiration," in *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament*, ed. William Horbury and Brian McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 118; Jan Willem van Henten, "The Martyrs as Heroes of the Christian People: Some Remarks on the Continuity between Jewish and Christian Martyrology, with Pagan Analogies," in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans*, ed. M. Lamberigts and P. Van. Deun, *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 322; Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 17-45;

even what constitutes a martyr text, few would disagree that some of its ideological strands can be traced, at least, back to the Jewish post-exilic literature.<sup>11</sup> Among these strands is the notion of a witness being tried and persecuted because of his faithfulness to God, a meta-narrative that clearly emerges in Daniel 3 and 6, but receives its most elaborate treatment in the court trial scene of 2 Maccabees 6-7, where we encounter a graphic depiction of the tortures suffered by the martyrs, along with a detailed emphasis on each martyr's triumphant confession of God and, in one case, his expectation of a future resurrection (2 Macc. 7.14).<sup>12</sup>

In the New Testament, this court trial scene will raise to greater prominence in the form of Christ's Passion narratives and the Lucan account of Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 6.8-7.60). The latter, in particular, evokes several narrative themes and motifs developed in the Passion story: a discussion of circumstances leading to Stephen's arrest (6.8-12), the postulation of a binary opposition between Stephen the faithful witness of God and his

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Carole Straw, "'a Very Special Death': Christian Martyrdom in Its Classical Context" in *Sacrificing the Self: Perspectives on Martyrdom and Religion*, ed. Margaret Cormack, American Academy of Religion Religions Series (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 39-50; B.A.G.M. Dehandschutter and J.W. van Henten, "Einleitung," in *Die Entstehung Der Jüdischen Martyrologie*, ed. B.A.G.M. Dehandschutter, J.W. van Henten, and H.J.W. van der Klaauw (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1989), 5-8.

<sup>11</sup> Attempts to define the martyr text (e.g., Droge and Tabor, van Henten), as Middleton points out, have not been entirely successful, since definitions derived from a selected corpus of martyr texts often cannot be satisfactorily applied to other acknowledged martyr texts, especially those composed in a different era and cultural setting. Droge and Tabor, ; J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviours of the Jewish People : A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 7.74-75; Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity*, Library of New Testament Studies (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 6-12.

<sup>12</sup> An alternative account of Daniel 6 is Bel and the Dragon 1.31-42. Composed after the book of Daniel, 2 Maccabees's story of the martyrs would, in turn, inspire 4 Maccabees' philosophical treatment of the narrative. David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerAcademic, 2002), 269.

prosecutors, that is, those who resist God (6.13-7.54), a sign of divine presence and approval in the form of Stephen's theophany (7.55-57), and Stephen's appropriation of Christ's prayers just before his death (7.59-60; Luke 23.34, 46).<sup>13</sup> Where it differs is its clear Christological emphasis, with Jesus now being clearly portrayed as the Lord who stands beside God in approval of Stephen and in judgment of the Jews (7.56).<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it is this version of the court trial scene and martyrdom, that is, Christ's Passion recast within a Christological framework, that would prove to be the most influential and enduring in the centuries to come.<sup>15</sup>

Alongside these narrative developments is the reconception of suffering and death in the Pauline epistles. Here, suffering is regarded not merely as an instrument of divine punishment, but more so as an important means of spiritual development for the Christian (Rom. 5.3.-5; Phil. 1.14). Similarly, death, in the light of the resurrection promise, is no longer a thing to be feared (1 Thess. 4.13-14), but a state to be longed for (Phil 1.21-5). In his letter to the Philippians, Paul would go so far as to declare that suffering is a vital way by which a Christian can participate in Christ's humanity (Phil. 2.5-11) – a point that is emphasized, yet again, in the synoptic Gospels' call for disciples to carry their crosses and

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<sup>13</sup> This, of course, strongly parallels the Gospels' Passion narratives, where the circumstances of Jesus' betrayal and arrest are presented, followed by his trials by the God-resisting Jewish and Roman leaders. Like the Stephen account, Jesus' execution is accompanied by signs of divine presence and concluded with Jesus' prayer of petition for his persecutors.

<sup>14</sup> It is on this basis then that one must disagree with C.K. Barrett's hasty dismissal of the Christological significance of this passage. C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 383

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the popularity of court trial scene and other literary forms in the *Acts of the Martyrs*, see H. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* ([s.l.]: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1972), li-lii and Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 60.

follow Christ (Mark 8.34; Matt. 10.38; Luke. 14.27)<sup>16</sup> and Ignatius' later assertion that his martyrdom is a *participatio Christo par excellence* and an act "in accordance to the mind of God."<sup>17</sup>

With respect to the Maccabean martyrs' expectation of a future resurrection, or indeed, divine vindication, this is developed most extensively in the Apocalypse. Here, this eschatological hope is recast within the framework of a cosmic conflict between the Christian and the principalities and powers of darkness, where the Christian's suffering and faithful witnessing until death plays an active role in God's war and final victory against the demonic forces, and every Christian who overcomes this trial will be richly rewarded by God.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Acta Martyrorum*

The close of the apostolic age also witnessed an increased incidence of Christian persecutions.<sup>19</sup> These trials would, in turn, etch a deep impression in the religious

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<sup>16</sup> Despite the reservations of some scholars, like Derrett, this Gospel injunction, in the light of Jesus' Passion, is undoubtedly understood by its earliest listeners as nothing less than a demand for obedience to Christ unto death. J.D.M.. Derrett, "Taking up Cross and Turning the Other Cheek," in *Alternative Approaches to New Testament Study*, ed. A. Harvey (London: SPCK, 1985), 61-78.

<sup>17</sup> *Rom.* 8.3. Ignatius even regards his discipleship as having begun only with his imprisonment and to be perfected upon his death (*Eph.* 3.1; *Rom.* 3.2; *Phil.* 5.1). As he understands it, martyrdom, as *participatio Christo*, inextricably binds the disciple with his Master, so much so that he will be able to experience the empowerment of Christ through this very deed (*Rom.* 4.2, 5.2; *Sym.* 4.2).

<sup>18</sup> *Rev.* 2.10, 20.4, 12-14. This eschatological expectation of a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil is also present in several of the Pauline epistles (*Eph.* 6.12, 1 *Thess.* 5.3-7; 2 *Thess.* 1.7-10, 2.10-12).

<sup>19</sup> Up until mid-third century, Christian persecutions were more localized affairs, emerging sporadically in different parts of the Empire. Systematic persecutions of Christians were to occur

consciousness of the early Christian communities and call forth their literary response to grapple with the violence, chaos and apparent meaninglessness of their martyrs' deaths. Indeed, to talk and write about their martyrs was, for these early Christians, a "practise of dying for God."<sup>20</sup> Yet, much more was involved here. Through their discourse about martyrdom, the early Christians were, ultimately, seeking to reassert "the priority and superiority of an imagined or longed-for order and a privileged and idealized system of meaning."<sup>21</sup> By this same telling and proliferation of their martyrs' stories, communal beliefs were reinforced and their martyrs' virtues celebrated. Most importantly, these martyr narratives, that is, the *Acta Martyrorum*, would also become, for the early Christians, a vital platform from which they can wage their ideological battles against contrary ideals.<sup>22</sup>

This is well-demonstrated in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* (c.156), the pioneer of the *Acta Martyrorum* genre and an excellent example of how an *Act* can bring the preceding Christian martyrdom traditions into the service of the above motivations.<sup>23</sup> Like the *Acta*

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only from 250 onwards, with the persecutions of Decius (250-51), Valerius (257-59) and Diocletian and his successors (303-13). G.E.M. De Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?," in *Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, ed. Michael Whitby and Joseph Streeter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 106-7.

<sup>20</sup> Boyarin, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making, Gender, Theory, and Religion*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 34.

<sup>22</sup> By treating a martyrdom account as essentially a story, rather than a historical source for the martyrdom, our primary focus is therefore the ideological and persuasive power of the martyr text itself, rather than its historical veracity. Eugene Weiner and Anita Weiner, *The Martyr's Conviction: A Sociological Analysis*, Brown Judaic Studies (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>23</sup> Scholars in the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably Campenhausen, often regarded the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, as we have it, to be the result of several generations of

that follow, the *Martyrium Polycarpi* is, essentially, a communal and paranetic document, composed by one Christian community for the exhortation of another.<sup>24</sup> Typical of its genre, it probably took on a liturgical function from a very early stage and was read during the annual martyr feasts celebrated by the local Christian communities.<sup>25</sup> When compared to the later *Acta*, it is surprisingly more self-conscious in its appropriation of the earlier martyrdom traditions. This is seen from the onset, when the author declares Polycarp's martyrdom as being "in accord with the gospel," and exemplifies how Christians may become imitators (μιμηταὶ) of Christ.<sup>26</sup> This conception of martyrdom as *imitatio Christi*, or shall we say, *participatio Christo*, is then developed in the rest of the *Act* according to the literary structure given in the Passion narratives.<sup>27</sup> The first half basically relates the

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redaction. Recent scholars, however, have argued quite convincingly that the extant martyr text was largely authored in the 150s. Parvis, for example, suggests that the *Act* was most likely composed just before the first anniversary of Polycarp's death, around c.156. Musurillo, xviii; Sara Parvis, "Martyrdom of Polycarp," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 127; Michael William Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translation*, trans. Michael William Holmes, J.R. Harmer, and J.B. Lightfoot, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerAcademic, 2007), 298; Hans von Campenhausen, "Bearbeitungen Und Interpolationen Des Polykarp Martyriums," in *Aus Der Frühzeit Des Christentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1963); Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Rhetoric, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and Its Allusions to New Testament Literature*, Wissunt Zum Neun Testament Ser. Ii, vol. 134 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 18-21.

<sup>24</sup> *mart. Poly.* 1.

<sup>25</sup> By the persecution of Decius (250-51), the anniversary of Polycarp, it seems, was already an annual event commemorated by the local Christians, such as the presbyter and martyr, Pionius. *mart. Pion.* 2.

<sup>26</sup> *mart. Poly.* 1.2.

<sup>27</sup> Despite the narrator's depiction of Polycarp as an imitator (μιμητής) of Christ, it is more accurate for us to regard Polycarp and the other martyrs as participators in Christ's Passion. This is because the authors of the *Acta* generally conceive Polycarp and the other martyrs as not mere imitators of Christ's suffering in general, but essentially participants in His Passion. This is particularly the case for Polycarp, whose martyrdom is characterized by several Passion narrative motifs.

circumstances leading to Polycarp's arrest, with great attention paid to the different ways in which his arrest mimics that of Christ's Passion.<sup>28</sup> The highlight of the story is the court trial scene, where Polycarp proves to be steadfast in his faith, despite his persecutors' numerous persuasions and threats. Like Christ, he is ultimately executed, but not before his prayer to God and the appearance of divine signs, most notably, the pyre fires taking on the shape of a sail.<sup>29</sup>

Besides these similarities with the Passion narratives, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* also adopts several themes developed in the earlier martyrdom discourse. Among these are the series of binary oppositions set up in these earlier texts and also the *Acta* that are to follow. The first and foremost is the conflict between Polycarp and his persecutors. While the martyr's immediate persecutors are the Roman officials and the heathens or Jews accusing him, the true enemy that he is up against is always the devil and his demonic realm.<sup>30</sup> It is this "Evil One, the adversary of the race of the righteous," who is, ultimately, responsible for all the persuasive words, threats and extreme tortures that the persecutors will amass against the martyr.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the frequent appearance of the persecutors' persuasion and threats, both here and in the other *Acta*, strongly suggests that they are to be taken as powerful means of demonic temptation. It is also not surprising then that, in the other *Acta*,

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<sup>28</sup> *mart. Poly.* 6.2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> Castelli, 36.

