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SCRIPTURE AND EXPOSITIONAL METHOD IN JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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ABSTRACT

Title: SCRIPTURE AND EXPOSITIONAL METHOD IN JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
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This thesis argues that a strict correlation exists between one's presuppositions about Scripture's nature, one's interpretive method, and one's approach to biblical exposition. This correlation is traced in John Chrysostom, whose presuppositions about the nature of Scripture ordered his interpretive principles and produced an expositional method that followed the biblical text and submitted to the author's intended meaning.

Chapter One sets forth Chrysostom's view of Scripture. Through his emphasis on the term συγκατάβασις ("considerateness"), Chrysostom asserted that God revealed himself to humanity in Scripture in a way that was accessible for each stage in the development of the plan of redemption. He also articulated a view of Scripture's inspiration through dual authorship that anticipated the later doctrinal development of divine-human concursus. Furthermore, since Scripture is divine revelation, he viewed it as universally authoritative.

Chapter Two identifies Chrysostom's correlating principles for interpreting the biblical text. As a member of the Antiochene school of biblical interpretation, his education and training informed his interpretive method. He considered Scripture to be a "precise" text that demanded "precise" interpretation (ἀκρίβεια). Precision in interpretation stemmed from his attention and appeal to authorial intent expressed by grammar, syntax, and context for understanding a text's meaning. Furthermore, by emphasizing a text as ἱστορία ("history"), Chrysostom accounted for Scripture's historicity and pursued literal interpretation. Finally, the relationship between one biblical text and other texts involved the οἰκονομία of God ("salvation history"). Reading Scripture this way interpreted individual texts in accord with the biblical canon.

Chapter Three observes how Chrysostom's preaching flowed out of his understanding and interpretive method of Scripture. In his view, preaching met the church's needs for promoting and protecting sound doctrine through its focus on Scripture. Therefore, Chrysostom's preaching presented the biblical text and its vision of the Christian life to the congregation. Chrysostom's exegetical preaching followed the order of the text and was grounded in a biblical book's overall argument and prominent themes, manifesting his submission to Scripture's inspiration and the text's authorial intent. His expositional method came together through θεωρία ("insight"), which Chrysostom used for connecting a text's historical meaning to its contemporary significance.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCS	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibRep	*The Biblical Repository*
CW	*Classical World*
CWS	The Classics of Western Spirituality
Colloq	*Colloquium*
DBTS	*Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
EBTC	Evangelical Biblical Theological Commentary
ECF	The Early Church Fathers
ECS	Early Christian Studies
EEC	Evangelical Exegetical Commentary
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
EkkPh	*Ekklesiastikos Pharos*
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
FC	The Fathers of the Church
FET	Foundations of Evangelical Theology
GJCT	*Global Journal of Classical Theology*
HQ	*The Hartford Quarterly*

ICC	International Critical Commentary
IHE	An Introduction to the History of Exegesis
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
ITSS	Invitation to Theological Studies Series
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JR	*The Journal of Religion*
LCC	The Library of Christian Classics
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*
MSJ	*The Master's Seminary Journal*
MT	*Modern Theology*
NAC	The New American Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NPNF	A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
OECT	Oxford Early Christian Texts
OTRM	Oxford Theology & Religion Monographs
OWC	Oxford World's Classics
PGL	*Patristic Greek Lexicon*
Perich	*Perichoresis*
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary

PRRD	Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics
Prud	*Prudentia*
RAD	Reformed Academic Dissertations
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBET	Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology
SCDS	Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture
SECT	Sources of Early Christian Thought
SHERM	*Socio-Historical Examination of Religion and Ministry*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SRev	*The Sewanee Review*
SRT	Studies in Reformed Theology
StPatr	*Studia Patristica*
TL	A Theology of Lordship
ThTo	*Theology Today*
TJ	*Trinity Journal*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VCSupp	Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements
VE	*Vox Evangelica*
VP	*Vox Patrum*
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World

WGRWSS	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplemental Series
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The nature of Scripture is the foundation for one's interpretive principles and expositional method. The set of interpretive rules employed should be consistent with the nature of Scripture. The exposition of Scripture derives its method from the interpretive principles that are grounded in Scripture's nature. Put another way, a correlation exists between the nature of Scripture, the interpretation of Scripture, and the exposition of Scripture. This thesis seeks to describe this correlation by looking at their connection in John Chrysostom's (ca. AD 349–407) ministry.[1]

To claim a correlation exists between Scripture, interpretation, and exposition is simply to argue that Scripture contains the knowledge that is needed to understand what Scripture is and how it should be interpreted. The apostle Paul implies as much when he writes, "Remind them of these things, solemnly charging them in the presence of God not to dispute about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed,

[1] Chrysostom, or "Golden-mouthed," was a moniker given to several orators in the ancient world (e.g., the Greek philosopher Dio Chrysostom [ca. AD 40–115]), by the fifth century AD the nickname came to be a virtually exclusive reference to John of Antioch (see J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom: Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995], 4n11).

accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:14–15).[2] Timothy's task is twofold. First, he is to use words to communicate divine truth that is useful to those who hear him. This act of communication accords with exposition.

Second, the content of Timothy's communication is derived from the soundness of his interpretive method. "Accurately handling" translates ὀρθοτομοῦντα, which, if τομέω ("to cut") is stressed in the compound word, has the sense of "to open in a straight line"[3] that "goes straight to its goal."[4] However, as William Mounce notes, the stress should be placed on ὀρθός ("right") since the imagery of a path (ὁδός) is absent in the context.[5] Thus, Timothy is to work rightly with the material he is given.[6] George Knight comments, "To handle this word correctly is to handle it in accord with its intention and to communicate properly its meaning."[7] In other words, his right handling corresponds with interpretation.

The material Timothy is to handle rightly is "the word of truth." Therefore, both interpretation and exposition are rooted in the nature of Scripture ("the word of truth").[8]

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[2] Unless otherwise noted, translations of biblical texts are taken from *Legacy Standard Bible* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 2021).

[3] Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, ed. Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder (Leiden: Brill, 2015), s. v. ὀρθοτομέω.

[4] Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s. v. ὀρθοτομέω.

[5] William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, WBC 46 (Dallas: Word, 2000), 524–25; see also George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 411–12.

[6] Knight writes, "The imagery of a worker working with his materials carries through what began with ἐργάτην" (*The Pastoral Epistles*, 412).

[7] Knight, 412.

[8] In context, "the word of truth" likely has a more nuanced reference to the gospel message (see 2 Tim 2:8–13; see Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 525; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*,

Furthermore, the quality of Timothy's interpretation and exposition is held to God's evaluating standard ("present yourself approved to God"). Thus, Scripture testifies to a correlation between its nature, its interpretation, and its exposition.

As champions of Scripture, evangelical expositors are tasked with preparing and delivering expositions on a biblical text to their respective churches. Yet, the connection is often assumed between the exposition, the interpretive method employed to develop it, and the nature of the biblical text that stands as the source material. In light of this assumption, there is a need for expositors to be reminded of the correlation between bibliology, hermeneutics, and exposition. This reminder may serve expositors by pointing them back to fundamental convictions that ought not be taken for granted.

To accomplish this purpose, this thesis focuses on an ancient expositor whose understanding of the nature of Scripture clearly informed his interpretation, and consequently his exposition of the biblical text. As a result, expositors have an example to look to in their own practice of interpretation and exposition that is firmly and consciously grounded in the nature of Scripture. Ultimately, this thesis argues that a strict correlation exists between one's presuppositions about Scripture's nature, one's interpretive method, and one's approach to biblical exposition.

NAC [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992], 215). However, an inferential connection between the gospel message and Scripture is a valid conclusion since the former is derived from the latter (see 1 Cor 15:1–4). Therefore, as the Scriptures are true, so also the nature of Scripture is characterized by truth. See also John S. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture*, FET (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 284.

Occasion of the Study

Planning to publish a French translation of Chrysostom's homilies, John Calvin wrote a preface to defend the undertaking.[9] His primary reason for choosing Chrysostom highlighted the ancient expositor's handling of Scripture. He wrote, "In [the interpretation of Scripture], no one of sound judgment would deny that our Chrysostom excels all the ancient writers currently extant."[10] The Antiochene "took great pains everywhere not to deviate in the slightest from the genuine plain meaning of Scripture, and not to indulge in any license of twisting the straight-forward sense of the words."[11] Calvin saw in Chrysostom an interpreter who did what he was seeking to do: explain the meaning of Scripture.

According to Calvin, Chrysostom's handling of Scripture rose above all others who lived in the first several hundred years of church history. Origen (d. 254) obscured "the plain meaning of Scripture with constant allegories."[12] Basil (d. 373) and Gregory (d. 379) "had more of an aptitude for oratory than for literary exposition."[13] Cyril (d.

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[9] For Chrysostom's influence on Calvin, see Paul A. Hartog, "Calvin's Preface to Chrysostom's Homilies as a Window into Calvin's Own Priorities and Perspectives," *Perich* 17, no. 4 (2019): 57–71; Jeannette Kreijkes-van Esch, "Sola Scriptura and Calvin's Appeal to Chrysostom's Exegesis," in *Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Scripture, Authority, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Hans Burger, Arnold Huijgen, and Eric Peels, vol. 32, SRT (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 260–75; Najeeb George Awad, "The Influence of John Chrysostom's Hermeneutics on John Calvin's Exegetical Approach to Paul's Epistle to the Romans," *SJT* 63, no. 4 (2010): 414–36; John R. Walchenbach, *John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin's Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010).

[10] W. Ian P. Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface to His Proposed French Edition of Chrysostom's Homilies: Translation and Commentary," in *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England, and Scotland, 1400–1643*, ed. James Kirk (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 144.

[11] Hazlett, 145–46.

[12] Hazlett, 144.

[13] Hazlett, 144.

444), was "an outstanding exegete . . . [and among the Eastern church interpreters] can be rated second to Chrysostom. He cannot, however, match him."[14] Finally, while Augustine (d. 430) "surpasses everyone in dogmatics . . . he is far too ingenious [as a biblical commentator]."[15] In Calvin's opinion, Chrysostom outshines all these giants of the patristic era because he interpreted Scripture straight-forwardly and explained its literal sense.

This is not to say that Calvin had no concerns to lodge against Chrysostom. Calvin noted that he had an "excessive tendency" toward emphasizing the freedom of the will and its impact on human ability for good works.[16] He also critiqued Chrysostom's occasional struggles in interpreting the Old Testament because of his lack of facility in the Hebrew language.[17] Another critique that could be added to Calvin's is Chrysostom's inappropriate exaltation of the apostle Paul. In part this was due to a general position in the church at the time that saw the lives of the saints as carrying some measure of authority.[18] As a result, imitating these saints and visiting their homes became sources for spiritual edification and growth.[19] This approach to the principle of imitation informs

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[14] Hazlett, 144.

[15] Hazlett, 145.

[16] Calvin asserts that such a posture obscures "the grace of God in our election and calling and the gracious mercy which follows us from our calling to the very moment of death" (Hazlett, 146).

[17] Hazlett, 144.

[18] Margaret Mitchell writes that this was a growing fourth-century position on godliness that "roots religious authority in the very lives of the saints, which are mediated to later generations in a variety of ways—by their 'relics'" (*The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002], 44).

[19] In regards to the apostle Paul, Mitchell lists Chrysostom as writing that "inspiration is to be gained from visiting the very places where the apostle taught or was imprisoned, or seeing fragments of the

why Paul was so significant to Chrysostom's preaching ministry.[20] Because Paul encouraged imitation as recorded in Scripture (1 Cor 11:1), these two sources of authority coalesce: Scripture and Paul's way of life.[21] Therefore, according to Chrysostom, following Paul's way of life is a primary source for living the Christian life. This combination of imitation and Scripture resulted in undue attention to the person of Paul as a source of authority rather than his office as apostle. While Paul is worthy of imitation, he is not worthy of veneration.

Despite these critiques, Calvin's overall commendation still stands.[22] Chrysostom handled Scripture in a straight-forward manner and sought to explain the meaning of the words according to their literal sense. More often than not, his explanations were given in a sermon delivered during a worship service of the church. He spoke to the common people using common language and appealed to Scripture as possessing a meaning that was accessible through a common interpretive method. However, what Calvin did not mention was that Chrysostom's confidence for speaking and interpreting in such a straightforward manner was rooted in his understanding of the nature of the biblical text. Chrysostom's view of the nature of Scripture promoted his interpretive principles and expositional method.

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actual chains which bound him, and confesses his deepest longing to visit Paul's funeral monument, his tomb in Rome, and kiss the very dust of his corpse" (Mitchell, 44).

[20] James Daniel Cook records that Chrysostom preached expositionally on every letter written by the apostle Paul, including the Letter to the Hebrews, which he considered to be of Pauline authorship (*Preaching and Popular Christianity: Reading the Sermons of John Chrysostom*, OTRM [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019], 58).

[21] Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 66.

[22] Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface," 146.

Significance of the Study

In accordance with the value that Chrysostom's example of the correlation between Scripture, interpretation, and exposition, this thesis is written with the following two goals in mind. First, it offers a contribution to the field of homiletics by providing a justification for expositional preaching through tracking the correlation between Scripture, interpretation, and preaching. How one views Scripture will affect how one handles Scripture in interpretation and exposition. The correlation is often assumed, but there is a need for contemporary expositors to be encouraged to examine it afresh.

The second goal of this thesis is to provide a resource that observes what Chrysostom believed about Scripture alongside his interpretive and expositional methods. The Antiochene bishop's interpretive and homiletical methods are addressed in research on Chrysostom.[23] His views on Scripture are also represented.[24] However, there is a

[23] Frederic Henry Chase, *Chrysostom: A Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Deighton Bell and Co., 1887); John A. Broadus, "St. Chrysostom as a Homilist," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, vol. 13, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), v–vii; Gerald Bray, *Preaching the Word with John Chrysostom* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020); Chris L. de Wet, "John Chrysostom and Hermeneutics of Resuscitation: A Critical Glimpse into the Reading and Preaching of Pauline Texts in the Fourth Century A.D. and Its Implications for Biblical Studies Today," *EkkPh* 92 (2010): 393–407; Kreijkes-van Esch, "Sola Scriptura and Calvin's Appeal to Chrysostom's Exegesis"; Samuel A. Pomeroy, *Chrysostom as Exegete: Scholarly Traditions and Rhetorical Aims in the Homilies on Genesis*, vol. 171, VCSupp (Leiden: Brill, 2022); M. B. Riddle, "St. Chrysostom as an Exegete," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 10, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), xvii–xxii; Thurén, "John Chrysostom as Rhetorical Critic"; Walchenbach, *John Calvin as Biblical Commentator: An Investigation into Calvin's Use of John Chrysostom as an Exegetical Tutor*; Amanda Berry Wylie, "The Exegesis of History in John Chrysostom's Homilies on Acts," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 59–72.