<sup>31</sup> *mart. Poly.* 17.1. A similar notion may be found in *The Martyrs of Lyons* 1 (Eusebius, *hist.* 5.1) and *Acts of Euplus* 2.2.

the martyrs would sometimes be presented as Christ's soldiers engaged in battle with these demonic forces and, finally, triumphing over these enemies.<sup>32</sup>

Bound up with this cosmic battle between the martyr and the demonic realm are the questions of divine kingship, soteriology and eschatology. For Polycarp, this is played out in his prosecutors' demands that he reviles Christ, while in the case of the other *Acta*, the martyrs are often coerced to sacrifice to the idols. More importantly, in each case the martyr's dissent is framed not simply as a rejection of these threats, but more so as an ideology in opposition to that of their persecutors. Hence, when the proconsul orders Polycarp to deny Christ, what he receives instead is an affirmation of Christ's Kingship.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, the proconsul's demand for Apollonius to sacrifice is countered by the martyr's confident declaration that God is the Creator of all things and the pagan gods are merely lifeless idols.<sup>34</sup> When faced with the proconsul's threat of execution, Ponius unhesitatingly reinterprets this threat eschatologically, not as death but a rushing head-on "towards life."<sup>35</sup> Among the different responses given by the martyrs, the one that reverberates most powerfully in the *Martyrium Polycarpi* and the other *Acta* remains their confession: "I am a Christian" (Χριστιανός εἰμι). Often, it is upon this single confession that the martyrs are

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<sup>32</sup> The use of athletic and military metaphors to depict the Christian struggle against evil is, of course, not unique to the *Acta Martyrorum*. They have been used as early as the Pauline epistles (Eph. 6.10-17; 1 Tim. 6.12; 2 Tim. 3.7). Nonetheless, they take on a richer meaning when used in relationship to the spectacle motifs. *The Martyrs of Lyons* 1.6; *mart. Das.* 4.1; Grig, 21-2.

<sup>33</sup> *mart. Poly.* 9.3.

<sup>34</sup> *mart. Apoll.* 7-8.

<sup>35</sup> The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* similar affirms that "good things" will await the martyrs after their sufferings. *mart. Poly.* 2.3; *mart. Pion.* 20.5.

condemned. Certainly, this is the confession that would mark out the martyrs' identity and set them apart from their pagan and unbelieving persecutors.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from the martyr's dissent, another narrative device commonly deployed to accentuate this binary opposition is the introduction of divine miracles, or theophanies, as both signs of God's support and vindication of the martyrs, and His judgment against their persecutors. Both forms of this literary motif are evident in the *Martyrium Polycarpi*. The first is the introduction of these as literal divine miracles or visions, such as Polycarp's vision of a burning pillow and his hearing of God's encouraging voice before his trial.<sup>37</sup> On occasions, they operate more like fictitious literary devices, as in the case of the author supposing that "the Lord was standing by and conversing with" the Smyrnaen martyrs as they were being tortured, and the flames which consumed Polycarp's body taking on apparently the shape of a sail – a sight visible only to those it was given to see.<sup>38</sup>

Having said this, the *Acta Martyrorum* also differ significantly from their biblical counterparts in their extensive use of the motif of *Roman spectacle*. "The category of the 'Roman spectacle'," notes Castelli,

comprises a wide range of public performances, including chariot races in the circus; athletic competitions in the palestra and the stadium; comedies, tragedies, mimes, and pantomimes in the theatres; military triumphs through the streets of Rome culminating on the Capitoline; and staged battles, mythological re-enactments, gladiatorial contests, and executions in the amphitheatre and the arena.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The story of Justin's martyrdom is probably the most poignant expression of this point, since Justin and his companions were summarily condemned for this confession. Boyarin, 95.

<sup>37</sup> *mart. Poly.* 5.2, 9.1.

<sup>38</sup> *mart. Poly.* 2.2, 15.1.

<sup>39</sup> Castelli, 107.

For these martyr texts, the amphitheatre and arena, in particular, are often a venue for not only the martyrs' trials and executions, but also a climatic scene of confrontation between the martyrs and their persecutors. The *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, for example, would have the Smyranean bishop tried by the proconsul and, later, burnt at the stadium, surrounded by a host of jeering spectators.<sup>40</sup> Yet, in the hands of the *Acta* authors, these martyrs are no longer the mere criminals they are supposed to be by their original spectators. Instead of the spectacle of Roman execution, these martyrs are recast as participants contesting in an athletic competition of cosmic proportions, where they are now spiritual athletes engaged in a courageous and noble contest against the Devil.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, their spectators are no longer the prosecutors or the mocking crowds, but God and His heavenly host, who cheer them on as they face their deaths.<sup>42</sup>

### *The Performance of Martyr Texts*

Central to this recasting of the *spectacle* motif, or indeed, the use of the other narrative devices discussed, is a deep-seated conviction that the martyr's stories are to be told not for the sake of the martyrs' glory *per se*. Rather, their stories are always directed towards a greater purpose, which is the edification of their Christian listeners. For this reason, there is an intrinsic performative quality in these martyr texts. This may be better

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<sup>40</sup> For similar trial and execution scenes in the amphitheatre, see *The Martyrs of Lyons* 37-56, *The Martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* 19-20 and *The Martyrdom of Pionius the Presbyter and his Companions* 21.

<sup>41</sup> *mart. Apoll.* 47; *Act. Eupli* 2.2; *mart. Das.* 4.1-4, 9.2.

<sup>42</sup> Castelli, 104-19, 124

understood when we consider how the motif of divine presence or approval operate within these texts.

To be sure the divine miracles, or theophanies, experienced by the martyr must, in the first place, be intended for the martyr's comfort, as it is surely the case for the divine voice heard by Polycarp just before his trial. Yet, when these signs are inscribed into the *Acta* texts, whether literal or fictitious, they are clearly re-constructed for the sake of an altogether different implied audience, namely, the Christian communities commemorating the martyrs' deaths. For these implied readers, every time these miracle motifs are read, they would be understood not so much as a comfort for their own persecutions, if any, but to confirm the veracity of the faith they share with the martyrs. The same can be said of the other motifs of athletic spectacle, and spiritual soldiers, or even the martyr's climatic confession of *christianos eimi*. When weaved together in the martyrs' stories and performed before each successive generation of Christians, these motifs are intended more as powerful reminders and confirmations of the victory of the martyr and, ultimately, that of their Church.<sup>43</sup>

Such an understanding of the *Acta* as performative texts becomes particularly important when we consider their reception in the Post-Constantine Church. With the conversion of Constantine and the advent of his pro-Christian policies, the fourth century Church, by and large, saw the end of Christian persecution, at least on the pagan front.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> As Grig puts it, "the triumph of the martyr, of the church of the martyr, was (re)enacted with every reading of the acts." Grig, 52.

<sup>44</sup> This is not to say that persecutions of Christians have ceased as such. The theological infighting between the Arian and Nicene Christians was to yield more casualties. As mentioned in our introduction, Julian's political manoeuvres against the Christians during his short reign would

Moreover, this imperial favouritism also precipitated the growing popularity of Christianity, with the net result that whole social groups were incorporated into the Church, including many from the affluent and aristocratic circles in the Empire.<sup>45</sup> These developments can only heighten the chronological, spiritual and experiential distance between the post-Constantine Christians and the martyr traditions, and render it increasingly difficult for these Christians to identify with, let alone imitate, the martyrs' stories and virtues.

In the light of these developments, it should not surprise us that the later *Acta* and martyr homilies would often display a high degree of theatricality and spectacularity in their attempts to narrow the spiritual distance between the martyrs and their new audiences, and to render the martyrs' feats more plausible to these listeners. This is especially true for many of the fourth century martyr homilies. While the kernel of the martyrs' stories and the narrative motifs used to depict them remain similar in these homilies, the form that they take, their rhetorical expressions, their narrative details and development, and their pedagogical significance, frequently become more elaborate and varied, especially in the 'hands' of rhetorically trained preachers like Gregory of Nazianzus or John Chrysostom.<sup>46</sup> Such is the case for Asterius of Amasea's *ekphrasis* of Euphemia's

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remain fresh in the memories of Christians decades after his death, so much so that a fifth century bishop, like Cyril of Alexandria, still saw it necessary to compose a treatise against the emperor.

<sup>45</sup> See our discussion of Chrysostom's pastoral context in Chapter 2, pp. 96-98.

<sup>46</sup> Both Grig and Castelli, for example, have drawn attention to an increasingly graphic depiction of the martyrs' stories in the later *Acta* and homilies, which, they suggest, are intended to strengthen the rhetorical force of these traditions. As Grig puts it, "the more the torments are multiplied, the more opportunities the victim has for demonstrating victory. The final result, the death of the victim, is of course the ultimate victory, in the Christian scheme." While it is

portrait. While the existence of the picture remains debatable, Asterius' paranetic aims are clear, namely, to draw his audience into Euphemia's story by means of vivid descriptions of her martyrdom, so that they may appreciate and, hopefully, imitate her courage, holiness and hope.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from the theatrical quality of fourth century martyr homilies, another unique characteristic of these sermons is the fact that their narrative setting is no longer the arena where the martyrs were executed or the immediate moments of grieving by the martyr's companions. Rather, these martyr stories are retold in a very different setting, namely, before the graves or relics of these martyrs – a tradition that began as early as the mid second century A.D.<sup>48</sup> To be present at the burial grounds of a martyr, touching and feeling the coffin that cover his relics, must surely have heightened the Christians' sense of the martyr's presence in a very physical and tangible way. This is not unlike walking along the beaches of Normandy and being told that this is the very site where the battle of Bloody Omaha took place. Moreover, the martyr figure, by a time no later than the mid fourth century, would also be esteemed by the Church as a unique prayer intercessor before Christ. This, coupled with the emerging stories of miracles at the martyrdoms or by

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questionable whether the later depictions of the martyrs are necessarily more graphic than the earlier ones, their general point, I think, remains valid. Grig, 66-67; Castelli, 121-22.

<sup>47</sup> B.A.G.M. Dehandschutter, "Asterius of Amasea," in *'Let Us Die That We May Live': Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria (C. Ad 350-Ad 450)*, ed. Johan Leemans (London ; New York: Routledge, 2003), 174-76.

<sup>48</sup> The earliest textual evidence is given in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, where the author notes the intentional collection of Polycarp's relics for the celebration of "the birthday of his martyrdom" – a clear allusion to a martyr festival or commemoration. *mart. Poly.* 18.3.

the martyrs' relics, would most certainly strengthen the Christians' awe for the saintly figure and their desire to imitate him whenever they hear his story told.

In the light of these sentiments, it is not surprising that the early Christians would revere the martyrdom as a sacred and unique site where they can encounter the saint and seek his intercession. This conviction is most clearly expressed in Gregory of Nyssa's *Homily on Theodore*, where, towards the end of the sermon, Gregory suddenly directs his address to the martyr by calling him the "president of this feast," and even imploring him to leave his heavenly abode and visit his grave, so that he may pray on behalf of the Church.<sup>49</sup> This incorporation of the martyr's grave and relics, along with its associated miraculous powers and efficacious prayers, into the martyr's narrative setting would, in turn, establish these features as a new narrative scene and motifs for subsequent martyr story-telling. This is undoubtedly the case for the martyr relics discovered (*inventio*) during this period and the healing powers that are supposedly displayed by them, many of which would become popular, if not essential, aspects of subsequent martyr narratives.<sup>50</sup>

Having surveyed the developments of Christian martyrdom narratives in the period prior to Chrysostom, we will now look at how the Antiochene preacher brings this tradition, along with the Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions that he was trained in, to bear on his rhetorical portraits of the martyrs. In this process, we will not only highlight the rhetorical strategies that he develops for this purpose, but also explicate the ideological functions that he intends for these saints.

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<sup>49</sup> s. *Thdr.* 70 (Translated by Leemans, in *Let us Die*, 90-1).