[24] Robert C. Hill, "St John Chrysostom's Teaching on Inspiration in 'Six Homilies on Isaiah,'" *VC* 22 (1968): 19–37; idem, "*Akribeia*: A Principle of Chrysostom's Exegesis," *Colloq* 14 (1981): 32–36; idem, "On Looking Again at *Sunkatabasis*," *Prud* 13 (1981): 3–11; David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of His Theology and Preaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Bradley Nassif, "John Chrysostom and the Nature of Revelation and Task of Exegesis," in *What Is*

research gap that this study seeks to bridge. There is no known work that ties together Chrysostom's view of the nature of Scripture to his interpretive and expositional method. This thesis tracks that correlation from Chrysostom's viewpoint.

In light of these contributions, there are three categories of readers for whom this research may have value. First, evangelical preachers who are committed to expository preaching will benefit from being exposed to an ancient expositor who carried out a similar homiletical practice.[25] He sought to explain the meaning and significance of the biblical text because it is God's authority enacted over the church. Witnessing his presuppositions and principles will undergird the foundation for exposition and fortify elements that may have become dislodged over time.

Second, evangelical preachers who employ various methods of preaching in addition to or in place of expository preaching will benefit from this thesis. These homileticians know the value of clear communication but may doubt whether exposing their congregations to the rigors of exegesis will facilitate it. What this project seeks to demonstrate is that clear communication in a sermon is founded upon the nature of Scripture and precision in interpretation. Clear communication in an exegetical, expository sermon is possible because of the nature of the biblical text. The expository ministry of the "Golden-mouthed" is testimony to its possibility.

Third, scholarship on Chrysostom and patristic studies will benefit from this perspective of looking at his preaching in light of his views of the nature of Scripture.

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the Bible? The Patristic Doctrine of Scripture, ed. Matthew Baker and Mark Mourachian, Kindle Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

[25] See again Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface," 144–45.

Studies on Chrysostom lack this viewpoint and thus miss something that Chrysostom himself thought was important. In turn, the researched offered here may be refined from a more historical perspective and contribute further to ongoing discussions about the relationship between ancient hermeneutics and homiletical practice.

Functional Definitions for the Study

The following terms and concepts that occur throughout this study are listed in alphabetical order and defined according to evangelical commitments. The definitions are not exhaustive but seek to establish a context for the study and interaction with scholarship.

Hermeneutics are the principles of, or the study of the principles of interpretation. Milton Terry elaborates, "Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. The word is usually applied to the explanation of written documents, and may therefore be more specifically defined as the science of interpreting an author's language."[26] Defining hermeneutics according to principles of interpretation has roots in the history of biblical interpretation. Anthony Thiselton notes that the term was understood as exclusively referring to how a text is interpreted during the period of the Church Fathers and from the Reformation period (sixteenth century) to the nineteenth century. He writes, "In the era of the Church Fathers (up to around AD 500) and from the Reformation to the early

[26] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 17. See also Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 16, 17.

nineteenth century, hermeneutics was regularly defined as '*rules* for the interpretation of Scripture.'"[27]

Returning to the initial definition, Terry specifically appeals to a text's author in interpretation. This leads to another term to define: *authorial intent*. Authorial intent refers to the meaning of the biblical text conveyed by the author through his use of grammar, syntax, and flow of argument. Andreas Köstenberger and Richard Patterson describe authorial intent as an expression of an author through his text. They write, "Every document has an author, and the resulting text is shaped by his or her intention. It is this authorial intention the interpreter must aim to recover."[28] This recovery happens through "careful and respectful interpretation" of the text since "it is an authorially shaped and designed product."[29] Likewise, Kevin Vanhoozer appeals to authorial intent when he defines the term meaning: "Meaning [is] 'what the author intended (did).'"[30] Thiselton recognizes that authorial intent was a concern of literal interpretation during the era of the Church Fathers. Highlighting Chrysostom's interpretive approach, he writes, "Chrysostom is also concerned with the role of the author of the text, especially in the

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[27] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2; emphasis original.

[28] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, ITSS (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011), 57.

[29] Köstenberger and Patterson, 57.

[30] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 253. By referring to what an author "does," Vanhoozer has in mind the author's actions through his words to convey meaning. He writes, "Properly to describe meaning requires us to describe the author's intended action—not the plan with which the author set out to write, nor the consequences that an author hoped to achieve by writing, but what the author was doing *in* writing, *in* tending to his words in such and such a fashion" (253; emphasis original). By referring to "what the author was doing," Vanhoozer is incorporating speech-act theory into authorial intent.

case of Jesus, apostles, or prophets, to remain 'in control' of the meaning of the text."[31] Hence, authorial intent is the goal of interpretation and is obtained by the interpreter through attention to the author's text.

In contemporary terms, discovering authorial intent is the objective of *grammatical-historical* interpretation. Grammatical-historical (GH) interpretation is the interpretive method that draws out the meaning of a text according to its grammar and historical context. Robert Thomas writes, "The Grammatico-historical method of exegesis is a study designed to discover the meaning of a text that is dictated by the principles of grammar and the facts of history."[32] Walter Kaiser adds, "The grand object of grammatical and historical interpretation is to ascertain . . . the specific usage of words as employed by an individual writer and/or as prevalent in a particular age."[33] According to Christopher Hall, authorial intent corresponds to GH interpretation. He writes, "The grammatical-historical interpretation of a biblical text leads to only one valid meaning—that intended by the author."[34]

Köstenberger and Patterson also note an historical connection between GH and literal interpretation, writing, "The literal sense is the historical-grammatical sense."[35]

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[31] Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 4.

[32] Robert L. Thomas, *Introduction to Exegesis* (Hurst, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2017), 34; see also Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 2–4.

[33] Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 88.

[34] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 133.

[35] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 73. NB This quote comes at a point when the authors are discussing the role of the *quadriga*—or four senses of Scripture—in medieval biblical interpretation (72–73).

Thus, GH is used in this thesis synonymously with the *literal-historical sense*, which is the sense of the biblical text that is understood according to its plain and ordinary meaning, rooted in its historical or narrative situation, expressed through grammar and syntax, and is tied to authorial intent.[36] While describing how the Church Fathers' method of interpretation could differ from modern GH interpretation, Hall connects GH with the literal sense. He writes, "The fathers, however, saw the grammatical-historical meaning of a text—what they would probably call its 'literal' meaning—as only one of its possible senses."[37]

Some have sought to connect GH interpretive principles with historical-critical methodologies.[38] Grammatical-Historical interpretation may be compared with historical-critical interpretation only in the sense that the two methods use a similar procedure for understanding the text through observation of how an author uses language and grammar to convey meaning. However, GH is contrasted with the historical-critical model in terms of its presuppositions about the biblical text. That is, GH presupposes the inspiration and

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[36] See also D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 32; Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 78; David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 188.

[37] Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 133. The senses that Hall refers to include the allegorical and typological senses. The allegorical sense of the text is a sense that indicates abstractions to doctrines or virtues that are not understood according to the grammatical or lexical meaning of the text. Instead, the words simply point to the abstractions in a way that is understood differently from their normal meaning. The typological sense refers to how an Old Testament text may foreshadow or predict an event in the Gospels. Hall also notes it is difficult to determine whether the Fathers saw a meaningful difference between allegory and typology (133–37).

[38] Craig L. Blomberg, "The Historical-Critical/Grammatical View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 27–47. Blomberg understands the historical-critical method as founded on three principles: criticism, analogy, and correlation. Criticism refers to the probable—not "indisputable"—conclusions of historical study. Analogy refers to the correspondence of historical events to other historical events. Correlation refers to the "continuum of cause and effect in a naturalist universe" (27).

inerrancy of the Bible and does not appeal to critical methods for determining the historical background or form of the text.[39] These presuppositions also play a role in how it is to be contrasted with postmodern interpretation, which points to the interaction between text and reader or community as the locus of authority in interpretation.[40]

Finally, GH interpretation contrasts with canonical interpretation and redemptive-historical interpretation. While diverse in practice, canonical interpretation generally presupposes "the Bible's final shape" as the arbiter of interpreting the biblical text.[41] A redemptive-historical approach interprets a biblical text according to its place in the history of redemption as it is recorded in Scripture and its culmination in Christ.[42] Although having their own distinctive methodologies, canonical and redemptive-historical interpretation both emphasize the role of the canon of Scripture in determining

[39] For example, Blomberg describes historical-critical methodology, writing, "In source, form, and redaction criticism, we are no longer just accumulating data or utilizing methods that best enable us to *interpret* a biblical text. Instead, we are employing approaches to the text that allow us to adjudicate its origin, the nature of its transmission, the probability of its historical trustworthiness and the like" ("The Historical-Critical/Grammatical View," 36–37; emphasis original). Then he contrasts this approach to conservative, or what this thesis identifies as GH interpretation, writing, "For some very conservative biblical interpreters, it is always wrong to embark on such activities because it seems to place the interpreter above Scripture and inevitably leads to historical verdicts that contradict the inerrancy of Scripture" (37). This thesis will affirm the presuppositions about the nature of Scripture in the "Assumptions of the Study" section.

[40] For example, F. Scott Spencer writes, "If we must prioritize [the hermeneutical triad], I maintain that, in their best-practiced forms, literary/postmodern approaches cohere in giving prime attention to the *text* at the high point of the triangle, with *readers* especially (texts do not read and interpret themselves) and *authors* (texts do not produce themselves) providing vital base support" ("The Literary/Postmodern View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012], 49 [emphasis original]). Spencer's inclusion of "especially" above suggests that the hermeneutical triad is tilted in favor of a text's readers above the author in terms of authority.

[41] Robert W. Wall, "The Canonical View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 111. Wall writes, "The variety of canonical approaches is guided by a common commitment to a theological conception of the Bible's final (or 'canonical') shape."

[42] Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "The Redemptive-Historical View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 93–94.

the meaning of a text.[43] While GH affirms the bibliological presuppositions of redemptive-historical interpretation, the interpretive method that GH draws from those presuppositions stand in contrast to the redemptive-historical method.[44]

Often, GH interpretation has the goal of interpreting the biblical text for the sake of exposition. *Expositional method* refers to how a Bible teacher explains and applies the meaning of a biblical text to a listening audience. Expositional method is often connected with expositional or expository preaching. For example, Richard Holland writes, "For an expositor, at its most basic level preaching is proclaiming the meaning of the Bible."[45] Although largely synonymous, expository preaching may be distinguished from expositional method in the following way. Expository preaching is the product of exposition while expositional method refers to the steps taken to explain and apply the meaning of a biblical text discovered in the interpretive process.

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[43] For example, Richard B. Gaffin Jr. writes, "The Bible may be fairly characterized as a record of the actual history of redemption (revelation), as a witness to revelation. … In this sense, the redemptive-historical approach in view here is a canonical approach. Our only revelatory access to the history of redemption is the biblical canon" (93–94). In this way, redemptive-historical interpretation is diachronic in nature, yet in such a way that the end of Scripture holds interpretive priority. On the other hand, canonical interpretation is synchronic, looking at the whole of Scripture as a "single" text. Robert W. Wall writes, "Recognizing that the single biblical canon was formed under the direction of one God for the edification of one church creates a new context in which the texts of diverse witnesses are read together, one text illuminating the fuller meaning of another" ("The Canonical View," 116–17). Furthermore, canonical interpretation often grants an authoritative role to the church in forming the biblical canon, which GH rejects (see Wall, 117, 119). Instead, GH affirms that the church recognized the canon, which places the authority of Scripture over the church. For an analysis and defense of this position, see Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

[44] Gaffin states redemptive-historical interpretation serves as a "control" for exegesis in light of the direction that redemptive history progresses throughout the canon. He writes, "Biblical revelation faithfully records the actual history of special revelation. … Exegesis controlled by this redemptive-historical, eschatological framework, established by Scripture itself, will not only be prone to reach more thoroughly biblical conclusions but will also tend to begin with the right questions" ("The Redemptive-Historical View," 93).

[45] Richard L. Holland, "Expository Clarity: The Conveyance of the Perspicuity of Scripture in Expository Preaching" (PhD diss, Kansas City, MO, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 82.

Expositional preaching is often, though not necessarily, delivered in the form of *lectio continua*—or consecutive exposition through a biblical book or passage.[46] Holland explains, "[*Lectio continua*] can be teaching every verse consecutively through [a] whole book or verse-by-verse through a section of Scripture."[47] Such an approach has a rich record in the history of biblical preaching. O. C. Edwards writes, "Many preachers through the ages have seen virtue in preaching all the way through one biblical book before considering a passage from another (*lectio continua*)."[48] For example, Calvin and the Reformed heritage that followed him was well-known for practicing *lectio continua*.[49] As will be discussed in Chapter Three, Chrysostom practiced *lectio continua* in his preaching ministry.

Other writers have noted the correlation between expositional method and the nature of Scripture. Holland writes, "Whereas expository preaching influences the health of the church, it is itself influenced by a bibliology."[50] John MacArthur asserts the connection as well, writing, "The only logical response to inerrant Scripture … is to

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[46] Holland, 118–22. For an hypothesis that defends the claim that Chrysostom practiced *lectio continua* in his preaching, see Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 201–10.

[47] Holland, "Expository Clarity," 120. See also Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 44.

[48] O. C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 832.

[49] Elsie Ann McKee and Bernard McGinn write, "The Reformed pattern of preaching, called *lectio continua* or continuous reading, was to preach all the way through an entire book of the Bible. It was a 'sermon series' in the sense of being a series of expositions of a text, accompanied by application to the hearers' own lives as Christians" (*John Calvin: Writings on Pastoral Piety*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Bernard McGinn, trans. Elsie Anne McKee, CWS [New York: Paulist Press, 2001], 14).

[50] Holland, "Expository Clarity," 101. Holland continues, "Expository preaching … is anchored to a conviction in the inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility, and authority of Scripture—and necessitates an intentional and demonstrable hermeneutic" (101–2).

preach it *expositionally*."[51] Steven Smith adds, "For those of us who believe in inspiration, preaching really is a re-presentation of a text of Scripture. This truly is exposition."[52] Thus, expositional method correlates with traditional, GH hermeneutics, which seeks to understand and interpret authorial intent. These elements of interpretation and preaching rest upon the foundation of the nature of Scripture, which leads to identifying and explaining the assumptions of this thesis.