<sup>50</sup> Grig, 86-94.

## Greco-Roman Rhetoric and Chrysostom's Praise of the Martyrs

The majority of Chrysostom's martyr homilies were preached at the city of Antioch, usually during the martyr festivals celebrated at either the martyriums or churches. Generally speaking, his homilies conform to the norms of Greek epideictic oratory, whether it is in terms of their objectives, literary structure or rhetorical motifs. Like most epideictic speeches, Chrysostom's martyr homilies are usually preached for the sake of honouring his subjects, in this case, the martyrs, and to persuade his audiences on the plausibility of his claims. For Chrysostom, this is achieved chiefly through the literary structure of epideictic rhetoric, with its emphasis on *prothesis* (the statement of proposition) and *pistis* (proof of the statement), circumscribed by a *prooimion* (introduction) and *epilogos* (conclusion).<sup>51</sup>

While Chrysostom occasionally begins his homilies by praising the martyrs in general, or the martyr concerned, he would, more often than not, abide by *prooimion* conventions and direct his praise and blame at his audiences, such as praising those who faithfully attend the martyrs' feasts and chiding others who stay away.<sup>52</sup> This appeal to his audiences then sets the stage of the introduction of his *prothesis*. Here, his homiletical objectives are clear, namely, to identify and exalt the virtues of the martyr concerned. Having said this, the actual form that his sermons take varies quite significantly,

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<sup>51</sup> Chrysostom is not averse to digressions in his martyr homilies, as is the case in his *On Phocas*, where he ends up not talking much about the martyr, but quite a lot about Nicene Christology. Aristotle, *Rh.* 3.13.4 (1414b). *s. hier. Phoca* 9-11.

<sup>52</sup> *s. hier. Phoca* 1, *Ignat. mart.* 1, *Rh.* 1415a

depending on the character of the martyr concerned. His panegyric for St. Ignatius, for example, emphasizes the saint's stature as both a bishop and the martyr, in order that he might unveil, from these roles, the many virtues of the saint. If an aspect of the martyr's life is questionable, as in the case of the Maccabean martyrs' status as *Christian* martyrs, he would address this from the onset, in order to pave the way for a more elaborate discussion of their virtues.<sup>53</sup>

More often than not, Chrysostom's starting point is a unique aspect of the martyr's life or the circumstances of his death. This, in turn, becomes the focal point for his discussion and exaltation of the martyr's virtue. His homily on the female martyrs, Bernike, Prosdoke and Domnina, is a good case in point. From the onset, he highlights the ladies' female nature, claiming that it is, by default, "weak and fragile," and susceptible to the Devil's wiles. This, however, serves only to accentuate their courage and love of God, since these female martyrs could, for the sake of their faith, transcend their inherent weakness and boldly embrace death – a spectre that has terrified even holy men like Moses and Abraham.<sup>54</sup> The same is observed in his *On Saint Romanus*, where the tongue cut off from the saint's mouth becomes the focus of his discussion. "Why," Chrysostom asks, "didn't the Devil lead him away to tortures and punishments and penalties, but instead cut off his tongue?" By saying this, he draws his listeners' attention to the significance of Romanus' tongue and, through it, helps them appreciate the martyr's virtue as a teacher of

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<sup>53</sup> His *On Eleazar and the Seven Boys* was probably preached in Constantinople, where the Maccabean martyrs' legitimate status as *Christian* martyrs was questioned. Consequently, a substantial portion of his homily was spent in allaying this doubt. *Eleaz. sep. puer.* 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ber. et Pros.* 1.

persecuted Christians and his later miraculous ability to continue his instruction despite having a tongueless mouth!<sup>55</sup>

Chrysostom's *pisteis* are, more often than not, substantiated by a retelling of the martyr's story.<sup>56</sup> For this reason, a large part of his homily would consist of a series of narrations, or *diēgēseis*, set up to prove, or amplify, a specific virtue that is claimed for the martyr.<sup>57</sup> To a great extent, these narrations 'borrow' greatly from the literary structure of the *Acta*, that is, with its emphasis on the circumstances of the martyr's arrest, his trial and subsequent execution.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, Chrysostom is clearly selective in his use of these literary motifs, often recasting them to suit the epideictic objectives of his homily. Hence, even though St. Lucian's trial and confession, "I am a Christian," remains one of the highlights in his *On Saint Lucian*, the focus of his *Homily 1 on the Maccabees* is the weaknesses of his martyrs instead, and how they managed to transcend their human limitations by the aid of God.<sup>59</sup>

Frequently, rhetorical techniques, like the *ēthopoiia*, *ekphrasis* and *synkrisis*, are deployed in his narrations as a means of enhancing the plausibility of these stories and,

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<sup>55</sup> *Romanum* 4-8.

<sup>56</sup> The only exceptions are, perhaps, when he digresses from the subject itself, as in the case of *On Phocas*, or when his homily addresses the virtues of the martyrs in general, e.g., *On All the Martyrs* (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 241-55).

<sup>57</sup> Once again, this is in line with Greco-Roman conventions regarding the relationship between proof and narration. Aristotle, *Rh.* 1.38.

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, his *De sanctis Bernice et Prosdoco, In Juventinum et Maximum martyres* and *De sancta Pelagia virgine et martyre*.

<sup>59</sup> This emphasis on the martyr's transcendence over his weaknesses is a significant meta-narrative in Chrysostom's martyr homilies and would be discussed in the next section. *Luc. mart.* (PG 50.525.2); 2-10; *Macc.* 1.2-10.

more importantly, bridging the chronological or spiritual distance that clearly exists between the martyrs and the late fourth century Christians. Take his *On Saint Romanus*, for example, where he has the Devil deliberating on the different ways that he can afflict Romanus, before settling on the severance of the martyr's tongue:

"I strewed coals," he said, "but they [the martyrs] ran over them as if [they were] roses. I lit up a fire, but they hurled themselves [into it] as if into streams of chilled water. I scourged their ribs, and cut open deep furrows and produced torrents of blood, but they were decorated this way - as though covered all over in a golden flow. I hurled them over cliffs and drowned them at sea, but they acted not as if they were descending to the depths but as if they were ascending to heaven itself. Skipping and rejoicing and dancing as if they were in a sacred pageant or playing around in a green meadow, so each seized their tortures, as if they were receiving not tortures but spring flowers and were being crowned, and through the exaggerated state of their own enthusiasm they undercut my tortures." "So what should I do? [...] Do I cut off his head? But [if I do that], what he (sc. Romanus) is praying for, is what occurs, and his disciples receive more substantial advice in practice [of martyrdom]." [...] For this reason he (sc. the Devil) cut off his (sc. Romanus') tongue, so that robbed of the voice which the martyr's disciples enjoyed and deprived of his counsel. [...] they would become more timid and return to their former anguish.<sup>60</sup>

Two objectives are achieved in this fictitious *ēthopoiia* of the Devil's scheming. First of all, by considering these different 'options' of torture and regarding them as ineffective against Romanus, Chrysostom is clearly hinting that even if these tortures - terrifying as they sound, are inflicted upon Romanus, they would not dent his courage one bit. Secondly, this *ēthopoiia* adopts, as a narrative framework, an important theme of martyrdom literature, namely, the eschatological conviction that the martyr's death is his entry into the blessings of God, whether it is the receipt of crowns or initiation into a heavenly life. More will be said about this theme later on. Suffice to say, its present introduction tells us not so much so about the Devil's eschatology, but serves more as a reaffirmation of Chrysostom and his audience's beliefs in the heavenly rewards of martyrdom.

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<sup>60</sup> *Romanum* 7 (Mayer, *The Cult of the Saints*, 232-33).

Besides the *ēthopoia*, another rhetorical technique that Chrysostom often deploys to animate the martyr's story is *ekphrasis*. To some extent, this is already demonstrated in the above enumeration of the martyrs' tortures. Yet, it is best exemplified in Chrysostom's portrayal of St. Drosis' death at the pyre:

For this reason I call that pyre both an extremely pure spring of water, and an astonishing dye bath, and a smelting furnace. For truly, like gold in a smelting furnace, so too did that blessed woman's soul become purer because of that pyre. For although her flesh melted away, and her bones were charred to a crisp, and were burnt away, and the lymphatic fluid in her body flowed out in every direction, her soul's faith became firmer and more dazzling. And while the people who were watching these events thought that she had died, she was purified all the more. Indeed, just as in the case of gold, whereas the ignorant person who stands and watches it liquefying and flowing out and mixing with the ash thinks that it is lost and has perished, the craftsman who truly has a precise knowledge of these matters knows that through this technique it becomes purer, and after its incineration he collects it from everywhere and extracts the gleaming [metal]; so too in her case, while the Christians who saw her flesh liquefying and flowing out had become ash and dust, the Christians understood very precisely that in liquefying she shed every stain and, upon receiving immortality, ascended in a more brilliant state.<sup>61</sup>

Surely, such a graphic depiction of the martyr's liquefaction can only be aimed at re-animating the execution scene in his audiences' mind, so that they may be equally awed by her courage, as those who first watched her die. Having said this, it is doubtful whether the immediate audience of Drosis' execution ever likened her gruesome death to the refinement of gold. Yet, by associating her death with the purification of a precious metal, Chrysostom would have succeeded in not only enlivening his audience's imagination with a more familiar picture, but he would also have laid the ground for his eschatological expectations for the martyr, that is, the martyr, like refined gold, would attain a greater height of spiritual perfection, in this case, a sinless immortality.

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<sup>61</sup> *Dros. mart.* 9 (Mayer, 200-01).

Another equally prominent rhetorical device that Chrysostom uses to amplify his martyrs is the *synkrisis*. Frequently, this takes the form of a comparison of the martyr with other saints, as in the case of the female martyrs, Bernike, Prosdoke, and Domnina, who are presented as greater than Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their lack of fear for death. On other occasions, it is a straightforward comparison with a lesser and more sinister figure, as may be seen in his *Homily 2 on the Maccabees*, where the youngest Maccabean martyr is held up as a philosopher, endowed with much spiritual wisdom and piety, as compared to the spiritual blindness and impiety of his persecutor, Antiochus Epiphanies.<sup>62</sup>

Apart from these rhetorical techniques, the common arguments used in epideictic oratory, that is, enthymemes and examples (*paradeigmata*), are regularly observed in Chrysostom's praise of the martyrs.<sup>63</sup> The former is well-illustrated in his panegyric for St. Ignatius. Here, he first draws attention to the saint's status as a bishop, before proceeding to deduce the various virtues implicit in his appointment. For example, the fact that Ignatius was appointed bishop by the "blessed apostles" must mean that they had "witnessed every possible human virtue" in him. Since he was appointed as a leader during the early and turbulent years of Church, it must also indicate that he had the "considerable foresight" and wisdom needed to fulfil this mammoth task. In a similar vein, the fact that Ignatius was a bishop of a city as large as Antioch, with a population of more than 200,000, must also imply that he was an extremely capable leader.<sup>64</sup> With regards to

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<sup>62</sup> *Macc. 2* (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 149-50).

<sup>63</sup> See the section, *Epideictic Rhetoric and Paradeigmata*, in Chapter 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Ignat. mart.* 4, 7-8, 10.

the *paradeigmata*, these are usually deployed by comparing the martyr's act with a similar deed performed by a biblical exemplar. Thus, Bernike, Prosdoke and Domnina's fleeing from Antioch is likened to that of Abraham's fleeing from Harran (Gen. 12.1). In line with 4 Maccabees, Chrysostom would also regard the Maccabean mother as imitating the courage of Abraham, who similarly sacrificed his son for the sake of God.<sup>65</sup>

Based on our above discussions, it is clear that Chrysostom takes seriously the rhetorical training that he acquired from his *paideia* and uses it abundantly in his homiletical exaltation of the martyrs in general. This must be borne in mind when we interpret the apparently disparaging remarks that he occasionally makes on the art of rhetoric. This is certainly the case for his *On Saint Lucian*, where he would have St. Lucian regard rhetoric as superfluous in the martyr's contest. What is implied here is not so much so a plain rejection of the value of rhetoric *per se*, but an exaltation of a different form of rhetoric, that is, the persuasiveness of the martyr's life and deeds.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, what we may easily forget is the important fact that the rhetoric of the martyr's deed has, by Chrysostom's time, become a thing of the past. An important way in which its inspiring power can be resurrected or reanimated to arouse new audiences, like those listening to Chrysostom, is by means of a rhetorical exaltation of the martyrs. This rhetoric of the martyr's deed or the rhetoric of martyrdom will be the focus of the remaining chapter. Specifically, we will examine how Chrysostom appropriates the traditions of Greco-Roman rhetoric and Christian martyrdom as means of developing his own rhetorical approach

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<sup>65</sup> 4 Macc. 16.20; *Macc.* 1 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 141).

<sup>66</sup> *Luc. mart.* 8.

towards exalting the martyrs. Having done so, we will then consider how his distinctive rhetoric may contribute to the shaping of his listeners' Christian identity.

### **Chrysostom's Rhetoric of Martyrdom**

#### *The Martyr as Icon of Divine Power*

Chrysostom's high regard for the rhetorical power of the martyr's deeds is, by no means, unique to him. Writing almost three centuries earlier, Ignatius similarly remarks that his impending martyrdom is a vehicle of God's message (λόγος θεοῦ), with a rhetorical force of its own.<sup>67</sup> Yet, just like the deeds of his Lord Jesus Christ, this rhetorical force of Ignatius' martyrdom, along with those of the other martyrs, can only be felt in the distant past, and cannot be appreciated immediately by Christians in the here and now. For this to happen, the rhetoric of Ignatius' martyrdom must be mediated to each generation by means of speech, that is, a rhetorical re-enactment of the martyr's acts, so that the plausibility and persuasiveness of his deeds may recapture the imagination of his new audiences. In this sense, this recollection of the martyr's lives is surely similar to the typical Greco-Roman encomium, where the acts of the subject are also retold persuasively, in order to convince the audience of the subject's praiseworthiness. Where it differs, I think, is the consistent conviction on the part of preachers, like Chrysostom, that the rhetorical force of a martyr is grounded not so much so on the persuasiveness of the

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<sup>67</sup> While Ignatius does not consider his death as work of "persuasive rhetoric" (πειθμονῆς), he is undoubtedly convinced that his martyrdom would declare a powerful message, that is, by his very imitation of Christ's death, he would also confirm the fact of Christ's incarnation and death. This 'rhetoric', as Kelly has suggested, is mostly clearly aimed at the docetic teachings that emerged during this period. *Rom.* 2.1, 4.2. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th revised ed. (London: A. and C. Black, 1977), 141.

orator's words, but on the acts of the martyr himself. There is a second and more important difference. When a martyr is praised by Chrysostom, what is at stake here is not merely the exaltation of the martyr's deeds and virtues. Ultimately, his rhetoric of the martyr's deed is iconic in intent, namely, to direct his listeners to the figure standing behind the martyr, that is, their common God, and to help them see afresh His power, glory and grace.

In Chrysostom's homilies, this iconic nature of his rhetoric of martyrdom operates at different levels. First of all, the martyr's life may be portrayed as a means of confirming the veracity of Scriptures. This can take the form of a straightforward illustration of biblical teachings, as in the case of his depiction of Bernike and her daughters' fleeing from Antioch as a fulfilment of Matthew 10.21-23. Equally common is a deductive application of the martyr's experience. This is best demonstrated in his repeated attempts to argue that the martyr's valiant death, whether literally, or through the loss of the martyr's tongue, is a convincing sign of Christ's resurrection.<sup>68</sup> A more subtle approach, however, is observed in his frequent comparison of the martyr with the familiar exemplars found in Scripture. As we discussed earlier, such comparisons are often helpful in elucidating the virtues of the martyrs concerned. This elucidation, however, is by no means unilateral. In many ways, the martyrs, chronologically and culturally speaking, are more proximate to Chrysostom's Greco-Roman audiences than, say, the Iron Age figures of Abraham and David – a fact that is only enhanced by the presence of the martyrs' graves and relics near the city. Consequently, Chrysostom's comparison of the martyrs with their biblical

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<sup>68</sup> *Ber. et Pros.* 1; *Dros. mart.* 5.

counterparts, e.g., his comparison of St. Drosis' death by the pyre with the three youths in Daniel 3, would serve not only to illuminate the virtue of St. Drosis herself, but also reaffirm the plausibility and exemplary character of the three youths' story.<sup>69</sup>

Secondly, this iconic nature of Chrysostom's martyrdom rhetoric is present in his homilies in the form of meta-narratives governing his discourse of the martyr's virtues. Earlier, we have shown that Chrysostom's praise of the martyrs frequently focuses on a unique attribute of the martyr's life as a starting point for exalting his virtue. Almost always, this focal point is an aspect of the martyr's life that best demonstrates his human weakness. More often than not, this is also a weakness that is commonly shared by most human beings. Yet, it is exactly through this weakness that the martyr's virtue is revealed, namely, as a transcendence of his weakness by the grace and power of God – an emphasis that is undoubtedly due to Chrysostom's soteriological ideals.<sup>70</sup> This meta-narrative is clearly operative in his *Homily on the Maccabees*, where the apparent weaknesses of Eleazar, the mother and her seven sons are emphasized, in order that his listeners "might learn in full the generosity and ineffable power of the one who set up the [martyrdom] contest."<sup>71</sup>

It is, however, more clearly illustrated in his portrayal of the virgin martyr, Pelagia. In this homily, Chrysostom presents Pelagia as a "gentle girl, knowing nothing beyond her chamber." Yet, when the soldiers came to arrest her, she had the courage to not only face them, but also to mislead them, so that she can retreat to her own chambers and boldly

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<sup>69</sup> *Dros. mart.* 8.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Chapter 3 for how the meta-narrative of transcendence functions as a narrative embodiment of Chrysostom's soteriology.

<sup>71</sup> *Macc.* 1.3-4.

take her life to protect “the crown of her virginity.” For Chrysostom, such demonstration of courage and wisdom by a youthful and inexperienced virgin can be due only to the help of God. It was God’s aid, he explains, that first enabled her to develop these personal qualities. Similarly, it was Christ’s support that encouraged her in those last moments when she was about to take her life in her chamber:

she wasn’t alone inside, but had Jesus as an adviser. He was by her side, he touched her heart, he cheered her soul, he alone cast out her fear. He didn’t do these things at random, but because the martyr had made herself worthy of his help.<sup>72</sup>

Chrysostom is, of course, deploying here a narrative device common in the *Acta Martyrorum*, that is, the motif of divine presence, by claiming that Pelagia had Jesus by her side to encourage her. By using this motif, he is undoubtedly conjuring the ideas of divine approval, aid and encouragement regularly associated with this device.<sup>73</sup> Having said this, there is a distinct difference between Chrysostom’s appropriation of this divine presence motif, both here and elsewhere in his martyr homilies, and that which is commonly found in the *Acta*. In the *Acta*, the divine presence motif is usually subsumed under the more important meta-narrative of *participatio Christo*, where the martyr is ultimately exemplary because he is a conscious imitator of, or participant in Christ’s sufferings.<sup>74</sup> While this meta-narrative persists in Chrysostom’s homilies, the more

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<sup>72</sup> *Pel. vir. Mart.* 1 (Mayer, *Let us Die*, 152).

<sup>73</sup> Such a rendering of this motif is already present in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, where Christ is presented as “standing by and conversing with” the Smyrnaen martyrs. Later, Polycarp would be similarly encouraged by hearing a divine voice, just before his trial. *mart. Poly.* 2.2.

<sup>74</sup> The entire *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, for example, is intended to depict the martyr as an exemplary participant in Christ’s passion. The *Acts of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice* similarly concludes by having Carpus thank Christ for counting him “worthy of having this share [of martyrdom] in you.” Likewise, the martyrs of Lyons are portrayed as being “intensely eager to

dominant meta-narrative in Chrysostom's homilies is now that of the martyr's transcendence over his humanity by the grace of God. It is this meta-narrative, I believe, that controls not only Chrysostom's use of the divine presence motif, but also the other literary devices that he inherits from the *Acta* traditions. In other words, the Pauline notion of "his power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12.9) has overtaken the prevailing meta-narrative of *participatio Christo* in Chrysostom's portrayal of the martyrs.<sup>75</sup>

Apart from this motif of divine presence, Chrysostom's rhetorical conception of martyrdom is also indebted to the *Acta* traditions in several ways. Of these, the most obvious is his keen adoption of the literary motifs used in the *Acta's* depiction of the martyrs. The martyrs, St. Barlaam and the Maccabees, for example, are readily presented as athletes engaged in a contest for God, being cheered on by the angels and archangels.<sup>76</sup> Elsewhere, the martyrs, in general, are praised as "a battle-array and squadron of martyrs" engaged, obviously, in spiritual warfare against the Devil and his dominions.<sup>77</sup> Quite often, he would also present martyrs, especially those who are female and virgins, as brides of Christ. Thus he would reconceive St. Drosis' death at the pyre as a bridal procession, where the martyr is escorted by the angels to her bridegroom and "holy bridal canopy" in

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imitate and emulate Christ" through their deaths. *Mart. Carp. Pa. Ag.* 41; *The Martyr of Lyons* 2.2 (Musurillo, *Acts of Christian Martyrs*, 27, 83).

<sup>75</sup> This is most clearly stated in his *Homily 1 on the Maccabees*, where Chrysostom remarks that God uses as martyrs those who are, humanly speaking, weak, in order to demonstrate his "generosity and ineffable power." *Macc.* 1.4 .

<sup>76</sup> *Barl. mart.* 8; *Macc.* 2.2.

<sup>77</sup> *S. martyr.* 1. See also *Juv. Max. mart.* 7.

heaven.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, the scene where Bernike leads her daughters into the river is regarded not so much so as a mother drowning her children, but rather as a mother “escorting them under the holy bridal canopy itself.”<sup>79</sup>

Like the *Acta*, Chrysostom regularly interprets these motifs within an eschatological framework. Hence, the martyrs do not so much so die as to have “raced up to the holy city,” being carried off or escorted by the angels to the “crowns of righteousness” awaiting them in heaven.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, he does differ from the *Acta* in one significant way, namely, his more elaborate conception of the martyr as an angelic figure in his homilies. To be sure, this idea is already implicit in the Apocalypse’s depiction of the martyrs as worshippers in heaven.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, its clearest expression is already found in the first of the *Acta* genre, namely, the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, where the Smyrnaen martyrs are praised as “no longer humans but already angels.”<sup>82</sup> Despite this precedence, this martyr-angel motif, as it seems, is rarely emphasized explicitly in the subsequent *Acta*.<sup>83</sup> This is, however, not

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<sup>78</sup> *Dros. mart.* 9.

<sup>79</sup> *Ber. et Pros.* 20 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 173).

<sup>80</sup> *Ber. et Pros.* 19, *Macc.* 1.7; *Juv. Max. mart.* 13; *s. martyr.* 13.

<sup>81</sup> *Rev.* 7.14-17.

<sup>82</sup> *mart. Poly.* 2.3.