In addition to these definitions relative to interpretation and exposition, certain terms from Chrysostom's views of Scripture, interpretive method, and expositional practice need to be introduced. The following definitions will be general in nature since these terms will be explained and illustrated in detail in the chapters that follow. First, συγκατάβασις generally refers to God's considerate self-revelation in Scripture and the incarnation of the Son of God wherein the inherent limitations of humanity are taken into account, yet without compromising the integrity and truthfulness of the revelation.[53] Second, ἀκρίβεια refers to Scripture's precise nature and thus a need for precision in interpretation. That is, Scripture is precise in its content and calls for precise interpretation.[54] Third, ἱστορία refers to a text's literary genre and a principle for

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[51] John MacArthur, "The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," in *Rediscovering Expository Preaching*, ed. Richard L. Mayhue and Robert L. Thomas (Dallas: Word, 1992), 18; emphasis original.

[52] Steven W. Smith, *Recapturing the Voice of God: Shaping Sermons Like Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2015), 3. Expository preaching and expositional method may be contrasted with topical, thematic, and doctrinal preaching. On this contrast, see Holland, "Expository Clarity," 122–23.

[53] Chase, *Chrysostom*, 27; Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, 17–18; Hill, "On Looking Again at *Sunkatabasis*"; Bradley Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis" (PhD diss, Fordham University, 1991), 173–74; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 29–30, 140–44; Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 116–23.

[54] Hill, "*Akribeia*"; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 114.

interpretation. As a literary genre, ἱστορία is a text that has subject-matter that deals with historical deeds and events.[55] As a principle for interpretation, ἱστορία takes the history that is presented by the text and interprets it according to its literal sense.[56] Fourth, οἰκονομία denotes the redemptive arc of Scripture with its historical epochs and the location of various texts within that biblical setting.[57] For interpretation, οἰκονομία provides a backdrop for how to understand a text in its biblical context. Finally, θεωρία is the exercise of insight by an inspired biblical author or illumined interpreter into the significance of the biblical text for the spiritual benefit of the contemporary audience that maintains the integrity and coherence of the text's argument or narrative.[58] Each of these terms are central to understanding how Chrysostom's view of Scripture correlated with his interpretive principles and expositional method.

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[55] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 166–67; Karlfried Froehlich, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, SECT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 91.

[56] Chris Len de Wet, "The Homilies of John Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12: A Model of Antiochene Exegesis on the Charismata" (Pretoria, South Africa: University of Pretoria, 2007), 52n101; Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 80; Miriam DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 24; Peter W. Martens, ed., *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures: An Antiochene Handbook for Scriptural Interpretation*, OECT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 23.

[57] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 171–72; R. B. Jamieson, *The Paradox of Sonship: Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SCDS (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 31–32.

[58] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 212; Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 111; Richard J. Perhai, *Antiochene Theoria in the Writings of Theodore in the Writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 113; Walter Kaiser, "Psalm 72: An Historical and Messianic Current Example of Antiochene Hermeneutical Theoria," *JETS* 52, no. 2 (2009): 257; Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 179–80.

Assumptions of the Study

This thesis assumes three presuppositions that revolve around the nature of Scripture and its interpretation: a) interpretation is a response to the nature of Scripture; b) inspiration is understood according to divine-human confluence; and c) there is a distinction between meaning and significance. First, interpretation is a response to one's view of the nature of Scripture. If one prioritizes divine authorship in inspiration as warrant for New Testament priority in interpretation, this presupposition holds true.[59] It also holds true for one who would deny revelation and inspiration, yet still interpret the Bible just like any other book.[60] Likewise, it holds true for those who follow the GH method of interpretation because of divine concursus view of inspiration.[61] Since Scripture is divine revelation wherein men, living in a particular place and time and being inspired by God, spoke and wrote using accessible language, then it follows that the biblical text is to be read and interpreted in that light. Although differences in interpretive conclusions may become evident because of these various positions, the principle that interpretation is a response to the nature of Scripture remains valid.

Second, this thesis assumes concursive inspiration—also known as divine-human confluence—which asserts that the Scriptures are authored by God and each book's

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[59] E.g., Matthew Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020), 26–31. Barrett asserts that his position upholds divine concursus in inspiration (30). However, he treats concursus as an interpretive tool to allow for *sensus plenior* rather than a doctrine that affirms each biblical text has one meaning.

[60] E.g., the nineteenth century historical-critical scholar Benjamin Jowett set forth the precept "*interpret the Scripture like any other book*" after concluding that Scripture's inspiration should only be regarded as a product of the development of doctrine ("On the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Essays and Reviews* [London: John W. Parker and Son, 1860], 377 [emphasis original]). Jowett writes that inspiration is "not important . . . to the interpreter" (351).

[61] Brad Klassen, "The Doctrine of Inspiration and Its Implications for Hermeneutics," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2023): 366–67.

respective human writer. The result is a singleness and unity of meaning shared by the divine and human authors in the giving and writing of revelation as the Holy Spirit bears them along.[62] Benjamin B. Warfield's articulation of this doctrine is lengthy but deserves a full quotation. He writes,

> The fundamental principle of this conception is that the whole of Scripture is the product of divine activities which enter it, however, not by superseding the activities of the human authors, but confluently with them; so that the Scriptures are the joint product of divine and human activities, both of which penetrate them at every point, working harmoniously together to the production of a writing which is not divine here and human there, but at once divine and human in every part, every word and every particular. According to this conception, therefore, the whole Bible is recognized as human, the free product of human effort, in every part and word. And at the same time, the whole Bible is recognized as divine, the Word of God, his utterances, of which he is in the truest sense the Author.[63]

Stated another way, the writers maintained and implemented their individual characteristics in writing. However, in no way did this affect the writings as divine in their origin. They continued to possess the perfection and purity of God in themselves. Therefore, the biblical writers were active in the process of writing and the product was God's authoritative revelation.[64] John F. Frame succinctly summarized the doctrine, writing, "*Inspiration* [is] a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a

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[62] Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1948), 94; Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 201–8. Warfield identified the revelatory act of writers producing Scripture as a "concursive operation," that is, the characteristics of individuality in the writings are real, but "in no way … affect their purity as direct communications from God" ("The Biblical Idea of Revelation," 94).

[63] Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Divine and Human in the Bible," in *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, ed. John E. Meeter, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1970), 547.

[64] Furthermore, this implies that divine authorship does not necessarily lead to later revelation reinterpreting earlier revelation.

human word."[65] Frame's language of an "identity" between the words as sourced in both the divine and human is Warfield's confluence.[66]

Third, this thesis assumes a distinction between the terms "meaning" and "significance."[67] *Meaning* is what the author willed to convey in his text through his use of words, grammar, and genre.[68] Abner Chou defines meaning as referring "to the particular ideas of the original author in the text."[69] Vanhoozer similarly locates meaning in an authorially controlled text, writing, "Properly to describe meaning requires us to describe the author's intended action . . . what the author was doing *in* writing, *in* tending to his words in such and such a fashion."[70]

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[65] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, TL (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), 140 (emphasis original).

[66] When 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21 are drawn together they affirm Frame's language of identity. Just as "men spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21), so also "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). Furthermore, in 2 Peter 1:19–20, Peter uses the phrases "prophetic word" and "no prophecy of Scripture," which means that to have a prophecy from Scripture is to have what the prophet spoke. Therefore, the authors who wrote these writings did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, inspiration as divine confluence is a legitimate assumption for this thesis to hold on both theological and exegetical grounds.

Although the same terminology is used, this understanding of confluence or concursus contrasts with those who use concursive inspiration as an interpretive tool to emphasize the unity of the canon through appeal to a text's divine meaning and *sensus plenior*. For example, see Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 26–30.

[67] The necessity to observe a distinction between meaning and significance is a well-attested presupposition. See Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 32; Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 31; G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, "Introduction," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), xxvi–xxvii; Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (September 1985): 310, 316; E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1967), xi, 8.

[68] E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1967), 31.

[69] Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 32.

[70] Vanhoozer, *Meaning in This Text?*, 253; emphasis original.

Significance is the various "valid ramifications, inferences, or implications stemming from the author's meaning."[71] Significance includes consequences for a reader's life or a related topic since it is more general in nature than meaning.[72] At the same time, significance is not necessarily bound to the specifics of meaning since it "merely denotes a relationship *between* (note well, it must be linked) that meaning and another person, time, situation, or idea."[73] As Vanhoozer puts it, "*The meaning/significance distinction is fundamentally a distinction between a completed action and its ongoing intentional or unintentional consequences*."[74] That is, "The *meaning* of Jesus is independent of our attempts to express his *significance*."[75] Therefore, interpretive investigation seeks to discover and articulate the meaning of a text, while the expositional product will explain the significance of a text for a particular audience.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This thesis focuses on Chrysostom's presuppositions about Scripture and their correlation to his expositional method. Both the primary and secondary sources that could be included in this study are voluminous. Therefore, the sources used are selected for their relevance to the project. Furthermore, there are nearly eight hundred extant sermons from Chrysostom.[76] Out of necessity, then, the homilies included in the research will be

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[71] Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 32.

[72] Hirsch writes, "Significance always entails a relationship between what is in a man's verbal meaning and what is outside it" (*Validity in Interpretation*, 63).

[73] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 32; emphasis original.

[74] Vanhoozer, *Meaning in This Text?*, 262; emphasis original.

[75] Vanhoozer, 263; emphasis original.

[76] Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 5, 172.

limited. Because Chrysostom did not write a treatise on Scripture or interpretation, a variety of homilies will be cited where he touches on these issues. On his expositional method, Chrysostom included a section of *On the Priesthood*[77] that discusses his view of the preaching task. Consequently, Chapter Three will include an analysis of this source.

As noted above, the secondary sources in scholarship are manifold. However, there are a few works that stand out because of their relevance to the project. Robert Hill has written numerous books and articles that focus on Chrysostom's understanding of the nature of Scripture.[78] Margaret Mitchell's *The Heavenly Trumpet* is devoted to Chrysostom's understanding of authorial intent in interpretive method.[79] Frances Young's *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* is a broad work that explains interpretive backgrounds, principles, and motivations in operation during the early centuries of church history.[80] David Rylaarsdam's *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy* studies the link between Chrysostom's view of revelation and theology against a rhetorical and philosophical backdrop.[81] Finally, Bradley Nassif wrote his dissertation on

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[77] John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, trans. B. Harris Cowper (London: Williams and Norgate, 1866).

[78] For example, R. C. Hill "On Looking Again at *Sunkatabasis*," *Prud* 13 (1981): 3–11; *idem*, "*Akribeia*: A Principle of Chrysostom's Exegesis," *Colloq* 14 (1981): 32–36; *idem*, "St John Chrysostom's Teaching on Inspiration in 'Six Homilies on Isaiah,'" *VC* 22 (1968): 19–37; *idem*, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

[79] Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

[80] Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997).

[81] David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of His Theology and Preaching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Chrysostom's understanding and use of Antiochene θεωρία.[82] His research and conclusions are significant for Chrysostom's expositional method. Each of these authors and works provide this thesis with a framework for managing the scholarship that could be consulted. More importantly, they are most relevant on the topic of Chrysostom's view of Scripture and the correlation to his interpretive and expositional methods.

Observing the value of Chrysostom's expositional method is not unique to this thesis. As already noted, the Reformer John Calvin was similarly appreciative.[83] In fact, Calvin regarded the Antiochene preacher as excelling all ancient writers in the interpretation of Scripture.[84] Chrysostom's "chief merit" was that "he took great pains everywhere not to deviate in the slightest from the genuine plain meaning of Scripture, and not to indulge in any license of twisting the straightforward sense of the words."[85] Calvin demonstrated his appreciation for Chrysostom by planning to publish an edition of the Antiochene's homilies in a French translation that would exemplify a sound method of interpretation.[86] Therefore, this thesis seeks to further Calvin's agenda by explaining and commending Chrysostom's expositional method to a new generation of preachers.

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[82] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis."

[83] Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface."

[84] He writes, "In this area [of the interpretation of Scripture], no one of sound judgment would deny that our Chrysostom excels all the ancient writers currently extant" (144).

[85] Hazlett, 145.

[86] Calvin's conclusion that Chrysostom was a model interpreter suggests further research is needed on its ramifications for contemporary biblical interpretive methodology. However, that is not a focus of this study and, thus, will not be given attention.

Method of the Study

The thesis examines the doctrine of Scripture, its interpretation, and its exposition through the lens of Chrysostom's views on Scripture and hermeneutics. Chapter One argues that Chrysostom's view of Scripture included the presupposition that the Bible is special revelation that is divinely inspired and authoritative. Emphasizing the concept of συγκατάβασις, Chrysostom recognized that God revealed Himself to humanity in Scripture in a way that was accessible for each stage in the development of the plan of redemption. He also articulated a view of Scripture's inspiration that anticipated the later doctrinal development of divine-human concursus. Furthermore, since Scripture is divine revelation and inspired, he viewed it as universally authoritative.

Chapter Two asserts that as the product of his view of Scripture, Chrysostom's interpretive principles promoted his search to understand the meaning of the literal sense of the text. He considered Scripture to be a precise text that demanded precise interpretation (ἀκρίβεια). Precision in interpretation stemmed from his attention and appeal to authorial intent expressed by grammar, syntax, and context for understanding a text's meaning. By appeal to a text's ἱστορία, Chrysostom's interpretation also accounted for the historical nature of the biblical text. Through the term οἰκονομία, he applied a biblical-theological framework to his interpretation of Scripture, understanding biblical history and revelation to culminate and climax in the life and ministry of Christ.

Chapter Three observes how Chrysostom's preaching flowed out of his interpretive method and view of Scripture. In his view, preaching met the church's needs for promoting and protecting sound doctrine through its focus on Scripture. Therefore, Chrysostom's preaching presented the biblical text and its vision of the Christian life to

the congregation. Chrysostom's exegetical preaching followed the order of the text and was grounded in a book's overall argument and prominent themes, manifesting his submission to Scripture's inspiration and the text's authorial intent. His expositional method came together through θεωρία, which Chrysostom used for connecting a text's historical meaning to its contemporary significance.

When Scripture's nature is explored rather than assumed, one result is the necessity for this kind of interpretation and exposition. In other words, when the nature of Scripture is identified as a non-negotiable presupposition, then the method for interpreting and explaining the biblical text will logically follow.[87] The correlation between the doctrine of Scripture and expositional method is the foundational subject-matter of this thesis.[88] Before studying Chrysostom's views of Scripture and his expositional methodology, it is necessary to become familiar with his life and work. This is the focus of the next section.

[87] As MacArthur writes, "The only logical response to inerrant Scripture, then, is to preach it *expositionally*. By expositionally, I mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented *entirely* and *exactly* as it was intended by God" ("The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy," 23–24; emphasis original). See also Richard Holland, "Expository Preaching: The Logical Response to a Robust Bibliology," *MSJ* 22, no. 1 (2011): 26–27. One goal of this thesis is to expand on this assertion.

[88] A limitation of this study is that it does not lay out a specific method for sermon preparation. Instead, it is to explore what is assumed in other homiletic works. That is, the nature of Scripture commends itself to expositional preaching. For works on sermon preparation, see Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 20–22; Haddon W. Robinson, *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 4–12; Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 8–12; Donald R. Sunukjian, *Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*, ITSS (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007); Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 134–35; John Piper, *Expository Exultation: Christian Preaching as Worship* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 159–61.

A Sketch of Chrysostom's Life

John Chrysostom lived in the Christologically contentious era between the First Council of Nicaea (AD 325) and the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). He was born ca. AD 349[89] in Syrian Antioch to Secundus and his wife, Anthousa.[90] His father died soon after his birth, leaving Anthousa to raise two young children alone.[91] His mother enrolled him into the normal course of education of the time. At age seven he attended elementary school, followed by grammar school at age ten, and advanced to rhetoric as a teenager.[92]

His professor for rhetoric was Libanius of Antioch, "a convinced pagan devoted to traditional values, openly contemptuous of the new official religion [of Christianity], . . . an viewed the progress of Christianity with acute dismay."[93] Edwards notes that Chrysostom was probably preparing for a career in the *sacra scrinia*—a "Roman civil service responsible for phrasing imperial documents."[94] During this time he was already recognized as a gifted speaker and writer by Libanius, who lamented on his deathbed that his successor should have been Chrysostom were it not for "the Christians [who stole]

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[89] Dates and events throughout this section are cited from Edwards, *A History of Preaching* and Kelly, *Golden Mouth*.

[90] Most of what is known about Chrysostom's childhood and upbringing is recorded in *On the Priesthood*, 1.1–3. Chrysostom does not mention whether his father was a Christian. However, he indicates his mother was and that she played an important role in his formation and education.

[91] Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 5. His sibling was an elder sister, about whom nothing is known (4).

[92] Kelly, 6. Chapter Two details Chrysostom's educational background.

[93] Kelly, 6–7.

[94] Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 1:73.

him from us."[95] This change of heart from Rhetoric to Christianity seems to have coincided with his graduation from Libanius's school.[96]

The impetus seems to have been the result of the influence of Meletius, the bishop of Antioch.[97] Chrysostom was likely baptized by Meletius on Easter Sunday, 368.[98] He began serving the bishop as an aide while also taking ascetic vows, living for around four years in the mountains outside of Antioch.[99] However, the ascetic practices exacerbated his physical frailty and led to poor health that marked the rest of his life. As a result, he was forced to return to Antioch, accepting an appointment to serve as a deacon of the church.[100] Chrysostom's career change also included more instruction, as he sat under the instruction of the Antiochene exegete Diodore of Tarsus (d. ca. 390).[101] Being appointed as a reader in the church in 371 allowed him the opportunity to master the Bible.[102]

In 375 he was made a deacon of the church. As a deacon he began to write on various subjects[103] until 386 when he was ordained a priest in Antioch. For more than a

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[95] Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 8.

[96] Kelly, 16.

[97] Kelly, 16.

[98] Kelly, 17.

[99] Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 1:74. Edwards notes that these vows included wearing a habit, remaining celibate, abstaining from meat and wine, and devoting oneself to prayer.

[100] Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 32–34, 37–38.

[101] Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch*, 6–7; Frederick G. McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3.

[102] Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 1:74.

[103] Kelly's survey of Chrysostom's works that date to this period include apologetic works on Christology over against paganism, discipleship, asceticism, and family life (*Golden Mouth*, 40–54).

decade thereafter Chrysostom was the leading preacher in Antioch.[104] In 397, Chrysostom unexpectedly was named the new bishop of Constantinople. Home of the Eastern Roman emperor's throne, he embraced his new role in the city and was well-received by its people. His work included church reforms, resolving ecclesiastical controversies, and preaching against the lavish lifestyles of the wealthy.[105] It is assumed that his preaching was the reason why he eventually fell out of favor with the emperor Aracadius and his wife, Eudoxia. More likely, there was a combination of factors involved in his removal, including the circumstances of his installment over other preferred candidates.[106] Before completing his fifth year in the city, he was temporarily exiled in 402 and permanently banished in 403. He died at age fifty-eight in 407 after four years of difficulty and deprivation in exile.

[104] Kelly, 57. Chapter Three details Chrysostom's preaching ministry.

[105] Kelly, 163–80. Kelly notes that an ecclesiastical tour of Asian districts seems to have laid the groundwork for the bishopric of Constantinople to become the seat of the archbishop of Constantinople at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, less than fifty years after Chrysostom's death (179–80). For a selection of Chrysostom's sermons on wealth, see Catharine P. Roth, trans., *St. John Chrysostom: On Wealth and Poverty* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981).

[106] The central opponent was the bishop of Alexandria, Theophilos (d. 412). Theophilos opposed Chrysostom's initial appointment as bishop of Constantinople (Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 106). Later, having been summoned to Constantinople to be tried over accusations against him concerning his treatment of monks in Egypt and having successfully escaped a trial through a variety of political schemes and Chrysostom's own refusal to act as judge at the trial, Theophilus presided over Chrysostom's trial—the Synod of the Oak—that deposed Chrysostom and sent him into temporary exile. For a thorough account of the events and a plausible argument about its circumstantial background, see Kelly, 181–227.

CHAPTER ONE: JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON SCRIPTURE

Foundational to interpretive methodology is an understanding of the nature of the Bible. The Enlightenment period of the eighteenth century produced a hermeneutical theory that side-stepped claims about the supernatural nature of the Bible in favor of an interpretive approach that focused on historical development. That is, the claim of the Bible's divine origin was ignored for the sake of attention on the human creators of a text that was to be treated like any other.[1] A variety of responses to this modernist hermeneutical revolution have risen since the middle of the twentieth century. Rather than focus on the human author, attention has been given to the text and the reader to varying degrees.[2] In these models, the nature of Scripture is often relegated to being an instrument of the Holy Spirit in the ongoing life of the church, but without authority itself.[3] This postmodern turn allows Scripture a place for consideration, but the

[1] For accounts of this history, see Benjamin Jowett, "On the Interpretation of Scripture," in *Essays and Reviews* (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1860), 330–433; Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University, 1974); James Barr, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (London: SCM Press, 1980); James S. Preus, *Spinoza and the Irrelevance of Biblical Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[2] Wimsatt, Jr. and Beardsley, "Intentional Fallacy"; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Revised 2nd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013); Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

[3] See, for example, N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2011), 115. Wright writes, "We urgently need an *integrated* view of the dense and complex phrase 'the authority of scripture'" (emphasis original). He proposes that this "integrated view" of Scripture's authority incorporates the Spirit's present role of transformation, the

community of readers, whether historical or present, holds authority for meaning and significance.[4]

Some evangelicals have presented alternative frameworks for hermeneutics that ground interpretation in the rule of faith or theological traditions in order to marginalize the historical-critical method in biblical and theological studies.[5] Others prioritize the divine meaning of Scripture over the human so that the New Testament holds interpretive authority over Old Testament revelation.[6] However, these efforts tend to predetermine exegetical conclusions in light of presupposed theological systems.[7] In contrast to

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eschatological goal of God's kingdom, the inauguration of that kingdom in the life and ministry of Jesus, and the church as proclaiming, hearing, and obeying Scripture.

[4] John R. Franke, "Scripture, Tradition and Authority: Reconstructing the Evangelical Conception of Sola Scriptura," in *Evangelicals and Scripture: Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics*, ed. Vincent Bacote, Laura C. Miguelez, and Dennis L. Okholm (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 192–210. In Franke's view, the work of the Spirit is authoritative in the trajectory of the church's composition, interpretation, and application of the Scriptures. He writes, "The Scriptures witness to the claim that they are the final written deposit of a trajectory or a traditioning that incorporates a number of varied elements in their composition, including oral tradition and other source documents. The community of faith recognized these writings as authoritative materials, and these materials in turn were interpreted and reapplied to the various contemporary situations" (Franke, 203).

[5] Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008); Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 106–14; John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason*, T & T Clark Theology (London: T & T Clark, 2012); Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018); R. B. Jamieson and Tyler Wittman, *Biblical Reasoning: Christological and Trinitarian Rules for Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

[6] Vern S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 241–79; Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*; Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*; Jason S. DeRouchie, "Redemptive-Historical, Christocentric Approach," in *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, Counterpoints: Bible and Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 181–211.

[7] See Robert L. Thomas, "The Origin of Preunderstanding: From Explanation to Obfuscation," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 41–62; Robert L. Thomas, "A Hermeneutical Ambiguity of Eschatology: The Analogy of Faith," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002).

interpreting and explaining Scripture according to a theological tradition or the priority of divine meaning, this thesis shows how interpretive and expository principles and practices are necessarily grounded in bibliological presuppositions. That is, interpretation and explanation happen the way they do because of how the nature of Scripture is understood.

The fourth-century Antiochene church father John Chrysostom models this connection when his presuppositions about the nature of Scripture are explored. His was an expository ministry—unaware of forthcoming debates beginning in the eighteenth century—that emphasized the Bible as divine revelation. In his view, the Bible is special, written revelation that originates from God, expresses the intent of the human authors used in its writing, and carries the authority of God over the church and in the world. While not unique to Chrysostom, witnessing these presuppositions in one of the most famous expositors in church history establishes a path toward an expositional method that is neither new nor accommodating to differing philosophies. Thus, this chapter argues that Chrysostom's view of Scripture presupposed its nature as special revelation that is divinely inspired and authoritative.[8]

The Nature of Scripture (συγκατάβασις)

That Scripture is divine revelation is a key component to any articulation of bibliology. Because of it, expositors have warrant to claim that the mind of God is

[8] This chapter expands upon Noah Hartmetz, "The Hermeneutics of John Chrysostom" (Paper presented in BI 830 History of Biblical Interpretation I, The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, CA, July 2022), 4–12.

revealed through Scripture and its exposition.[9] As such, it is appropriate to begin any discussion of expositional method by focusing on one's view of Scripture as divine revelation. The fundamental idea of revelation is a disclosure, shedding of light, unveiling, or uncovering of knowledge that was previously unknown.[10] Included in the diverse modes of divine revelation is Scripture.[11] Chrysostom's understanding of divine revelation accords with this view through his use of the term συγκατάβασις. This key term is defined below within Chrysostom's theological framework, its implications for communication, and how it connects with other characteristics of Scripture.

Defining συγκατάβασις

Although it can be said that "Chrysostom is the principal owner of συγκατάβασις,"[12] the term possesses an important history leading up to his extensive employment of it in his works. Philo appeals to συγκατάβασις when he describes the various forms of God's appearances to humans.[13] Origen and Athanasius employed the term in reference to the Incarnation.[14] The Cappadocian fathers—Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus—are closest to Chrysostom in their use of the term, although they

[9] Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 33. While acknowledging the difficulty of defining the doctrine of revelation, Feinberg asserts that "the doctrine of revelation is foundational to all of theology."

[10] Feinberg, 38.

[11] Feinberg, 105. Feinberg records that it is common for theologians to distinguish general revelation from special revelation and then to distinguish different forms of special revelation. Feinberg lists six general means of special revelation: divine acts or deeds, direct communication, indirect communication, revelation of a person, revelation of the Person of the Son of God, and Scripture (79–105).

[12] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 23–24.

[13] Rylaarsdam, 25.

[14] Rylaarsdam, 25–29. Chrysostom seems to have developed Athanasius's view of the Incarnation as divine adaptation in revelation (Rylaarsdam, 28–29).

favored other terms in their formulation.[15] This background suggests that Chrysostom's ample use of συγκατάβασις was a distinctive bibliological concept for him, and therefore crucial for understanding his view of Scripture.[16]

Others have noted the distinctiveness of συγκατάβασις in Chrysostom's bibliology. In a seminal nineteenth-century study of Chrysostom's hermeneutics, Frederic Chase commented that according to the Antiochene, "The Bible owes its very existence to the [συγκατάβασις] of God. . . . God speaks to man in man's words."[17] He continued, "The great principle expressed by the word συγκατάβασις is of deep and wide application. As in the historical Incarnation the Eternal Word became flesh, so in the Bible the glory of God veils itself in the fleshly garment of human thought and human language."[18] According to Chase, Chrysostom's συγκατάβασις likens the Bible to the incarnation of the Son in that both are revelatory acts of God. Hill describes συγκατάβασις in similar terms:

> [It is] God's gracious acceptance of the limitations . . . of the human condition—eminently in the Incarnation and derivatively in that other incarnation of the Word in Scripture. . . . For Chrysostom the Scriptures exemplify God's gracious 'considerateness' (*not* 'condescension') because in them God speaks to human beings in language, and primarily in speech.[19]

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[15] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 29. Rylaarsdam identifies οἰκονομία and τὸ πρέπον as their preferred terms.

[16] Rylaarsdam calculates that Chrysostom uses συγκατάβασις around 430 times out of almost 1,600 in extant Greek literature. However, before Chrysostom's time, the word is found only 80 times combined (24n85).

[17] Chase, *Chrysostom*, 27.

[18] Chase, 27.

[19] Robert C. Hill, trans., *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, FC 74 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 17–18; emphasis original.

Both Hill and Chase recognize that συγκατάβασις comprises a revelation from God, preeminently in the incarnation of Christ but also in the Scriptures.[20]

Chrysostom's testimony that συγκατάβασις refers to divine revelation preeminently in the incarnation of the Son fits into his overall understanding of salvation as "the restoration of human nature from the corruption of death to life eternal."[21] This life is experienced in communion with God and in accordance with his commands. At the fall, communion with God was lost. As Rylaarsdam explains, the incarnation is the climax of God's plan to restore that communion. He writes, "In order for communion to be restored between God and humanity, God planned that the Son would take on human flesh, die for sin, and rise and ascend into heaven with our common human flesh."[22] According to Chrysostom, in Christ's birth God stretches "forth both his hands [and lays] hold on either side, and tie[s] them together; even so hath He done, joining the old

[20] Hill is careful to note the order for Chrysostom's conception of συγκατάβασις, writing, "Chrysostom's esteem for Scripture was not born of the heat of controversy but was the fruit of personal meditation on the Incarnation" (17). Others note this connection, too. See Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 173–74; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 140–44. Although the analogy between Scripture and the incarnation is helpful for articulating the nature of Scripture as both divine and human, it must not be pressed too far. For example, Peter Enns appeals to the analogy in support of considering the human authorship of Scripture to be essential to the nature of the Bible (*Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015], 5–9). However, his view suggests that the human element of Scripture calls for reconsiderations of the historicity of Genesis 1–11, for example, because of recent discoveries of Akkadian origin myths that suggest the author of Genesis was culturally-bound in his writing (28–30). That is, evidence from ancient sources should dictate how the nature of Scripture is understood because the common element between them is human authorship. At this point in Enns's argument, the analogy between Scripture and the incarnation breaks down if Christ's perfections are to be maintained. Furthermore, it suggests that the analogy does not fit Enns's argument.