<sup>83</sup> In the *Acta* compiled by Musurillo, this angelic motif would re-emerge only in the fourth century story of the martyrs, Agape, Irene, Chione and their Companions. Here, the Diocletian martyrs are presented, first, as ascetic figures enjoying a heavenly life in the mountains, and, later, as participants in the angels’ endless praise of God in heaven upon their martyrdom. Such a conception, however, is most likely indebted to the influence of the fourth century monastic movement, which tends to present the monks as ascetic and angelic figures, rather than the *Acta* tradition *per se*. Nevertheless, it is not implausible that the *Acta* authors regarded the martyrs as angel-like beings, since the *Acta* regularly characterize the martyrs with narrative motifs reminiscent to those used for angels. For further discussion, see Chapter 1’s discussion of the angelic motif in early Christian discourse, pp. 63-65. *mart. Ag. Ir. Ch.* 1.1-3, 2.2.

the case for Chrysostom, who frequently depicts the martyrs as angelic figures, no different from their heavenly counterparts.<sup>84</sup> In his *On the Holy Martyrs*, he would even go so far as to assert that the martyrs are greater than the angels, since, unlike the angels, they can even mimic Christ's death in their bodies. They are

in no way inferior to the host of angels which the patriarch Jacob saw, but readily comparable and equal to it. For martyrs and angels are distinct in name only, but come together in works. Angels inhabit heavens, but martyrs do too. The former are ageless and immortal; this the martyrs will possess too. Yes, but don't the former have a nature that's incorporeal? And so what? For even if the martyrs are enclosed in a body, yet it is immortal. Rather even before immortality, Christ's death adorns their bodies more than immortality. The sky, decorated as it is with the chorus of stars, is not as brilliant as the bodies of the martyrs, decorated with their brilliant chorus of wounds. As a result, because they died, through this above all they have the greater share and received their prizes before immortality, crowned by death.<sup>85</sup>

Given the paucity of references to the angelic motif in the *Acta*, it is unlikely that these sources would have provided Chrysostom a sufficient impetus to develop the motif in such elaborate terms. Rather, his use of this motif is most likely due to the fourth century conception of the monk as both a successor of the martyr and an exemplary Christian who has recapitulated Adam's angelic life in Paradise.<sup>86</sup> Having said this, it is noteworthy that Chrysostom's martyrs, more often than not, attain the angelic life *only after* they enter the contest of martyrdom, especially at their death. This is not the case for his

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<sup>84</sup> *Mart. Aeg.* 4; *Juv. et Max. mart.* 7.

<sup>85</sup> *S. martyr.* 1 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 218-9).

<sup>86</sup> This is put in somewhat different terms in *On Saint Drosis*, where Chrysostom remarks that "after his [Christ's] coming those who inhabit the earth developed [...] from human beings into angels - all those who follow him in truth." Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 192-93 for Chrysostom's portrayal of the ascetic's life as a recapitulation of Adam's angelic life. *Dros. mart.* 5 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 197).

ascetic exemplars who are generally portrayed as having realized, at least to some degree, this spiritual perfection in their present lives.

### *Rhetoric of Appropriation*

Thus far, we have seen how Chrysostom's rhetoric of the martyrs is, essentially, a rhetoric of *plausibility*, where all his oratorical skills are brought to bear to reanimate the martyrs' deeds in his audiences' mind, so as to convince them of the praiseworthiness of the martyrs concerned. Furthermore, we have also drawn attention to the Christian aspects of his martyrdom rhetoric, the most important of which are the iconic nature of the martyrs' deeds and the Christian meta-narratives that he regularly deploys to depict these martyrs. When these different elements of his rhetoric are woven together, the end result is, most certainly, a very convincing picture of the martyr's deeds and virtues. In the case of a typical Greco-Roman encomium, this is also where the speech usually ends.

For Chrysostom, however, this is only the beginning of something much more important, namely, the persuasion of his audiences to appropriate the martyrs' lives and virtues for themselves. There are three aspects to this rhetoric of appropriation, namely, *identification*, *imitation* and *veneration*. With regards to identification, the aim here is to galvanize his listeners in such a way that they would take 'ownership' of the martyr concerned. In other words, the martyr becomes not merely a virtuous person worthy of imitation, but is recognized, essentially, as a spiritual forefather beloved by his audiences. In Chrysostom's homilies, this is often achieved through a rhetorical identification of his audience as participants in the martyr's life, as may be seen in his concluding reflections on St. Ignatius' martyrdom in Rome:

God removed him from *you* for a short time and happily gave him [back] to *you* with greater glory. And, just as those who borrow money pay back whatever they receive with interest, so too God, after using this valuable treasure among *you* for a short time and showing it to that city, gave it back to you with greater brilliance. My point is that *you* sent away a bishop, and received a martyr. *You* sent [him] away with prayers, and received [him] with crowns. (*italics mine*)<sup>87</sup>

The use of the second person plural here is clearly strategic, and aimed at incorporating Chrysostom's audience into the martyr's story. By numbering them among those who had sent Ignatius to Rome and, later, celebrated the return of his relics, he would not only have bridged the chronological distance between his listeners and Ignatius, but, more importantly, rendered the martyr more endearing to them as well.<sup>88</sup>

A more striking example, however, is to be found in Chrysostom's homily on St. Meletius, a bishop whom he also counts as a martyr.<sup>89</sup> Unlike most martyrs, Meletius (d. 381) died only recently and was personally known to many of the Antiochenes. Chrysostom takes full advantage of this by beginning his sermon with an appeal to his listeners' love for their bishop:

*you* demonstrate such good will concerning *your* shepherds, even after they are dead and gone. [...] *you* too are blessed because after *you* received the deposit of his love, *you* persisted in preserving it intact for the depositor up to the present. [...] He is to be envied because he fathered such [daughters and] sons. To be envied are *you*, to, because *you* were allotted such a father. (*italics mine*)<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> *Ignat. mart.* 17 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 115).

<sup>88</sup> This homily is probably the earliest textual evidence of the translation of Ignatius' relics to Antioch. Lightfoot, however, doubts that the translation actually took place and considers Chrysostom's reference as simply "an imaginary picture of the return of the relics." Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers: Ignatius and Polycarp Part 2*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1889), 46.

<sup>89</sup> As mentioned in our earlier introduction to his homily on St. Babylas, Chrysostom Meletius is most probably the bishop who enthusiastically revered Babylas by building a martyrium for him and, more importantly, "preserved in himself the martyrs' image." *hier. Bab.* 10.

<sup>90</sup> *Mel. Ant.* 1 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 42-3).

By depicting Meletius as a spiritual father to the Antiochenes, Chrysostom has once again united, by means of rhetoric, the lives of his audiences with that of their bishop. Yet more is involved here, as may be seen in what he says immediately after this.

Blessed Meletius, hidden in this coffin, is not evident to us with our physical eyes, yet through you, the fruit, the strength of his special grace is revealed. [...] For he has so inflamed your mind towards passion for him that you are heated through at just his name and are excited at the very mention of it. [...] For this is the custom of lovers and such is their habit, to embrace even just the names of their loved ones and to get heated up at their very mention, which is what you, too, have experienced in the case of this blessed man.<sup>91</sup>

Given the popularity of Meletius among the Antiochenes, there is no reason to doubt that Chrysostom is describing a common sentiment here. Nevertheless, I would also argue that this depiction of the Antiochenes' relationship and love for Meletius is equally *prescriptive* about how his listeners should foster their *memory* of the bishop. In other words, by idealizing the Antiochenes as the spiritual fruit of Meletius and the tangible means by which he still exists among them, and by presenting them as having such a passionate love for their bishop as that shared between lovers, Chrysostom is subtly reinforcing, or even establishing, *how* his listeners should remember and adore this bishop-martyr.

In his martyr homilies, this second aspect of Chrysostom's rhetoric of *identification* is, quite often, bound up with his constant exhortation of Christians to visit the graves of the martyrs.<sup>92</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Chrysostom keenly recognizes that physicality and tangibility of the martyrdom inadvertently deepens a Christian's sense of

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. 1-2 (Ibid. 42).

<sup>92</sup> *Juv. Max. mart.* 10; *hom. in Matt.* 37.

the martyr's immediacy, or presence. This, in turn, should yield many spiritual benefits for the Christian.

that's why God deposited in our hands the bodies of the saints until the time of the resurrection, so that we might have a rationale for a strict Christian way of life.<sup>93</sup>

Having said this, Chrysostom also clearly understands that a mere recollection of the martyr's story and a proximity to his relics in no way guarantee a proper appropriation of both by his listeners. For this reason, his encouragements to visit the martyriums are almost always accompanied by descriptions, or shall we say, instructions, on *how* the martyr's story and relics should be incorporated into his audiences' lives. This is well-demonstrated in his reflections on the relics of Julian. His holy bones, explains Chrysostom, should become a "constant reminder of virtue" for Christians.<sup>94</sup>

For even if a person is utterly lazy, they immediately leap up and become more enthused and bounce off to battle, when they see a fighter's armour [...] bloodied, taking encouragement from the sight of the weapons to attempt the same deeds. Even if we're utterly timid, how then won't we have considerable enthusiasm when we see not weapons but the very body of the holy man that was honoured with being bloodied through its confessing Christ, when this sight is falling into our mind like a fire and summoning us to the same contest?

Now, it is not self-evident that when a man sees a bloodied piece of armour, he would be inspired to continue the dead soldier's battle. The exact opposite is equally plausible. Likewise, the very sight of the martyr's relics does not necessary encourage a Christian to imitate his spiritual contest. Nevertheless, by interpreting the sight of the martyr's relics along these lines, Chrysostom essentially provides a controlling narrative for *how* the martyr's story and relics should be remembered and appropriated by his audiences.

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<sup>93</sup> *Jul. mart.* 4 (Mayer, *Let us Die*, 137).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* (*Ibid.*, 135).

Moreover, Chrysostom rarely leaves his instructions *in abstracto*, but often develops them in accordance to his listeners' context, as it is the case for this homily, where he would add, moments later, that Julian's body:

doesn't just work miracles but also persuades on to live a Christian life. For if you're rich and proud and have an inflated soul, when you come here and see the martyr, and work out the gap between your wealth and his riches, you'll at once suppress your conceit and shed your inflammation and so depart with considerable health in your soul. If you consider yourself poor and contemptible, when you come and see the martyr's wealth and scorn the many out in the world you'll depart in such a way that you'll have filled yourself with much discipline. [...] When you see that you haven't suffered as much as this holy martyr, you'll take back sufficient comfort from here.<sup>95</sup>

In other words, the very sight of the martyr's body should remind his listeners about the true nature of Christian wealth, namely, that it resides not in one's material riches, but in that of his soul. It is for this reason that the rich should not become conceited, while the poor need not feel inferior about their poverty.

This paranetic aspect of the martyr's memory brings us, next, to the second element of Chrysostom's rhetoric of appropriation: *imitation*. To be sure, the imitation of exemplary figures for one's moral development is a deeply ingrained assumption among the Greco-Romans, be they pagan or Christian. Yet, Chrysostom is also keenly aware that, in the case of the martyrs, this is no straight forward matter, since opportunities for a literal martyrdom have largely disappeared in the post-Constantine era.

"How is it possible," you ask, "for us to imitate martyrs now? After all, it isn't a time of persecution?" Yes, I know. Yet while it isn't a time of persecution, it is a time of martyrdom. It isn't a time of wrestling matches of that sort, but it is a time of crowns. Human beings aren't in pursuit, but demons are in pursuit. A tyrant isn't in persecution mode, but the Devil's in persecution mode, crueller than any tyrant. You don't see burning coals lying in front of you, but you do see desire's flame kindled. They trampled on burning coals; trample on nature's pyre. They sparred with wild animals; bridle your anger, the savage and untamed wild animal. They stood fast against unbearable pains; subvert the unnatural and wicked thoughts that swell in

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. (Ibid., 137).

your heart. It's in this way you will imitate martyrs. "For our struggle now isn't against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil." Nature's desire is a fire, a fire that is inextinguishable and constant. It is a rabid and mad dog; no matter how many times you get rid of it, it leaps at you every time and doesn't give up. The flame of the burning coals is savage, but this is crueller – that is, the flame of desire.<sup>96</sup>

What Chrysostom is advocating here is a form of white martyrdom that emphasizes a spiritual, rather than a literal death. Structured along the lines of Greco-Roman virtue ethics, it is a call for Christians to slay the sinful desires (ἐπιθυμία) that constantly plague them, in order that they might develop the same virtues that had once enabled the martyrs to embrace their deaths.<sup>97</sup> With regard to the form that this teaching takes in Chrysostom's martyr homilies, it is quite varied and is largely a function of both the martyr's life and the spiritual condition of his listeners. Quite often, Chrysostom would perceive certain aspects of the martyr's life as commonly shared by his audiences and encourage his listeners to imitate the martyr in this aspect. It is with this in mind that both the Maccabean mother and Bernike are commended as exemplary figures for mothers listening to their stories, while St. Lucian, with his patient endurance of starvation, is presented as an apt reminder for Christians not to indulge in gluttony.<sup>98</sup> Having said this, the martyrs also commonly exemplify the virtues of spiritual courage, patience and

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<sup>96</sup> *Barl. Mart.* 2 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 180).

<sup>97</sup> Such a spiritualization of martyrdom is not unique to Chrysostom, but is often practised by other fourth century fathers, such as Basil and Gregory of Nyssa (cf. Basil's *A homily on the Martyr Gordius* and Gregory's *A homily on Theodore the Recruit*). Although developed in the third century by fathers such as Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian, the earliest roots of this concept may be traced to the epistles of Paul (Rom. 6, Phil. 3), where we find the apostle teaching that a Christian may identify with Christ's death and resurrection through his death to sin. Finally, as we mentioned earlier, such ascetic cultivation of virtues is readily recognized by most fathers as a means of Christian deification. Malone, *The Monk and the Martyr*, 5-40.

<sup>98</sup> *Macc.* 1.8, 2.2; *Ber. et Pros.* 23; *Luc. mart.* 9.

endurance under tribulation, and it is this particular paradigm that Chrysostom calls upon most often in his frequent attacks against, what he perceives to be, the common spiritual ills of his audiences, such as spiritual laziness, indulgence in luxury and the despondency of the poor and sick.<sup>99</sup>

A final aspect of this rhetoric of imitation is the so-called multiplying of texts, or the narratives of the martyrs. As mentioned earlier, this is commonly understood as the development of further narratives about the relics of the martyrs – a narrative device that will be taken up shortly in our discussion of Chrysostom’s rhetoric of veneration. I would argue, however, that there is a second feature to this ‘multiplying’ of martyr texts and this relates to how the martyr’s story is incorporated into that of another exemplary figure. In Chrysostom’s homiletical portrayal of Meletius, the bishop clearly comes across as an exemplary leader in his own right. Indeed, Chrysostom goes so far as to claim that God had summoned Meletius to the Council of Constantinople, in order that bishops from all over the world might watch “that holy man” and learn from him “every virtue appropriate to a priest.” Having said this, Meletius, for Chrysostom, is also an exemplary figure because he demonstrates in his own life how one might appropriate a martyr’s deeds and virtues, be it in his reverence of Babylas’ relics, or in his imitation of the martyr’s virtues.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> *mart. Aeg.* 5; *Macc.* 1.11; *Dros. mart.* 6; *Pel. vir. Mart.* 3, *Romanum* 12; *Jul. mart.* 2.

<sup>100</sup> *hier. Bab.* 10.

A similar stance is observed in Chrysostom's tribute to Eustathius.<sup>101</sup> Here, the Antiochene bishop, Flavian, is identified as yet another person who imitates a martyr's virtues, in this case, Eustathius', in his own life:

It was on the basis, too, of this training [that is, Paul's admonition in Acts 20.25-28] that blessed Eustathius gave advice to his own disciples. So, when this wise and noble teacher [Flavian] heard this advice, he brought the theory to fruition in practice.<sup>102</sup>

Once again, by narrating how the virtues of Eustathius are re-enacted in the life of Flavian, Chrysostom is also asserting that the martyr's legacy, or indeed, the rhetoric of his deeds, endures even after his time. As a matter of fact, the stories of the two bishops have become one, with Flavian's story becoming an extension of that of Eustathius. What is more important is also the fact that this new story has become, for the present audience, a powerful sign and reminder of how one might perpetuate the life and virtues of the martyr in their own lives.

This rhetoric of the martyr's acts, however, is not merely re-enacted in process of *imitatio martyrii*. For Chrysostom, it is also actualized in the third and final element of his rhetoric of appropriation, namely, his rhetoric of veneration. In his *On the Holy Martyr Ignatius*, Chrysostom likens the martyr to:

a perpetual warehouse that is drained day after day and does not run dry, and makes all who share in it more prosperous, so indeed too this blessed Ignatius sends back home full of blessings, confidence, noble thoughts, and a great deal of courage those who come to him.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Although Eustathius did not die a martyr's death, Chrysostom, nevertheless, "styles him as a martyr by virtue of Eustathius' suffering for his confession of Nicene Christianity in the face of Arianism." Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 49; *Eus. Ant.* 5.

<sup>102</sup> *Eus. Ant.* 10.

<sup>103</sup> *Ignat. mart.* 17 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 115).

What Chrysostom has in mind here is, once again, expressive of the sentiments common among his contemporaries, such as Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>104</sup> For Chrysostom, the rhetorical force of the martyr's life is not simply confined to the exemplary value of his deeds. Rather, it is also expressed in more tangible ways. First of all, despite his physical death, the martyr is regarded as very much alive and present among the contemporary Christians, joining them even in their martyrs' feasts. It is for this reason that Chrysostom would unhesitatingly declare that the martyr, Julian, is:

watching from nearby, and being close and standing next to the table [of the martyrrium] itself, doesn't allow the enjoyment to give itself over to sin. Instead, like a tutor or an excellent father, he watches with the eyes of faith and checks the laughter [of Christians].<sup>105</sup>

Beyond this, the martyrs are also active participants in the Christians' prayers, acting frequently as their patrons and interceding before God on their behalf.<sup>106</sup>

Let us entreat them [Bernike, Prosdoke and Domnina], let us ask them to be our patrons. For they possess much boldness of speech, not just when they were alive, but also now that they are dead – and far more that they are dead. For now they bear the marks of Christ and when they display these marks they can persuade the King of anything. So, since they have so much power and friendship with God, by rendering ourselves as one of their own through constant attendance and perpetually coming to them, let us embrace through them the loving kindness that comes from God.<sup>107</sup>

By asserting that the martyrs are very much 'alive' and participating in the life of the Church, Chrysostom is, essentially, declaring anew that the rhetoric of the martyrs' acts is not merely a thing of the past, but continues to reverberates, even now, in the life of the

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<sup>104</sup> See pp. 250. Clark, *Christianity and Roman Society*, 57-58.

<sup>105</sup> *Jul. mart.* 4 (Mayer, *Let us Die*, 137).

<sup>106</sup> *Mel. Ant.* 10 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 48).

<sup>107</sup> It is noteworthy that this regard for the martyrs is widespread in both the Latin and Greek Churches. *Ber. et Pros.* 24 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 175-6); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London: SCM, 1981), 5-6.

Church. This rhetoric of the martyrs' deeds is also actualized in another more powerful way. Speaking of the martyrs, Juveninus and Maximinus, Chrysostom calls them

pillars, and lookouts, and guard-towers and light-sources, and bulls. For truly like pillars they hold up the Church, and like guard-towers they wall it in, and like lookouts who beat off every plot, they create a great deal of calm for those inside. And like light-sources they drove away the darkness of impiety and like bulls in body and soul, with equal enthusiasm, they dragged Christ's trusty yoke.<sup>108</sup>

Certainly, Chrysostom has in mind here the exemplary value of the martyrs, that is, their virtuous lives can help discourage vice and inspire virtue within Christians. Nevertheless, he also regards these same statements as attesting to the miraculous power that is displayed, time and again, by the martyr's relics and graves, whether it is through the healing of sickness, exorcism of demons, or even the fending off of enemies from the city.<sup>109</sup> As Chrysostom explains, this power is grounded not so much so in the martyr himself, but in the power of the Holy Spirit, who once helped the martyr triumph in his acts, and continues to do so through his relics.

This belief is well-illustrated in Chrysostom's narration of the Babylas' 'conflict' with Julian, which we mentioned in our introduction. In this homily, Chrysostom speaks of the martyr's body as not "bereft of animating energy." Instead, "a second power greater than the soul itself, infuses it - the grace of the Holy Spirit, which, through the miracles it performs, confesses to all about the resurrection."<sup>110</sup> It is on the basis of this power that

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<sup>108</sup> *Juv. Max. mart.* 9 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 99).

<sup>109</sup> *Dros. mart.* 10; *Jul. mart.* 4.

<sup>110</sup> Elsewhere, in his praise of Ignatius, Chrysostom claims that the Spirit's power is present even in the coffin of the martyr. In this same homily, we also find his further justification of the powers of the relics. Specifically, he argues that this power was already present in the old dispensation, when the coffin of Elisha displayed a similar healing power (2 Kgs 13.21). This being the case, the new dispensation, with its more abundant spiritual blessings, should naturally enjoy a

the rhetoric of Babylas' martyrdom is re-enacted, this time through a new contest between his relics and the oracle of Daphne. Initially, it would appear that the demonic forces, through Julian's hands, had triumphed over Babylas by having the martyr's relics disinterred from Daphne. On the contrary, it was Babylas who turned out to be the final victor, since the temple of Apollo was subsequently consumed by flames. For Chrysostom, this was immediately taken as a sign of the martyr's vindication by God and his triumph over his demonic foes – a fact that was supposedly confirmed by Julian's reluctance to “unleash his anger on the martyr's martyrdom” as revenge for the conflagration.<sup>111</sup>

As Brown and others have pointed out, the investment of such power in the martyrs, particularly the efficacy of their prayers and relics, is a phenomenon that is unprecedented in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, it is also apparent that these convictions took root very quickly in both the Greek and Latin Church by the late fourth century, though not without objections from some quarters.<sup>113</sup> As Markus has shown, this practice may be understood as an attempt by the post-Constantine Christians to bridge the

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greater degree of such spiritual power, as one does see in the powers of the martyrs' relics and coffins. *hier. Bab.* 2 (Mayer, *Let us Die*, 143); *Ignat. mart.* 18 (Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 116).

<sup>111</sup> *Hier. Bab.* 8 (Mayer, *Let Us Die*, 146-7).

<sup>112</sup> Brown, 5; Mayer, *Cult of the Saints*, 15-19.

<sup>113</sup> The immediate opponents that Chrysostom has in mind are probably pagans, like Julian and Libanius. Yet, it is not implausible that he is also addressing some among his listeners who remain sceptical of this practice. This is evident in the fact that Chrysostom frequently appeals to the Scriptures for justifications of his case, an appeal which will sound rather hollow if not spoken to a fellow Christian. Indeed, this objection is explicitly raised elsewhere by a presbyter, Vigilantius, against whom Jerome had to launch a defence for the cult. *Bab. Jul. et gen.* 9; Jerome, *C. vig.*; Josef Lossl, "An Early Christian Identity Crisis Triggered by Changes in the Discourse of Martyrdom: The Controversy between Jerome of Strido and Vigilantius of Calagurris," in *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, *Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia* (Leuven ; Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2005), 97.