[21] Ashish J. Naidu, "Christology and the Christian Life in the Preaching of John Chrysostom," *GJCT* 8, no. 3 (2011): 6.

[22] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 133.

covenant with the new, God's nature with man's, the things that are His with ours."[23] Hence, in Chrysostom's conception of salvation, the incarnation "summarizes God's plan of salvation in a nutshell."[24]

The link between the incarnation and Scripture for Chrysostom was found in God's συγκατάβασις. God began to reveal himself and his plan of salvation that would culminate in Christ by relating to man what he could understand. Commenting on Genesis 1 and Moses's strategy of teaching the fundamentals first, Chrysostom states,

> When Moses, remember, in the beginning took on the instruction of the human race, he taught his listeners the elements, whereas Paul and John, taking over from Moses, could at that later stage transmit more developed notions.
>
> Hence we discover the reason for the considerateness [συγκατάβασις] shown to date, namely, that under the guidance of the Spirit he was speaking in a manner appropriate to his hearers as he outlined everything.[25]

In other words, Scripture is a revelation from God that teaches man what needs to be known for reconciliation.

Chrysostom's observations about God's revelation accounts for all of God's dealings with man. According to Hill's summary, it includes the appearances to the Patriarchs, the law given to Israel, and the new covenant promises.[26] Furthermore, the way this revelation is given reflects God's συγκατάβασις. It comes with a simplicity of

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[23] John Chrysostom, "Homily II Matthew 1:1," in *Homilies on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 10, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 10.

[24] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 134.

[25] John Chrysostom, "Homily 2 Gen. 1.1," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 34.

[26] Hill, "*Sunkatabasis*," 6–8.

speech in the concreteness of language.[27] Such use of words may threaten the grandeur of God, but this is part of his amazing συγκατάβασις. Chrysostom asks, "Do you see God's considerateness [συγκατάβασις]? It is not with a view to his own dignity that he chooses his words, but out of considerateness [συγκατάβασις] for our limitations."[28] Thus, just as the Son's glory is veiled in the Incarnation, Scripture is not primarily given to reveal all of God's splendor in terms that humanity must stretch its finitude to understand. Instead, it is given to teach humanity in accessible language.

Capturing the essence of συγκατάβασις in English translation is difficult despite its abundant usage in Chrysostom's works. Rylaarsdam notes the difficulty in translating the word: "No single term in English perfectly captures the full sense of the term συγκατάβασις."[29] It can be translated as God's "considerateness," his "making allowance," his "taking account," his "adaptation," or his manner of self-revelation in Scripture and in his dealings with humanity.[30] Put another way, it indicates the revelation of God's concern for mankind's understanding of himself as witnessed by his adoption of "human forms of expression."[31]

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[27] Hill, 8–10.

[28] Cited in Hill, 10.

[29] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 29.

[30] Hill, "On Looking Again at *Sunkatabasis*," 4; Duane A. Garrett, *An Analysis of the Hermeneutics of John Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8 with an English Translation*, SBEC (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 176; Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, 18; Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 170; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 29–30; Stephen Westerholm and Martin Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture: Voices from the History of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 116–23.

[31] Hill, "*Sunkatabasis*," 5; John Chrysostom, *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert Charles Hill, vol. 1 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 33. For clarity's sake, when the word appears in translation, this thesis will follow Hill in using "considerateness" for συγκατάβασις, except where it is necessary to use "accommodation" as a theological term.

Despite the difficulty in translating the term, Chrysostom seems to provide his own definition of συγκατάβασις. In his third homily on the incomprehensibility of God, he says, "What is this συγκατάβασις? It is when God appears and makes himself known not as he is, but in the way one incapable of beholding him is able to look upon him. In this way God reveals himself proportionally to the weakness of vision of those who behold him."[32] Thus, having started with God's incomprehensible nature made known, Chrysostom thinks of συγκατάβασις as "considerate" revelation from God that accounts for the limitations of man while protecting the transcendence of God. It is divine revelation that God makes accessible to the understanding of finite humanity.[33]

Συγκατάβασις and Communication

A perennial theological problem for an accommodated revelation concerns the ostensibly self-evident truth that if humans are to know God's revelation, it must be presented in a way that humanity's limited capacity may grasp.[34] Included here are significant implications for the received revelation's truthfulness and method of

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[32] *Incomprehens.* 3.15, cited in Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 17. Rylaarsdam claims that this is Chrysostom's definition of συγκατάβασις.

[33] The term "accommodation" is not a preferred translation of συγκατάβασις because of the theological baggage that accompanies it (see e.g., Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*, 44–45, 97). Accommodation can convey the idea that divine revelation loses its authority and truth when it is given through a prophet's words or an apostle's pen because the human element contains too much natural frailty and error to overcome. Likewise, Rylaarsdam's "adaptation" is not preferred as a translation because of the possible connotation that the revelatory meaning of one era can be revised or altered to become another meaning based on the needs of another era (see *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 29–30). It is granted that significance may be drawn from the meaning of a text regardless of a reader's historical context. However, the meaning of the text may not be changed.

[34] Feinberg writes, "It is common when speaking of divine revelation to hold that, given the difference between God's intellect and ours, God must accommodate his revelation to our finite minds with their limited ability to understand what an infinite intelligence reveals. This seems almost self-evidently true" (*Light in a Dark Place*, 42).

interpretation. John Feinberg asks, “The questions seem even more cogent if one never articulates exactly what accommodating information does to its truthfulness. And, whether accommodated language is or isn’t exactly what God knows, then how should we interpret it—literally, figuratively, or how?”[35]

The importance of this question in establishing the correlation between bibliology and exposition should not be understated. If divine revelation is bound to the limitations of mankind because it is accommodated to their understanding, then no interpretive method will provide certainty that the revelation’s intended meaning may be discovered. If the intended meaning of the revelation cannot be discovered with certainty, then there is no expositional approach that can explain the meaning to an audience. The revelation will turn on an endless loop of accommodation. Put another way, accommodated revelation must be able to overcome human limitations if interpretation and exposition are to be a possibility. Chrysostom’s understanding of Scripture as divine revelation is valuable not only for demonstrating its possibility, but also its necessity.

For Chrysostom, συγκατάβασις is a programmatic concept that permeates God’s interactions with humanity. He writes,

> Do you see how the Lord shows considerateness [συγκατάβασις] for our human limitations in all he does and in arranging everything in a way that gives evidence of his characteristic love? Don’t be surprised, dearly beloved, at the extent of his considerateness [συγκατάβασις]; rather, remember that with the patriarchs as well, when he was sitting by the oak tree, he came in human form as the good man’s guest in the company of the angels, giving us a premonition from on high at the beginning that he would one day take human form to liberate all human nature by this means from the tyranny of the devil and lead us to salvation. At that time, however, since it was the very early stages, he appeared to each of them in the guise of an apparition, as he says himself through the inspired authors,

[35] Feinberg, 43.

> "I multiplied visions and took various likenesses in the works of the inspired authors" (Hos 12:10).[36]

By understanding it as a concept that is foundational to all divine revelation—not least of which includes Scripture—Chrysostom clarifies what accommodation in revelation means and does not mean. Thus, this term may serve to clarify the issues at stake in the debate.

If God considerately looks upon humanity with full understanding of their weakness, then it follows that he tailors his word to them according to their vocabulary and thought patterns. That is, God reveals himself in Scripture in order that humanity may understand him. For Chrysostom, this explains how Isaiah could have seen God when John 1:18 says, "No one has seen God at any time."[37] It accounts for "both the mode and manner of revelation [as] conditioned by the day in which it was given."[38] It also clarifies why God revealed himself in a variety of ways to the prophets. Chrysostom writes, "When he reveals himself, he condescends [συγκατάβασις],[39] now in one way, now in another way, to the prophets. He alters the visions in ways appropriate to the circumstances."[40] Thus, in revelation God closes the gap on behalf of man and does not expect man to do it for himself.

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[36] From Homily 58 on Genesis, quoted in Robert C. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 37.

[37] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 176.

[38] Garrett, 176–77.

[39] Garrett translates συγκατάβασις as "condescends" throughout his work.

[40] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 124.

However, this does not mean that God's ability to communicate was hindered by insurmountable communicative hurdles. As Stephen Westerholm and Martin Westerholm explain, "It is a mark of divine 'considerateness' that God addresses people where they are, with the measure of truth that they are capable of receiving or that will render them amenable to the reception of further truth."[41] Neither does this mean that the contents of divine revelation are inaccurate. As Duane Garrett writes, "For Chrysostom . . . condescension does not call into question the accuracy of revelation."[42] Divine revelation accounts for human limitations without compromising the integrity of the revealed content.[43]

On a practical level, this brings out the connection between divine revelation and the reception of biblical teachings as a matter of faith, even if those teachings are not exhaustively understood. Concerning the author of Hebrews' exposition of the significance of Melchizedek for the high priesthood of Christ and its relationship to the doctrine of Christ, Chrysostom writes, "While the fact that he was born of the Father I know, how so I do not know; while the fact that he was born of the virgin I understand, the manner even in this instance I do not grasp: the generation of each nature is a matter for confession, and the manner of each is a matter for silence."[44] In other words,

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[41] Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 116.

[42] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 178.

[43] Rylaarsdam summarizes, "Yet, for all of Chrysostom's emphasis on humanity's extremely limited knowledge of God in this life, he is still confident that it is possible to know God. For God, out of philanthropy, has revealed himself in a manner which humanity can understand. The extent to which God is knowable to humans is a result of divine adaptation or accommodation" (Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 17).

[44] John Chrysostom, "Homily One: Proof of the Obscurity of Old Testament References to Christ, the Nations and the Rejection of the Jews," in *St. John Chrysostom: Old Testament Homilies: Homilies on*

Chrysostom receives the Christological teaching of Scripture on the basis of its status as divine revelation. Furthermore, he sees no hindrance between the reality of divine accommodation in revelation and its acceptance by finite human beings.

Συγκατάβασις and Progressive Revelation

Although humanity can receive divine revelation because of συγκατάβασις, God has given his revelation in a progressive manner. That is, he does not give at one time everything he intends to communicate. Instead, he reveals over time. Scripture's intimate link with history testifies to this reality. For example, the apostle Paul's explanation of the timing of the first advent of Christ in Galatians 4:4–5 is unintelligible if revelation is not progressive.

Chrysostom observed this principle of Scripture's nature and he used συγκατάβασις to describe it. In *Homily 31* on the Gospel of John, he describes God's revelation as being given slowly and over time. He writes,

> The great advantage of moderation [συγκατάβασις] can be demonstrated in all affairs of life. Thus, in mastering the arts we have not learned everything at once from our teachers. Similarly, we have constructed our cities by degrees, setting them up slowly and gradually. By this meaning we keep order in our life. Moreover, do not be surprised if this quality is so important in the things of this life, since you will also find that in the things of the spirit the power of this prudent moderation is great. Thus the Jews were able to be rid of idolatry, by being persuaded slowly and gradually, and hearing no lofty teaching in the beginning with regard either to doctrine or to practice.[45]

Just as teachers teach by degree and cities are built slowly, so also Scripture is given by

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the Obscurity of the Old Testament & Homilies on the Psalms, trans. Robert Charles Hill, vol. 3 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 11.

[45] John Chrysostom, "Homily 31 (John 3:35–4:12)," in *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John, the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 1–47*, trans. Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, FC 33 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1957), 296.

God by degree and over periods of time. Chrysostom explains that this slow and gradual manner of God enabled the Jews to forsake idolatry without burdening them with later teachings. This is an important point for his exposition because his text begins at John 3:35–36, wherein Jesus discusses his relationship with the Father and the opposite outcomes for those who receive him or reject him. However, Chrysostom notes that Christ does not refer directly to himself and neither does the apostle John present him as doing so in the text. He explains, "Christ adopted this practice [of gradual teaching] toward most men from the start. So John also has done now [in John 3:35–36], speaking of Christ as if merely of an unusual man, and only indirectly including lofty ideas."[46] An indirect reference to the full teaching continues the slow ascent to the full teaching about the Son's identity.

Chrysostom considers this manner of teaching to be a part of Scripture's normal character and God's design for it. He states, "You see, God doesn't do everything all of a sudden but uses his accommodation [συγκατάβασις] because of his great loving-kindness."[47] Furthermore, God's way of instruction has a pedagogical function to which Moses's ministry bears witness. He explains, "You see, just as if the Jews had been little children he placed Moses as schoolmaster over them in this way, and like little children he made these representations in a sketchy way, just as we teach the alphabet."[48] In other words, Moses's ministry taught the people according to their ability.

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[46] Chrysostom, 296–97.

[47] John Chrysostom, "Homily 4 Colossians 1:21–22," in *Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 111.

[48] Chrysostom, 113.

Chrysostom does not limit the need for progressive revelation only to the Jews. In *Homily 5* of his Colossians exposition, he explains that God's dealings with the members of his church are commensurate with the Jews since Scripture continues to teach in a progressive fashion. He says,

> See how God schools us little by little. He translated Enoch: that isn't a terrific achievement. This schooled us for the ascent of Elijah. He shut Noah up in the ark: that isn't a terrific achievement. This schooled us for shutting up the prophet in the whale. So even the things of old needed forerunners and types. You see, just as on a ladder the first step passes to the second, but from the first it's not possible to get to the fourth, and this one passes on to that, so that that may be the way to the next; nor is it possible to get to the second before the first—so too is it here.[49]

In other words, Chrysostom's basic position is that earlier revelation prepares for later revelation. As Rylaarsdam summarizes, "God calibrates his revelation according to the capacity of humanity at a particular point in history."[50]

This is especially the case for the key doctrines of the Christian faith. In one instance, Chrysostom comments on the type of barren women giving way to a virgin birth as preparation for a full Christology. He says, "Therefore, the sterile woman is a type of the birth from a virgin, and she sends the mind forth in faith. Again, this was a type of God being able to beget alone."[51]

Thus, God's συγκατάβασις accounts for progressive revelation that reveals in degrees like a teacher to his students or a construction crew of a building. God's habit is to teach his creatures little-by-little, accounting for their capacity to handle the revelation.

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[49] John Chrysostom, "Homily 5 Colossians 1:26–28," in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, Writings from the Greco-Roman World (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 135.

[50] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 90.

[51] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 5," 137.

The progress of revelation develops doctrine within Scripture that builds on the articulations of previous revelation. Put another way, earlier revelation prepares for later revelation. This formulation of bibliology correlates with an expositional method that prioritizes the message of one text while also enabling that text to interact with earlier and later passages that teach on similar themes and doctrines. Such exposition can be carried out in a faithful and responsible manner because it accounts for the progressive nature of divine revelation in Scripture.

Συγκατάβασις and Authorial Intent

In connection with exposition, συγκατάβασις promotes explanations of the biblical text that accord with human authorial intent.[52] Following from the idea that divine revelation loses none of its truthfulness as it is communicated in Scripture, interpreting the biblical text is a matter of taking the text as it stands rather than pursuing an interpretation that is foreign to what the text says. Such an interpretive approach is grounded in viewing the nature of Scripture as communication from God to humanity via letters. Chrysostom explains,

> When God formed human beings in the beginning, he used to speak to them personally, in a way that was possible for human beings to understand him. . . . And even when all humankind fell into evil ways, the creator of all did not abandon the human race. Instead . . . he sent them letters as you do to people far away from you, and this drew all humankind back again to him. It was God who sent them letters, Moses who delivered them. What do the letters say? "In the beginning God made heaven and earth."[53]

[52] Authorial intent as a central interpretive principle for Chrysostom will be discussed in Chapter Two. This section connects *συγκατάβασις* and authorial intent from the perspective of Scripture's nature.

[53] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 2," 31.

To send letters and to have Moses deliver them is a statement about what Scripture is and how it came to be. Scripture is communication from God. Scripture came into existence through God's use of human instrumentality to record his communication. Therefore, Scripture's nature necessarily involves words written on a page to facilitate the understanding of the readers.

Since Scripture is viewed as communication from God and that communication comes in the form of what Chrysostom calls "letters," attention to authorial intent is necessary for understanding the meaning of the communication. According to Mitchell, this communication via a letter made the absent writer present to the reader. She writes, "The letter is considered the medium of communication between absent friends who desire one another's company and conversation. Indeed, a letter was thought to contain the speech of its absent author."[54] Thus, a letter is the speech of the absent author.

When the letter is read, it is only natural that the reader—who views the letter as the speech of the author—interpret the written words according to the intention of its author. It is also natural to expect that the author chose the words he wrote because they would make known his intention for writing. In other words, interpersonal discourse assumes that communication is intended to be understood in accord with who is communicating, how that communication is happening, and what is being communicated. Assuming the viability of written communication to convey authorial intent seems to have been shared by Chrysostom. Rylaarsdam comments, "Chrysostom seems to assume,

[54] Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 48; see also Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 116.

therefore, that when one is interpreting God's letters, his personal discourse can be interpreted as a letter would be."[55]

While Chrysostom affirms that God is ultimately incomprehensible, συγκατάβασις means that God has accounted for human limitation so that his written word is comprehensible to mankind and remains true. It is divine revelation written for the purpose of readers' comprehension. Commenting on the phrase "Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits on high, the One who brings Himself low to see?" (Psalm 113:5–6), Chrysostom argues,

> [The psalmist] gradually makes this comparison, though of course God incomparably surpasses all things; instead, as I have said before and shall never cease repeating constantly, with the limitations of the listeners in view he adjusts the language. His anxiety, you see, is not to ensure for the time being that what he says is in keeping with the respect due to God, but that it can be grasped by them.[56]

This considerate revelation made no compromise to the integrity of the revelation or the biblical text. Instead, the revelation accurately conveys what God intends to communicate to finite human understanding. As a result, revelation serves as the foundation for exposition.

Chrysostom's understanding of revelation as God's considerate accommodation of finite human understanding without sacrificing the truth of what is revealed serves as an impetus for literal interpretation. That this is the case may be seen in contrast to Origen's approach to the same subject. As noted above, Chrysostom did not consider divine revelation to be hindered in communicating truth and true facts despite the

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[55] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 117.

[56] John Chrysostom, "Psalm 113," in *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert Charles Hill, vol. 2 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 72; see also Hill, "*Sunkatabasis*," 4–5.

incomprehensibility of God or the limitations of man. Origen, on the other hand, considered divine revelation to be inherently inaccessible and therefore required a spiritual sense to lie hidden in the words of Scripture. He writes, "These mysteries, which were made known and revealed to [the prophets and apostles] through the Spirit, they portrayed figuratively, as if narrating certain human deeds or handing down certain legal observances and precepts."[57] In other words, the biblical writers were revealing mysteries in their writings. However, they represented those mysteries in figures that consisted of narrative accounts, laws, and statutes. For Origen, books like Genesis and Leviticus are figures for the genuine revelation that rests in the spiritual sense of the words.

This view of the nature of revelation logically produces an approach to interpretation that openly questions the truthfulness of the revelation. Two sections later in *On First Principles*, Origen claims that it was the exercise of God's wisdom that some portions of Scripture are not truthful accounts of the events recorded. He writes,

> Divine Wisdom took care that certain *stumbling-blocks* or interruptions of the narratival sense should occur, by inserting into the midst certain *impossibilities and incongruities*, so that the very interruption of the narrative might make the reader pause, as if by casting certain obstacles before him, on account of which he might refuse to proceed along the path of the ordinary sense and, by excluding and debarring us, it might recall us to the beginning of another way, in order that, by entering upon a narrow path, it might unfold, as a loftier and more sublime road, the immense breadth of divine knowledge.[58]

In other words, Scripture contains things impossible to believe as true if taken in their plain sense. When the interpreter encounters these portions, it is an indication that

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[57] Origen, *Origen: On First Principles: A Reader's Edition*, trans. John Behr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 258 [4.2.7].

[58] Origen, 261 [4.2.9]; emphasis original.

they communicate a higher, spiritual sense since that is what Scripture as divine revelation is ultimately intended to communicate. In order to understand the higher meaning, the reader locates the impossibilities in a passage, discerns the extent to which the passage refers to either a true or untrue element, and then interprets the passage allegorically so that its true meaning may be understood.[59]

This view of revelation and its implications for what Scripture communicates stands in contrast to Chrysostom's συγκατάβασις. For him, Scripture is revelation from God that manifests no difficulties in bridging the gap between God's transcendence and man's finitude to communicate truth through the ordinary and plain sense of the text. This clarity is another element of the nature of Scripture that falls within the purview of συγκατάβασις.

Συγκατάβασις and Clarity

Since revelation is a communicative act, συγκατάβασις also touches on the issue of Scripture's clarity. Westerholm and Westerholm bring out Chrysostom's view of Scripture's capacity to be understood when they write, "It is a mark of divine 'considerateness' that God addresses people where they are, with the measure of truth that they are capable of receiving or that will render them amenable to the reception of further truth."[60] In other words, revelation is able to be understood at the time that it is given and written.

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[59] Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84–87; Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 80–88.

[60] Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 116.

For Chrysostom there is a direct link between συγκατάβασις and the clarity of Scripture. This is reflected when he exhorts his congregation on what to do with his sermon on Genesis 1:1:

> It's better to conclude our sermon at this point, exhorting you in your goodness to remember what has been said and keep it ever in your mind; when you go home from here, lay out with your meal a spiritual meal as well. The father of the family might repeat something of what was said here; his wife could then hear it, the children too could learn something, even the domestics might be instructed.[61]

That is, everyone can gain and learn from the teaching because the biblical text is considerate revelation from God that is accessible to all who hear it.

Another example is found in *Homily 9* of Chrysostom's series on Colossians. He begins by summarizing the content from the previous sermon and quickly moves to verse 16 and focuses on the exhortation, "Let it dwell in you richly."[62] He turns to men in his congregation and counsels, "Listen, those of you who are in the world and have charge of a wife and children, how Paul entrusts you too especially to read the Scriptures, and not to do it haphazardly, but with great earnestness."[63] Chrysostom appeals to heads of households to read the Bible for themselves. In doing so he says nothing to warn them about difficulties in understanding its meaning. Instead, his view of Scripture's clarity governs his relay of Paul's exhortation. A little later he adds that his church should desire the Bible above all else in the world. He says, "If you don't want anything else, at least

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[61] John Chrysostom, "Homily 2 Gen. 1.1," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 36–37.

[62] John Chrysostom, "Homily 9 Colossians 3:16–17," in *John Chrysostom Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 207. Translations in the case studies follow Allen.

[63] Chrysostom, 207.

buy the New Testament, [that is] the apostle [Paul], the Acts of the Apostles, the Gospel, as your constant teachers. . . . No, don't study them but take them all on board, keep them in your mind."[64] The possession, study, and meditation of the Scriptures is profitable in large part because its meaning is accessible to readers and hearers.

A third example, again from *Homily 9*, addresses Scripture's clarity in the same paragraph as the immediately preceding quote. He says, "Don't wait for another teacher: you have the oracles of God. Nobody can teach you as they can."[65] By calling the Bible "the oracles of God" (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ), Chrysostom is strengthening his exhortation through affirming divine inspiration.[66] This shows the connection between the inspiration of the Bible and its clarity. These divine oracles are able to teach men and women if they will devote themselves to learn what the Scriptures say. Furthermore, Chrysostom identifies the Bible as the "teacher" of his congregation. As it is in today's world, so also it was in the ancient world that a teacher was an authoritative figure.[67] Thus, Chrysostom expects his congregation to learn from the authoritative teaching of the Bible through their personal reading, study, and meditation.[68]

However, clarity does not mean that studious effort is not required for understanding God's revelation in Scripture.[69] This is especially the case when

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[64] Chrysostom, 209.

[65] Chrysostom, 209.

[66] *LSJ*, s.v. λόγος [VII. 1.].

[67] E.g., see Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 52–65.

[68] Remembering that obtaining a copy of the Scriptures in part or in its entirety was not a simple matter in the fourth century, Chrysostom's expectation is all the more remarkable.

[69] As addressed in Chapter Two, Chrysostom recognizes that a clear text can be obscured by the interpreter in a number of ways, including an unwillingness to believe, a lack of knowledge of the context, or misunderstandings about the language used in the text. See Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1," 13–

interpreting a text that was originally written to and for another time and place. While the immediate audience was able to understand the text, all other audiences need to apply diligent study to arrive at the same understanding of the text. As J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays write, "Since God spoke his message in specific, historical situations (i.e., to people living in particular places, speaking particular languages, adopting a particular way of life), we should take the ancient historical-cultural situation seriously."[70] At the same time, it is self-evident that the more understandable a text was to its original audience and its situational context, so also the more challenging it will become for later readers to approach the same text from their situational context.

Chrysostom affirms this principle in a series of sermons that discuss why the Old Testament is difficult for contemporary believers to interpret.[71] One reason is the language gap. He says, "We do not have the Old Testament written for us in our native tongue: while it was composed in one language, we have it read in another language."[72] Although Chrysostom and his congregations were primarily Greek-speakers, they needed help to understand the Hebrew Scriptures. While this gap may be bridged through

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24; John Chrysostom, "Homily Two: More on the Obscurity of the Old Testament, on God's Lovingkindness, and about Not Accusing One Another," in *St. John Chrysostom: Old Testament Homilies*, trans. Robert Charles Hill, vol. 3 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 29–31.

[70] J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 111. Köstenberger and Patterson concur, "It is commonly acknowledged that it is vital to study Scripture in its proper context, and that context, in turn, properly conceived consists of both historical and literary facets; so there is no need to justify the necessity of responsible historical research as part of the interpretive process" (*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 94).

[71] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1"; Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 2."

[72] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 2," 29.

translation, Chrysostom recognized the difficulty—and impossibility in some cases—to translate a text from one language to another with the same level of original clarity.[73]

Another reason for difficulty in interpretation is the knowledge gap—what Chrysostom attributes to inexperienced interpreters. Chrysostom draws a comparison between the experience needed for sailing with confidence and interpreting with confidence. He says,

> What occurs in the case of the sea, then, and happens with the mind is realized also in explanation of the Scriptures: there is need to be alarmed, disturbed when we go out on to the ocean, not because the ocean is fearsome, but because we are inexperienced mariners. It is possible, you see, that a text, simple by nature, becomes difficult through the inexperience of the listeners.[74]

The text itself, Chrysostom notes, is "simple by nature." The knowledge-level of the interpreter may be a hindrance to understanding a biblical text, but it says nothing about whether the text is obscure. The obscurity is inherent to the reader, not the text.

Although there are gaps in a reader's understanding, these gaps may be bridged through regular study of the Scriptures and its historical background. Chrysostom's expositions model this bridging exercise where necessary. For example, he explains from Jeremiah 36 the presence of a fire into which Jeremiah's prophecies were being thrown by the king. The fire is mentioned not simply for the sake of having a place to burn the prophecies. Instead, the text mentions that it was the ninth month, and the king was sitting in his winter house (36:22). Chrysostom explains that the ninth month corresponds

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[73] He says, "Whenever a language is rendered into another language, it involves great difficulty. All who are versed in many languages are aware of this, how it is not possible to transfer the clarity naturally contained in the words when moving to another language" (29).

[74] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1," 9.

to November and, therefore, the fire is present "because it was cold."[75] Again, although obscurity may be encountered in interpretation, the obscurity is in the interpreter's knowledge base. Yet the biblical text is clear.[76]

Chrysostom's view of clarity contrasts with the earlier Alexandrian approach represented by Origen. In his theological and hermeneutical manual, *On First Principles*, he writes about what various difficulties indicate when encountered in the text:

> We have mentioned all these instances in order to show that the aim of that divine power which bestowed on us the sacred Scriptures is that we should not accept what is presented by the letter alone, such things sometimes being not true with regard to the letter but actually irrational and impossible, and certain things are interwoven with the narratives that happened and with the legislation that is useful according to the letter.[77]

In other words, for Origen, the language of the text can be a stumbling block on the way to arriving at its meaning because it may contain false, irrational, or impossible statements. However, these difficulties were indications to the interpreter that the text has a symbolic or allegorical import to be discovered through a search of the rest of Scripture.[78] For Origen, his approach was coherent because of his view of the nature of Scripture. He explains,

> Our position is that with respect to the whole of the divine Scripture all of it has a spiritual meaning, but not all of it has a bodily meaning, for there are many places where the bodily is proved to be impossible. And

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[75] Chrysostom, 19–20.