“generation gap” between the martyrs and themselves, that is, to convince themselves that “essentially, nothing had changed and that their Church was still the Church of the martyrs.” Indeed,

no radical break could be allowed to divide the triumphant Church of the fourth and later centuries from its persecuted predecessor. The past had to be kept alive in the Church’s mind, and not only alive, but renewed in the novel conditions of its existence.<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, more can be said regarding Chrysostom’s rhetoric of veneration, beyond its role of establishing the chronological and spiritual continuity between the martyrs and the present day Christians. His claims that the martyrs are very much ‘alive’ in the here and now, be it through their intercessory prayers or the power of their relics, can also be understood as attempts to recapture the *dynameis* that have once animated the rhetoric of the martyrs’ acts and to insist that the same power is still available for his listeners. In other words, his language of veneration is, ultimately speaking, iconic, intended to direct his audiences’ focus back to the power, love and glory of God, so that they might also be similarly transformed by Him.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have demonstrated the clear continuities between Chrysostom’s rhetoric of martyrdom, and the Greco-Roman rhetorical and Christian martyrdom traditions that he was brought up with. Generally speaking, his martyr homilies conform

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<sup>114</sup> R. A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 90.

to the literary structure of Greco-Roman epideictic rhetoric and deploy most, if not all, of the narrative motifs and themes commonly used in the *Acta Martyrorum*. Having said this, there are several unique features in his rhetoric of martyrdom that distinguish him from both his Greco-Roman and Christian predecessors. These same rhetorical features also play an important role in establishing and clarifying Chrysostom's ideological intentions for the martyr as an exemplary figure.

There are two central aspects to Chrysostom's rhetoric of martyrdom. The first is his rhetoric of the martyrs' deeds, where the goal is to reanimate the martyrs' lives and deeds in his audience's mind, so as to render the martyrs' virtues plausible to them. In this respect, Chrysostom is clearly indebted to the conventions of Greco-Roman epideictic oratory, with its deployment of rhetorical techniques such as the *ēthopoia*, *ekphrasis* and *synkriseis* as means of rendering the martyrs' feats credible to his listeners.

Having said this, Chrysostom also differs significantly from his Greco-Roman counterparts in that his rhetoric is always iconic in nature, namely, his goal is always to redirect his audience's focus to the God who has empowered the martyrs. This is clearly shown in his frequent use of the meta-narrative of transcendence as a way of upholding the martyr as a *paradeigma* of the Christian's potential for transcending his human weaknesses and attaining greater heights of spiritual perfection through the power of God. Indeed, this meta-narrative is to sharply distinguish his rhetoric from not only his pagan counterparts but also the *Acta* traditions' tendency to present the martyrs' lives as *participatio Christo*. To be sure, the notion of participation in Christ's sufferings continues to be an important theme in Chrysostom's ethical framework. Nonetheless, it is now subsumed under the more important spiritual trait of dependence on God's aid as a means

of transcending one's human limitations and attaining spiritual perfection, or indeed, deification.

Nevertheless, the continuities between Chrysostom's martyr homilies and the *Acta* traditions are also manifestly clear, whether it is his belief in God's unique presence during a martyr's sufferings, or his conviction that death represents not so much the end for the martyr but his entry into the eschatological blessings of God. Even so, Chrysostom is to develop his own unique eschatological vision through his homiletical portrayal of the martyr as being a participant in the angelic life. In doing so, the martyr is reconceived as yet another exemplary figure for the angelic lifestyle which Chrysostom is convinced that every Christian should realize not only in the *eschaton* but also, to some degree, in the here and now.<sup>115</sup>

As to the second major feature of Chrysostom's martyr discourse, it is his rhetoric of appropriation. Having convinced his listeners about the plausibility of the martyrs' virtues, Chrysostom's objective here is to persuade them to further identify with and, therefore, love the martyrs, so that they would not only willingly imitate their saintly lives, but also venerate them. Of course, many aspects of his rhetoric here are not without precedence in Greco-Roman oratory, especially his call for the imitation of the martyrs. Nevertheless, there are several oratorical features that are clearly unique to Chrysostom and, I believe, indebted to his Christian worldview. Among these, the most distinguished feature is his language of veneration, which, ultimately, is an insistence that the power

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<sup>115</sup> See Chapter 1 for his didactic teachings on the angelic life of the Christian.

that once animated the rhetoric of the martyrs' deeds remains very much available for the spiritual transformation of his listeners.

Clearly then, the Christian martyr, as portrayed by Chrysostom's rhetoric of martyrdom, is an important exemplar whose very life and death embodies and reinforces the Christian ideals that Chrysostom holds dear, such as a wholehearted dependence on God's aid for transcendence over one's human weaknesses, the importance of cultivating the life of the angels and the belief in God's presence and aid during times of sufferings. In addition, Chrysostom's martyrdom rhetoric also effectively enriches his vision of the Christian life in two ways. The first is its constant reminder to his audiences that the *dynamis theou* that once animated the martyrs remains available for them. As for the second, it is his rhetoric's continual insistence that Christian self-identity is to be grounded upon one's conscious appropriation of the lives and aspirations of the saints, and also his communion with the same.

## CONCLUSION

In the summer of 2008, my family and I headed for the cinema to watch what we had been anticipating eagerly for the last two and a half years: the screening of *Prince Caspian*, the second in the series of films that are based on C.S. Lewis' epic fantasy, *The Chronicles of Narnia*.<sup>1</sup> However, as ardent fans of the novel, we were less than pleased to see what seemed to us to be a rather poor adaptation of the story and an unnecessary re-characterization of one of its leading characters: High King Peter.<sup>2</sup> Gone is Lewis's noble and mature Peter Pevensie, who had the wisdom to remind Susan, his sister, not to behave like a kid, since she is back in Narnia, where she is a Queen.<sup>3</sup> In his place is a teenager who is not only struggling with an identity crisis but allows his pride to go disastrously awry by leading the Narnians into a premature battle and an unnecessary slaughter by the Telmarines.<sup>4</sup>

Setting aside my personal 'grievances', the screenwriters' re-conceptualization of Lewis's lofty king is intriguing, since this new Peter is, in many ways, not unlike a twenty-first-century adolescent. Despite all his flaws, this new Peter would eventually rise to the occasion, overcome his weaknesses and, ultimately, triumph over his enemies. By doing

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<sup>1</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian*, *Chronicles of Narnia* (New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1951; reprint, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Several of the novel's central themes, as Arkelian points out, such as "faith, renewal, and rejoicing" did not make it to the screen intact. On the whole, the film is, as the title of Arkelian's review, puts it, "long on action, short on faith." Jon Arkelian, "Narnia Film Long on Action, Short on Faith", *The Anglican Church of Canada* <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/culture/040/article/narnia-film-long-on-action-short-on-faith/?cHash=6d96658f96> (accessed 24 March 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Lewis, 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, my reader response and I suspect that not a few lovers of the movie might disagree with my assessment.

so, he also becomes, for his teenage audience, a hero figure that they can readily identify with and find plausible.<sup>5</sup>

Though preceding the Narnian screenwriters by more than 1,600 years, Chrysostom similarly understood that an exemplary figure is, essentially, an ideological construct, whose persuasive power is dependent largely on its plausibility to its audiences. Where he differs from these screenwriters is the fact that his exemplar discourse is conducted in quite a different historical and cultural context. In Chrysostom's world of Late Antiquity, exemplar discourse was dictated predominantly by five streams of exemplar traditions: Greco-Roman *paideia*, philosophical ethics, biographical and rhetorical traditions, and the Christian heritage to which Chrysostom belonged.

In this thesis, we have contended that the reading strategies and analytical frameworks assumed by these different traditions played an influential role in shaping Chrysostom's approach to exemplar portraits. When due attention is paid to these hermeneutical principles, what we gain is a better understanding of not only how Chrysostom constructed these exemplar portraits, but, more importantly, his pedagogical and ideological objectives for these literary constructs and the role that they can play in elucidating his didactic teachings in general. In other words, we believe that a hermeneutics of exemplar portraits can be developed to facilitate our interpretation of Chrysostom's writings. So, what does such a hermeneutics of exemplar portraits look like? Where can it be applied? What interpretative benefits does it yield?

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<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Cusey, "'Prince Caspian' Walks Tightrope for Christian Fans", USA Today [http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-05-16-narnia-christian-caspian\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2008-05-16-narnia-christian-caspian_N.htm) (accessed 24 March 2010).

We began in Chapter 1 by arguing that Chrysostom's education under the system of *enkyklios paideia* would have cultivated in him a deep conviction that *imitatio exemplorum* is both an important and natural way for a person to communicate his ideas and worldviews effectively in the Late Antique world. Within this pedagogical framework, the principle of *imitatio exemplorum* is applicable to the most mundane of learning activities, such as the copying of Greek alphabets onto one's wax tablets. Yet, as Chrysostom and his peers would have recognized, the principle has a far more significant and popular role, that is, its ability to communicate one's ethical ideals. As we have seen over the course of the last five chapters, this is also the primary function that Chrysostom has in mind for his exemplar portraits: as embodiments of his ethical ideals and the theology upon which these ideals are grounded.

In terms of his ethical approach, Chrysostom differs little from his pagan counterparts in that he generally conforms to the ethical principles and framework bequeathed to him by the Greco-Roman tradition of virtue ethics. Like the Platonists, he is quite at ease speaking about the need for a Christian to discipline his reason, so that it can guide the irrational aspects of his soul towards cultivating the *aretai*. Likewise, Chrysostom is also not averse to presuming a multiplicity of Christian *aretai* on some occasions, while arguing for the unity of the same in other situations. When defending the superiority of celibacy over marriage, he thinks it natural to appropriate the Platonic distinction between goods in nature and external goods, and to count monasticism among the former while relegating marriage to the latter.

Having said this, there are also distinctive Christian overtones to Chrysostom's conception of virtue ethics. Influenced by his Christian heritage, he would conceive

*eudaimonia* as primarily realized in one's participation in God's *agapē* and His love for humanity. Such a conception of *eudaimonia* would, in turn, have three implications for his understanding of *aretai*. First of all, it brings him into agreement with the Platonists and many of the early Christians that the cultivation of divine likeness and *aretai* is a crucial means by which one attains *eudaimonia*. Secondly, it leads him to regard external goods as not only expressions of God's *agapē* for humanity but also as instrumental in nature, in that external goods are to find their proper excellence in the degree to which they are serviceable to God. Thirdly, within such an ethical framework, the *aretē* of the human nature can only be understood teleologically. Specifically, the body is regarded as *enaretos* only when it subjects itself to the leadership of the soul. Likewise, the soul becomes *enaretos* only when attains its proper end, that is, to exercise rational rule over the body and to rely on the aid of the Spirit to participate in the *agapē* of God.

Another aspect of Christian influence upon Chrysostom's ethics is to be seen in his preference for the motif of the angelic life as a symbol of the human *telos*, rather than the more abstract Platonic conception of *eudaimonia* as attaining the life of the gods. Specifically, every Christian, at the *eschaton*, is to become like the angel by attaining immortality, celibacy, moral virtue and a citizenship in heaven. Having said this, there remain distinct differences between the Christian and his heavenly counterpart, namely, the Christian is to live his angelic life in the body and by the Holy Spirit's help.

Contrary to the assessment of many theologians, what Chrysostom is propounding here is not mere Christian moralism. Rather, as we have demonstrated in Chapter 3, his ethical vision is grounded in a robust Christology, soteriology and eschatology. In line with the Irenaean, Athanasian and Cappadocian traditions, Chrysostom conceives the

Incarnation as both the means of human salvation and also the prefiguration of human *telos*. By the Son's Incarnation, a way has been opened up for all humanity to become deified in the flesh through their union with Christ by the Holy Spirit. This is actualized in every Christian whenever the Holy Spirit recreates him into the Image of Christ by enabling him to live a life that is increasingly divine, though resolutely human. For Chrysostom, to live such a divine and human life is also tantamount to participation, no doubt in a progressive manner, in the victorious recapitulation of Christ. Seen from this perspective then, the motif of the angelic life is but a way for Chrysostom to articulate a more glorious end for the Christian, that is, deification.

As to how Chrysostom articulates these soteriological and ethical ideals in his exemplars, this is achieved primarily through the narrative strategies and rhetorical techniques that he learnt from Greco-Roman biographies and rhetoric. With respect to the former, they would have nurtured in Chrysostom an innate sense of how narrative motifs may be deployed to characterize his exemplars and accentuate his soteriological and ethical ideals. This ideological appropriation of narrative motifs operates at three levels. First of all, narrative motifs are frequently used in an episodic manner, intended to communicate a straightforward ethical point. This is well illustrated in his narrations of David's repentance for his adultery, which, on one occasion, is held up as an example of Christian humility, while, on another, as a reminder of divine judgment over sin.

Secondly, whenever Chrysostom uses a narrative motif, he would generally take on board the ethical or soteriological ideals associated with this motif. Notwithstanding this, he is also quite prepared to reconceive the narrative motif and its associated ideals in a manner that allows him to express his own distinctive ethical and soteriological vision.

This is clearly the case for his adoption of the angelic life motif. Traditionally, in earlier Judeo-Christian writings, the motif is used mostly as a way of denoting the immortal and heavenly life of the faithful, or to stress the inferiority of humanity vis-à-vis the angels. Certainly these attributes are still presumed by Chrysostom whenever he speaks of an exemplary figure as angelic, as in the case of his many portrayals of the Christian monks. Nevertheless, Chrysostom is also quite prepared to reconceive the same motif creatively for his own pedagogical purposes.

Take his narration of David's encounter with Saul at the cave, for example. Here, one of the ways that Chrysostom marks out the Israelite king as a distinctively *Christian* exemplar is to regard David's way of life as no different from the angels. In other words, the angelic motif is now redefined by Chrysostom as a distinctive sociological marker for Christian identity. In the case of his Pauline portraits, however, the same angelic motif would become for Chrysostom not a symbol of human inferiority but more so a means of declaring a Christian's deification. This is surely the intent underlying Chrysostom's frequent exaltation of Paul as being greater than the angels – a rhetorical move that is aimed at proclaiming afresh God's promise that all Christians can attain the heights of divinity in Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Having said this, there is a third and more important feature in Chrysostom's appropriation of narrative motifs. More often than not, he will deploy these literary devices by organizing them around specific meta-narratives, so that these devices may better communicate the ideologies implicit in these meta-narratives. In the course of our

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<sup>6</sup> Another multivalent motif that Chrysostom often deploys is the motif of virginity. See Chapter 4, pp. 198-206.

study, we have identified three meta-narratives that, we believe, are important for his exemplar portraits in general. The first is the *enkōmion* paradigm which Chrysostom inherited from the Greco-Roman biographical and rhetorical traditions – a narrative framework that essentially endorses the classical belief that human excellence is a function of a person's God-given *phusis* and the training that his *phusis* receives. This meta-narrative is evidently assumed in one of Chrysostom's portrayals of David's duel with Goliath, where David is portrayed as possessing a kingly affection for his people even before he became a king, an affection which he presumably developed during his days as a shepherd boy. It is also present in one of his rationalizations of David's adultery, which Chrysostom takes to be the mere result of circumstances, rather than due to David's nature and training.

Nevertheless, Chrysostom's appropriation of this *enkōmion* paradigm is often not straightforward. Indeed, most of his exemplar portraits are clearly aimed at subverting the ethical heart of this paradigm. As we have demonstrated, Chrysostom, in direct opposition to Platonic ethics, believes that human excellence is founded not so much on the quality of one's *phusis* but upon the aid and grace of God. The consequence of this is that the *enkōmion* paradigm, with its positive correlation of human *phusis* and *aretai*, cannot be adopted for his Christian exemplars without a fundamental reconception of this narrative framework. This, Chrysostom achieves, largely through a conscious demeaning of his exemplar's origins, whether it is King David, the apostle Paul, or the Phoenician prostitute. By doing so, Chrysostom also successfully brings the *enkōmion* paradigm in line with the second meta-narrative that he commonly uses for his exemplars: the meta-narrative of transcendence.

As explained in the analysis of Chrysostom's Pauline portraits in Chapter 3, the object of this meta-narrative of transcendence is to exalt the exemplar as an example of God's deifying work by laying stress on the ways in which the exemplar has transcended his human nature. Within such a narrative scheme, the demeaning of the exemplar's origins has two functions. The first is to bring into relief the spiritual heights to which such a lowly creature has ascended and, in the process, magnify the divine grace that has enabled this ascent. The second is to hold up the exemplar as a demonstration of what a Christian, no matter how inferior his nature may be, can potentially attain through the grace and power of God. This, in turn, redefines the exemplar as not simply another role model of Christian living but, indeed, the sign and icon of God's grace and ineffable power.

With regard to the third meta-narrative, it is the encapsulation of Chrysostom's soteriological conviction that Christian salvation is no less than being refashioned into the *Imago Christi*, which is both human and divine. Essentially, this calls for the exemplar to be portrayed as one who, despite his humanity, is able to recapitulate the deified life of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Once again, this meta-narrative of *Imago Christi* is best demonstrated in Chrysostom's frequent depiction of Paul as an exemplar who is thoroughly human, whether it is in his exercise of his free will or in his human frailty. Yet in spite of this, the apostle also proves to be a figure capable of performing divine-like feats by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is powerfully demonstrated in Paul's ability to transcend his human limitations, whether it was his triumph over all his persecutors or his conversion of barbaric tribes.

Despite the formative role that Greco-Roman biographies play in Chrysostom's exemplar portraits, the form that these portraits take would be determined more decisively by the rhetorical tradition that he was trained in. In line with *paradeigmata* rhetoric, Chrysostom's exemplar portraits are frequently introduced as proofs for his didactic arguments and teachings. These portraits usually take the form of the rhetorical techniques prescribed in the *progymnasmata*, though their actual expressions will depend largely on Chrysostom's pedagogical intent and context. Among the rhetorical techniques he adopts, the following predominate: the first is clearly the *enkōmion*, whose application we have already considered; the second is the *synkrisis*, where the exemplar concerned is compared with another similar exemplar or even a villainous figure, in order to highlight the *aretai* and superiority of the exemplar concerned. In this way, Chrysostom would not only render his exemplar's virtues more plausible but also reinforce the specific virtue that the *synkrisis* is meant to illustrate. A similar assumption is observed in Chrysostom's application of the *ēthopoia*, whereby a character in his narration is made to utter a fictitious speech that would either draw attention to a specific virtue of the exemplar or reveal the ethical motivation underlying the exemplar's deeds.

Another popular rhetorical technique or figure of speech that Chrysostom regularly employs is *ekphrasis*. Here, a vivid rhetorical description of the exemplar's story is employed in order to stimulate the audience's imagination and visualization of exemplar's life and feats. In this way then, the audience is led into a deeper and more experiential appreciation of the exemplar's virtues. Frequently, an *ekphrasis* plays an iconic role in Chrysostom's teachings, in that it is the window through which his audience can see more clearly Chrysostom's ethical ideals and the soteriology that these ideals

presuppose. Such is the case for his many *ekphraseis* of Christian ascetics, which, when presented to fellow ascetics, are meant to be an affirmation of their vocation and an inspiration for them to persevere in their calling. Yet, when a similar *ekphrasis* is re-enacted before a predominantly lay audience, it has an additional cathartic effect, which is to deconstruct the laity's less than godly worldviews and to compel them to repent on the one hand and develop new spiritual aspirations on the other.

Apart from these rhetorical techniques, another aspect of Greco-Roman rhetoric that Chrysostom uses regularly is epideictic rhetoric. This is certainly the case for his panegyrics to Christian saints, especially the Christian martyrs, which, by and large, conforms to the rhetorical structure of epideictic oratory. Nonetheless, this rhetorical structure cannot be adopted *in situ* if it is to achieve fully the pedagogical objectives that Chrysostom intends for his soteriological and ethical ideals. This can be seen in the several rhetoric innovations that he develops in his panegyrics for the martyrs.

Like Greco-Roman epideictic rhetoric, Chrysostom's martyr homilies are similar attempts at narrating the martyr's deeds and demonstrating the virtues implicit to these feats, so that both the saint's achievements and virtues may become plausible and persuasive before his present day audience. Where Chrysostom differs is his conviction that what is at stake here is not so much so the reputation of the martyr or the plausibility of his deeds but rather the power of God that has once animated the martyr's valiant sacrifice. In other words, what Chrysostom is re-enacting ultimately is the divine power that has empowered the saint. Pedagogically speaking, as long as Chrysostom can convince his listeners that the power that once animated the saint remains available for them, they will be one step closer to appropriating it for their own lives.

With regard to his narration of the martyr's life and deeds, Chrysostom, generally speaking, does not conform to the *enkōmion* paradigm. Rather, in line with his soteriological ideals, he adopts the meta-narrative of transcendence and thus finds himself demeaning the martyr's human stature so that the divine grace that empowered the saint can be magnified. As a matter of fact, the dominance of this meta-narrative is to be seen in how it subsumes the meta-narrative of *participatio Christo* that is traditionally associated with the martyr literature. Under this re-conceptualized narrative framework, the martyr figure becomes not so much an exemplar of how one might faithfully participate in Christ's sufferings, but how one might endure the same sufferings by the grace and aid of God.

This rhetoric of the plausibility of the martyr's deeds or, in fact, the divine power animating the martyr, is but one of the two major innovations that Chrysostom introduces to his martyr panegyrics. Equally important is his rhetoric of appropriation, which Chrysostom develops as a means of achieving his pedagogical intent for his martyr discourse. There are essentially three elements to this rhetoric of appropriation. The first is the rhetoric of identification, where the audience is persuaded to move from a simple admiration of the martyr to a heightened consciousness of their relationship with and love for the martyr. This then sets the stage for the rhetoric of imitation, where Chrysostom introduces a variety of ways in which his listeners can imitate the martyr's deeds in their present context.

As for the third way by which Chrysostom encourages his audience's appropriation of a martyr's life and virtues, it is through the rhetoric of veneration. Specifically, a martyr figure is portrayed not so much so as a hero of the past, worthy of

imitation, but more so as a saint who is both alive and present among his audience, and capable of interceding prayerfully on their behalf. Again, what is at stake here for Chrysostom is not so much the spiritual presence of the martyr or the efficacy of his relics. Rather, it is the fact that the divine power that has once animated the martyr's deeds remains operative through the saint's prayers and relics. Hence, by promoting the veneration of the martyrs and their relics, Chrysostom is essentially holding out these two as icons of God's transforming power and, more importantly, as tokens of God's promise that the same power remains available for the present day Christians.

Having examined the different ideologies, interpretative methods and reading strategies assumed in Chrysostom's exemplar portraits, we shall conclude by returning to the final and perhaps most important question that we asked in the beginning of our conclusion, namely, what benefits can such a hermeneutics of exemplar portraits yield? During the course of our study, three benefits have been identified. The first is the function of validation or invalidation, where the degree to which Chrysostom's exemplar portraits (*praxis*) coheres with one's model of his didactic teachings (*theoria*) either confirms the validity of the latter or calls into question its soundness. This diagnostic function is well-demonstrated in our discussion of Chrysostom's soteriology, where the incoherence between Chrysostom's Pauline portraits and the popular western conception of Chrysostom's doctrine brings into relief the problems inherent within the western model. The net result of this investigation is a fresh appreciation of Chrysostom's soteriology as essentially a doctrine of deification that is well attested in his Pauline portraits.

With regard to the second and third benefits, these are essentially the benefits of ideological reinforcement and supplementation. Examples of both abound throughout the thesis and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say, the benefit of reinforcement occurs whenever an exemplar portrait proves to be an excellent embodiment and therefore a confirmation of an ethical or soteriological ideal that is taught by Chrysostom. As for the benefits of supplementation, these are gained whenever an exemplar portrait particularizes a didactic teaching to the extent that it yields additional insights that can enrich our overall understanding of the concept.

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