[76] A millennium later, Martin Luther developed the doctrine of Scripture's clarity when he argued for the concept of "internal clarity." The experience of obscurity in interpreting the biblical text was due to the absence of "internal clarity," not "objective clarity." See Martin Luther, "On the Bondage of the Will," in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, ed. E. Gordon Rupp and Philip S. Watson, LCC (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1969), 158–68.

[77] Origen, *On First Principles*, 268 [4.3.4].

[78] He writes, "Carefully ascertain where the meaning according to the letter is true and where it is impossible, and as far as possible trace out, by means of similar expressions, the sense, scattered throughout Scripture, of that which is impossible according to the letter" (270 [4.3.5]).

> therefore great attention must be given by the careful reader to the divine books, as being divine writings.[79]

Origen appeals to the divine nature of the Scripture as warrant for his understanding. Because they are "divine writings," Scripture contains obscurities by nature in its composition. As Peter W. Martens explains Origen's position, Scripture was "*composed* as a twofold communication: words had their basic referent, but they were also symbolic of some other referent."[80]

Contrast this approach with Chrysostom's attention to the literal sense because of his presuppositions about the nature of Scripture.[81] Westerholm and Westerholm write, "Closely identifying the writers with their writings, he insists that those who read Scripture enjoy living communion with—and even hear the voices of—those authors: they actually 'have Moses and the prophets' with them through their writings."[82] For Chrysostom, his view of revelation led him to affirm the clarity and accessibility of the Scriptures, which in turn produced a literal hermeneutic that served his exposition of the biblical text.

Thus, the difference between Origen and Chrysostom's various interpretations

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[79] Origen, 270 [4.3.5]. By referring to a "bodily" and "spiritual" meaning, Origen is drawing from his tripartite division of meaning. The bodily meaning referred to the "obvious interpretation" or literal sense and was intended for the immature reader. A second level of meaning was the "soul of Scripture," which was the moral sense and was accessible to those who were progressing in maturity and "able to perceive something more." A third level of meaning was for the mature and called the spiritual sense, and was akin to a doctrinal sense that was able to discern connections between the "*shadow of the good things to come*" and the "*spiritual law*" (252–53 [4.2.4]).

[80] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 66; emphasis original.

[81] This point will be explored further in Chapter Two.

[82] Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 103.

often was a result of their distinct views of Scripture.[83] For Origen, Scripture's nature as divine revelation meant that its composition inherently contained a spiritual meaning to be mined out from other places in the biblical canon. Furthermore, he understood Scripture to require that the reader ascend by means of the text to discover the divine meaning that was hidden to most readers.[84] Finally, if readers were to commune with God, they must locate and rise above the text's literal sense since that is Scripture's intent.[85] For Chrysostom, Scripture's nature as divine revelation meant that it was an act of God's considerateness of man's inherent limitations of knowledge. Nevertheless, God's revelation was given so that it would be understood. In other words, God condescended all the way, leaving no ascent necessary. Hence, the revelation was inherently clear. And being clear, it could be interpreted with clarity despite the knowledge gaps of the interpreter.[86]

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[83] Westerholm and Westerholm note one difference between the two ancient expositors was their capacity for handling metaphors: "Origen proved singularly obtuse in his reading of biblical metaphors, declaring the untruth of their surface meaning a reason for resorting to allegorical interpretation. Chrysostom, on the other hand, grasped that the *sense* of a metaphorical text is that conveyed by the metaphor, not that of a woodenly literal understanding of its *words*" (119 [emphasis original]).

[84] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 87.

[85] Martens, 225–26.

[86] As the history of biblical interpretation proceeded, the fundamental of assumption of Origen about the clarity and accessibility of the Scriptures was adopted by the Roman Catholic monasteries and cathedral schools of the twelfth century. Regarding Stephen Langton (ca. 1150–1228) and his use of the quadriga, Levy writes, "He declares that it was the first rule, history, that [his mentor Peter Comestor] had worked through, as though laying a foundation or providing milk for infants when they were being introduced to the study of theology" (Ian Christopher Levy, *Introducing Medieval Biblical Interpretation: The Senses of Scripture in Premodern Exegesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018], 194). Levy defines the quadriga as the "four divine rules of Scripture: history, allegory, tropology, and anagogy." "History" refers to the literal sense (Levy, 194).

Summary

In sum, the term συγκατάβασις assists Chrysostom as a clarifying term that explains the nature and context of divine revelation. It is God's considerate or accommodating self-disclosure to humanity in various forms. Although it is an accommodation to human finite understanding, divine revelation loses nothing in communicating accurately and truthfully. As divine revelation, the biblical text is an integrated whole and should be received and believed. This revelation is considerate of human language, adopting its vocabulary, grammar, and syntax patterns. It also is considerate in that it is progressive in nature, accounting for previous revelation and the people to whom it was given, while also setting up later revelation. As a text, Scripture should be understood in a way that corresponds with the author's intent as communicated by its linguistic features. As revelation, Scripture is an accessible text that can be understood with clarity.

The Inspiration of Scripture

The claim of Scripture is that it is God-breathed and that men spoke and wrote this special revelation by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21).[87] According to John Frame, "*Inspiration* [is] a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word. Such inspiration takes place in all verbal revelation."[88] The inspiration of Scripture ensures that what is written in the Bible is God's word. The adjective

[87] Parts of this section expand upon Noah Hartmetz, "Revelation or Instrument: Perspectives on the Bible's Authority Contrasted" (Paper presented in TH 813 Seminar in Bibliology, The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, CA, January 2023), 8–14; Noah Hartmetz, "The Expositional Method of John Chrysostom," *MSJ* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2023): 413–16.

[88] John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, TL (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), 140; emphasis original.

θεόπνευστος in 2 Timothy 3:16 is either active, indicating that Scripture is "filled with God's breath and that it breathes out the Spirit of God," or passive, which would say "that scripture itself is a result of" having its source be "the breath of God."[89] In Benjamin B. Warfield's examination of early patristic usage of θεόπνευστος and the importance of its use in 2 Timothy 3:16, he determines that the word carries "a uniformly passive significance, rooted in the idea of the creative breath of God."[90] In another place Warfield comments on 2 Timothy 3:16, "What is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them."[91] Thus, Scripture's source is God, making Scripture God's word. That "Scripture" is God-breathed indicates that its actual language and form is of God, since "Scripture" refers not just to concepts or contents, but to the "writings" and that which is "written."

Furthermore, God revealed His word through His prophets who spoke from Him, for Him, and with His authority.[92] The claim of 2 Peter 1:21 is that prophecy is of divine origin and the prophets' words were from God. That is, the prophets' words were their

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[89] George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 446.

[90] Benjamin B. Warfield, "God-Inspired Scripture," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1948), 275.

[91] Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1948), 133. See also Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 123.

[92] Several scholars note that 2 Timothy 3:16 asserts the reality of Scripture's inspiration and 2 Peter 1:19–21 indicates the process of inspiration. See Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," 133; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy & Titus*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, EBTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 268; Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 236.

words (ἐλάλησαν . . . ἄνθρωποι), and those words were of divine origin (ἀπὸ θεοὺ).[93] Peter makes this claim based upon the active agency[94] of the Holy Spirit in the process of their writing ("prophecy of Scripture," v. 20).[95] Thus, similar to Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16, Peter claims Scripture's divine origin because the prophets spoke and wrote from God by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.[96]

This position was generally adopted and defended in the early centuries of the church's history.[97] A few extreme examples emphasized the divine authorship of Scripture to the extent that the human author was virtually ignored. For instance, Origen stressed the timelessness and unity of Scripture's teaching in such a way that "the key to understanding a passage of Scripture is not found in the immediate literary context, but in some other passage found elsewhere in Scripture."[98] Examples like these

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[93] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 324; Richard J. Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1983), 234.

[94] Lea and Griffin note that the passive voice of the participle φερόμενοι in reference to the men who spoke by the Holy Spirit corresponds to the passive meaning of θεόπνευστος in 2 Timothy 3:16 (Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236).

[95] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 324; Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration," 135–37. Schreiner writes, "Human beings spoke, and they spoke with their own personalities and literary styles; hence inspiration does not require a dictation theory of inspiration. The words the prophets spoke, however, ultimately came from God. They were inspired, or 'carried along', by the Holy Spirit. Hence, Peter defended the accuracy of the prophecies in the Scriptures" (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 324).

[96] Drawing these two passages together, just as "men spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:21), so also "all Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim 3:16). Furthermore, in verses 19 and 20, Peter uses the phrases "prophetic word" and "no prophecy of Scripture," which means that to have a prophecy from Scripture is to have what the prophet spoke. Therefore, the authors who wrote these writings did so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Warfield identifies this revelatory act "concursive operation," that is, the characteristics of individuality in the writings are real, but "in no way … affect their purity as direct communications from God" (Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," 94). See also Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 324.

[97] Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What the Early Church Can Teach Us* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 70–75.

[98] Graves, 73. Graves immediately adds that Origen was a skillful interpreter of the Bible's literal sense. Nevertheless, "for Origen, the spiritual level is where God speaks timelessly through Scripture, and the only way to grasp the spiritual sense of most passages is to locate them within their proper theological

notwithstanding, most patristic interpreters acknowledged that divine inspiration included a role for the human author.[99]

Chrysostom's position on inspiration has been described as by Hill as "unfailing and deep-seated."[100] In an exposition of Genesis 2, Chrysostom states, "They are not simply words, but words of the Holy Spirit, and hence the treasure to be found in even a single syllable is great . . . . Consider . . . the fact that we are listening to God speaking to us through the tongue of the inspired authors."[101] These words demonstrate that Chrysostom affirmed the divine origin of Scripture and God's employment of human writers. This is no different from his contemporaries. However, as will be shown below, Chrysostom's view may have been ahead of his time in terms of articulating the view of divine-human confluence in inspiration.

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context within the whole Bible." Martens highlights that, while Origen's work at the literal level was based upon his conviction that the text was a work of precise composition, "probably the most frequently mentioned exegetical procedure … and probably also the most frequently practiced …" was the use of "clearer passages to illuminate related, yet obscure, passages," or the "principle that one ought to explain Scripture with Scripture" (Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 61). Later he adds, "This exegetical principle is at work on seemingly every page of Origen's exegetical corpus" (Martens, 62).

[99] Warfield's research concluded that while the church affirmed inspiration, it merely concluded that the mode of inspiration was "inscrutable." Concerning Reformed churches, he writes, "The Reformed Churches admit that [the mode of inspiration] is inscrutable. They content themselves with defining carefully and holding fast the effects of the divine influence, leaving the mode of divine action by which it is brought about draped in mystery" (*The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1948], 420–21). That is, they tended toward a transcendental view of inspiration that prioritized the divine role in authoring Scripture. The transcendental view contrasts with the immanent view wherein the human role in inspiration is emphasized. For an historical account of Warfield's exegetical formulation of inspiration as concursus, see Jeffrey A. Stivason, *From Inscrutability to Concursus: Benjamin B. Warfield's Theological Construction of Revelation's Mode from 1880 to 1915*, RAD (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2017). For the implications involved in affirming or denying divine concursus in inspiration, see Klassen, "Inspiration and Its Implications."

[100] *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:76n61.

[101] John Chrysostom, "Homily 15 Gen 2:20-22," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 195.

First, in terms of Scripture's divine authorship, a key passage on Scripture's inspiration is the opening of Psalm 45.[102] Hill notes that the psalm's first verse "provided a classic text for enunciating their theology of scriptural inspiration."[103] Commenting on the term ἐξερεύγομαι, which appears in Psalm 45:1 (Heb. 45:2; LXX 44:2)[104] and is translated as "to erupt" or "to belch," Chrysostom writes,

> After all, since in what he had to say there was nothing human, and on the contrary he was about to describe heavenly and spiritual things, not as a result of his own discovery but from divine impulse, he presents it under the term *belch* . . . . The psalmist accordingly, to show that what he says is not the result of human effort but of divine inspiration moving him, called his inspired composition belching.[105]

The words "not the result of human effort but of divine inspiration" show that Chrysostom considered the psalm a product of God's authorship.

Second, Chrysostom understood that inspiration included God's employment of human authors in the writing of the biblical text. Chrysostom's comments above might be understood to mean that the human authors' rational involvement in writing Scripture was mitigated because "we do not belch when we choose to."[106] However, rather than

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[102] Robert C. Hill, "Psalm 45: A Locus Classicus for Patristic Thinking on Biblical Inspiration," *StPatr* 25 (1993): 95–96.

[103] Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:285n5 .

[104] Ἐξερεύγομαι is found in a Greek version derived from Codex Alexandrius that Chrysostom is thought to have used (Mario Cimosa, "John Chrysostom and the Septuagint (Job and Psalms)," in *XII Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies Leiden, 2004*, ed. Melvin K. H. Peters, SBL–Septuagint and Cognate Studies 54 [Leiden: Brill, 2006], 117–30). The word translates רחשׁ, which is generally understood in the sense of "overflow," "stir," or "arouse" (David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993], s.v. רחשׁ; Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1994], s.v. רחשׁ; G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. David E. Green [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 7:419).

[105] Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:258; emphasis original.

[106] Chrysostom, 1:258.

being mindless seers,[107] Chrysostom contends the writers of Scripture were alert to the meaning of their writings because "the Holy Spirit . . . allows the heart to know what is said."[108] This statement affirms that the Bible's human authors understood what they were writing. Notably, Chrysostom claims the text supports this conclusion: "I mean, if the psalmist did not know, how could he have said *good news*? . . . The Holy Spirit . . . renders those who receive him sharers in his purpose, and with them understanding him he reveals what he has to tell."[109] That is, the Holy Spirit reveals his word so that the writers comprehend the revelation.

Further, the words of the text belonged to the human authors. Chrysostom states, "What works does he refer to? Inspired composition [*propheteia*].[110] You see, as it is the work of a smith to make a tool, of a builder to build a house, of a shipwright to build a ship, so too is it an inspired composer's job to produce inspired composition."[111] The writers wrote their own words and what they wrote was what God intended.[112]

Not only did they write what they intended to write, but their meaning was also in accord with their intent. In another place Chrysostom states, "The prophets then knew the cross, and the cause of the cross and that which was effected by it, and the burial and the

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[107] Chrysostom explains that seers "utter everything without their mind understanding anything of what is said; rather, it is like a flute sounding without a musician to play a tune" (Chrysostom, 1:258).

[108] Chrysostom, 1:259.

[109] Chrysostom, 1:259 (emphasis original).

[110] Hill, "Psalm 45," 99.

[111] Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:259. Garrett concurs with this analysis, "It is clear that [Chrysostom] did not believe that the personality of the prophet was obliterated by inspiration" (Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 179).

[112] On this point for the doctrine of Scripture, see Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 228.

resurrection, and the ascension, and the betrayal, and the trial, and described them all with accuracy."[113] At the same time, the writers are mindful of the Holy Spirit's work in their words: "It is the Spirit who moves the mind, there is no obstacle; instead, just as a flood of water moves forward under the impulse of a mighty torrent, so too the grace of the Spirit moves forward with great speed, carrying everything in its path with utter force, with complete ease."[114] These comments show that he believed that the biblical writers wrote with intent and knew they were writing under the Holy Spirit's inspiration.

Third, these statements about the divine and human authorship of Scripture imply that Chrysostom was discussing dual authorship in a way that may have been ahead of its time. Hill suggests the patristic position on the manner of inspiration shows "a diversity of position about the role of the human author, from the mechanical to the utterly voluntary," but "about the Spirit's contribution there is little uncertainty."[115] Chrysostom's contribution to the doctrine of inspiration in the patristic period pressed toward an understanding of divine-human confluence in inspiration. That is, Scripture's dual authorship maintained compositional integrity for both the human and divine authors.[116] Chrysostom showed how Scripture could be described as the product of both God and man without compromising either's role in its composition. Put positively, dual

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[113] John Chrysostom, "Homily on the Passage (Matt. 24:29), 'Father If It Be Possible Let This Cup Pass from Me,' Etc., and Against Marcionists and Manicheans," in *Saint Chrysostom: On the Priesthood, Ascetic Treatises, Select Homilies and Letters, Homilies on the Statues*, ed. Philip Schaff, NPNF vol. 9 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 203.

[114] Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1:259.

[115] Hill, "Psalm 45," 99.

[116] Cf. Warfield, "The Biblical Idea of Revelation," 94; Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 201–8; John S. Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God*, FET (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 184–86.

authorship in inspiration resulted in compositional integrity that maintained the single-meaning intention communicated by the biblical text with the capacity of handling the significance that later biblical writers may place on that meaning.

In addition to Chrysostom's comments on Psalm 45:1 above, he also seems to anticipate divine-human confluence in inspiration as he explains the self-controlled state of mind of prophets in contrast to mediums and soothsayers. He says,

> For this is characteristic of the diviners, to be in a frenzy, to be impelled by necessity, to be driven by force, to be drawn, like a madman. A prophet, on the contrary, is not so, but utters his communications with sober intelligence and in a sound state of mind, knowing what he says. Therefore, learn hereafter to know the distinction between a diviner and a prophet.[117]

Diviners have no control over their minds as the speak. They are "impelled by necessity" and "driven by force." Prophets, on the other hand, speak "in a sound state of mind" and they know what they are saying. That is, although the message originates with God and they are subject to his message, the prophets are fully engaged in delivering the message. They are active in their speaking. Thus, Chrysostom not only distinguishes prophets from soothsayers by emphasizing the former's active engagement, he also implies an understanding of the prophets' divine inspiration that is consistent with the divine-human confluence mode of inspiration.[118]

Hill suggests that Chrysostom's position on inspiration was inconsistent, although

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[117] John Chrysostom, "Homily XXIX 1 Corinthians 12:1–2," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 12, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 169.

[118] Chrysostom's explanation echoes 2 Peter 1:21 where it is said that "men spoke from God" as they were "being moved by the Holy Spirit."

"not illogical."[119] He makes this statement based on what Chrysostom says next:

> Then, to show again that what was said was not the result of man's devising or meditation or composition, but of God's grace, and that he had simply lent his tongue, the psalmist added: "My tongue like the pen of a fluent scribe." The pen writes whatever the hand of the one holding it commands.[120]

This qualification seems to support Hill's suggestion that Chrysostom is inconsistent. It must be granted that the Antiochene qualifies his point since he seems to describe a dictation theory of inspiration when he says, "The pen writes whatever the hand of the one holding it commands." However, it may be better to suggest that Chrysostom sought to express how inspiration results in the dual authorship of Scripture, which was still being defined during his day.[121] Hill seems to agree with this assessment when he writes that Chrysostom went beyond his contemporaries "to represent inspired composition as even deliberate, workmanlike labor where the activity of the Spirit is anything but that spontaneous irruption denoted before by 'belching.'"[122] In other words, the human author is writing with intent that concurs with the divine author's intent. This suggests that Chrysostom's emphasis on authorial intent and the understanding of the prophets in writing Scripture may be understood to incorporate what some contemporary exegetes identify as the single meaning of Scripture.[123] Nevertheless, as explained earlier, while

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[119] Hill writes, "Chrysostom himself is perhaps aware of the extreme (but not illogical) position he has taken on inspiration, because he immediately qualifies it" ("Psalm 45," 99).

[120] Quoted in Hill, 99.

[121] On the general patristic position of inspiration and dual authorship, see also Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, 70, 73. The doctrine would not be refined until Warfield concluded that the best way to describe the biblical testimony was as a confluence or concursus between the human and divine authors. See Stivason, *From Inscrutability to Concursus*.

[122] Hill, "Psalm 45," 99.

[123] Walter C. Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *Evangelical Roots: A Tribute to Wilbur Smith*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1978), 123–42; Robert L. Thomas, "The

Chrysostom may have been ahead of his time, he was also trying to catch up to where Scripture already was.

These views speak to the debate over theories about the interpretive implications resulting from Scripture's inspiration, specifically the issue of *sensus plenior*. Raymond E. Brown defines *sensus plenior* as "that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation."[124] In contrast, Chrysostom's contention from Psalm 45 is that the biblical writers were aware of the meaning of their writings. This stance rules out any attempt to present him as an advocate for *sensus plenior*.[125] While the prophets may not have known the full significance of their words, they were aware of what their words meant since they understood,

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Principle of Single Meaning," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2002). On authorial intent, Chrysostom lays down this rule for interpretation while commenting on Galatians 1:17: "It is not the right course to weigh the mere words, nor examine the language by itself, as many errors will be the consequence, but to attend to the intention of the writer. And unless we pursue this method in our own discourses, and examine into the mind of the speaker, we shall make many enemies, and every thing will be thrown into disorder" ("St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 13, NPNF [New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889], 11). Chrysostom's promotion of interpreting according to authorial intent will be addressed in Chapter Two.

[124] Raymond E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore, MD: St. Mary′s University, 1955), 92.

[125] Pertinent to this discussion of *sensus plenior* is Chrysostom's view of inspiration in relation to his practice of θεωρία, on which see Chapter Three. For now, suffice to say that de Margerie's comments on θεωρία also apply to Chrysostom's view of inspiration and its implications for the understanding of the writers: "The prophet, according to the Antiochene exegetes, is fully aware of the figurative value of the primary object his words intend to convey" (Bertrand de Margerie, *The Greek Fathers*, vol. 1, IHE [Petersham, MA: Saint Bede's, 1993], 167–68). Brown acknowledges that *sensus plenior* and θεωρία are not the same: "We admit now that such explanations as the *theoria* of the Antiochenes are totally out of the question" (cited in Bradley Nassif, "'Spiritual Exegesis' in the School of Antioch," in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. Bradley Nassif [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 373).

comprehended, and conveyed the meaning the Holy Spirit gave to them. Chrysostom's position on inspiration was able to affirm the vital role of the biblical writers in conveying their intended meaning without sacrificing God's role in producing the text.

In sum, Chrysostom held to a doctrine of inspiration wherein Scripture is from God and God utilized men in writing Scripture. These men were conscious of what they wrote, and their written words conveyed their intended meaning. These elements articulate an understanding of inspiration that is in accord with the divine-human confluence theory of inspiration.

The Authority of Scripture

That Scripture is universally binding is an enduring affirmation throughout church history.[126] Since Scripture is divine revelation from God, it possesses God's authority. Since God has revealed himself in Scripture[127] and God is the unrivaled authority because of his inherent distinction from creation as the Creator,[128] it follows that Scripture is the expression of and equal to God's authority.

Chrysostom assumes the authority of the Bible in his sermons and commentaries. Garrett's analysis of Chrysostom's view of the authority of Scripture yields three observations. First, Garrett understands Chrysostom to hold to the authority of the Scriptures: "The *Interpretatio in Isaiam 1–8* reflects the view that the Scriptures are the

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[126] Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, 38–42.

[127] See Deut 31:24–26; Ps 19:7–9; Matt 22:31–32; Rom 3:2; 9:17; Gal 3:8.

[128] This claim understands God's ontological or immanent relations to be unique. That is, his nature as Triune does not serve as a model for relations between Creator and creature. For more on God's immanent relations, see Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 488.

Church's authoritative rule and its guide to edification."[129] One way Chrysostom put this into practice was by observing the limit that God has set in His word. In a sermon on Isaiah 6, Chrysostom confesses that while he knows it to be a fact that Isaiah saw the Lord, he is unable to explain how it happened. Then he draws a biblical comparison, "Scripture says, 'Do not shift ancient boundaries which your fathers set in place.' It is not safe to move boundaries; so how shall we change what God has determined for us? Do you want to find out how he saw God? Turn prophet yourself."[130] It is evident from such commands that Chrysostom's doctrines of revelation and inspiration intertwine with Scripture's authority. God reveals His word through the prophets. That word is not subject to readers' speculations about things God has not revealed. Only the prophets have that kind of authority, which is expressed in the biblical text. Instead, interpreters must approach the revealed, authoritative word with the following perspective: "What he said I accept, into what he left unsaid I do not pry; what has been revealed I grasp, I do not busy myself with what remains concealed."[131]

Second, Garrett notes how Chrysostom analyzed the entirety of the text in his interpretation. He writes, "Every phrase of Isaiah 1–8 receives comment because nothing is considered unimportant or trivial."[132] Chrysostom puts this principle in his own words when he comments on Jeremiah 36. Noting the attention to detail about the presence of burning coals in the biblical text, he says, "Do you see how nothing is passed over by the

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[129] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 175.

[130] John Chrysostom, *St. John Chrysostom: Old Testament Homilies*, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 2 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 105.

[131] Chrysostom, 2:105.

[132] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 175.

divine Scripture?"[133]

Finally, Garrett writes in his analysis, "Chrysostom believed that the main reason for the existence of the Bible was for Christians to read it, read it again, meditate over it, and thereby escape the snares of sin."[134] Both Nassif and Hill agree with this analysis, understanding Chrysostom to believe that Scripture is "a saving truth."[135] For example, Chrysostom ends a sermon on Genesis with an appeal for the members of his church to give themselves to read the Scriptures because of their saving effect:

> If we have a precise realization [that any time is suitable for spiritual discourse], we . . . [can] take the Scriptures in our hands and gain benefit from them and provide spiritual nourishment for our soul . . . . This, after all, is the secret of our salvation, our spiritual riches, our security.[136]

Adding to these observations, Chrysostom's view of the authority of Scripture includes its authority over the church's doctrine. Since Scripture is authoritative revelation from God, the church should follow the lead of Scripture in its doctrine. For example, in *Homily 13* of his series on Genesis, Chrysostom decries the interpretation of some that God's breathing into man means that man's soul comes from the substance of God. For others it means that the breath from God to man means the souls of men become like base animals.[137] A better way is to "follow the direction of Sacred Scripture

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[133] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 2," 20.

[134] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 175.

[135] Bradley Nassif, "Antiochene Θεωρία in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," in *Exegesis and Hermeneutics in the Churches of the East: Select Papers from the SBL Meeting in San Diego, 2007*, ed. Vahan S. Hovhanessian (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 55; Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, 19.

[136] John Chrysostom, "Homily 10 Gen 1:27," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 141–42.

[137] Chrysostom says, "Some seize on a reading of the text, 'He breathed,' to say that souls come from the substance of God, whereas others on the contrary say they change into the substance of the worst

in the interpretation it gives of itself."[138] Chrysostom links Scripture's authoritative nature with its interpretation, implying that Scripture can be rightly interpreted based upon its wording and that faulty interpretations may be avoided by attention to the same wording. Thus, sound doctrine may be derived from such an interpretive method because Scripture is authorized to occupy the role.

Another example of Scripture as authoritative norm is found later in *Homily 13* on Genesis 2:8. Chrysostom discusses God's planting of a garden in Eden. After lamenting that some take the garden to refer to a heavenly garden planted in a heavenly locale, he sets forth an interpretive axiom: "Sacred Scripture, though, whenever it wants to teach us something like this, gives its own interpretation, and doesn't let the listener go astray."[139] Then he counsels the members of his church to "block your ears against all distractions [from the text's teaching], and let us follow the norm of Sacred Scripture."[140] The "norm" of Scripture is by its nature the church's authority for doctrine. Furthermore, the authority of the biblical text is given so that it may be interpreted according to its intention. Thus, the authority of Scripture is exercised for the sake of the church's maturity through sound interpretation. In other words, the nature of Scripture informs how it ought to be interpreted. Although Chrysostom was not the only patristic expositor to hold this position,[141] he models an understanding of how Scripture's authority is

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of brute beasts" ("Homily 13 Gen 2:8," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986], 172).

[138] Chrysostom, 172.

[139] Chrysostom, 175. This interpretive axiom will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

[140] Chrysostom, 175.

[141] See Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, 38–41.

exercised through a sound interpretive method.

In sum, Chrysostom understands the authority of the Scriptures to be absolute, putting that conviction into practice by allowing the biblical text to say everything it has to say. This conviction and practice align with his view that the Bible is authoritative truth that saves. Garrett concurs, "The Isaiah commentary, therefore, is not a scientific inquiry but a tool to enable the reader to hear the Scripture more clearly and thereby enable the Bible to do its work more effectively."[142] In other words, his exposition is only an instrument to explain and clarify the authoritative Scriptures.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Chrysostom's view of Scripture presupposed its nature as special revelation that is divinely inspired and authoritative. Through the term συγκατάβασις, Chrysostom understands divine revelation to be the product of God's concern that humanity receive and understand the revelation of himself. It is God's "considerateness" that he would communicate himself and his will to humanity. This is the nature and context of divine revelation. Although this revelation comes in various forms, one primary form is divine revelation given in Scripture. This concept carries implications for whether humanity in its limited capacity can receive God's revelation. Chrysostom affirms that it can and should be understood. He denies that something is lost in the communication of revelation between God and man. Instead, συγκατάβασις guarantees that the communication is clear.

[142] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 175.

Chrysostom's position on the ultimate origination of Scripture corresponded to the position adopted and defended by the early church. He affirmed the divine authorship of Scripture and that God used human instrumentality in recording the biblical text. However, Chrysostom also articulated a view that corresponds with contemporary positions regarding inspiration as divine-human confluence. That is, dual authorship in inspiration resulted in compositional integrity that maintained the single-meaning intention communicated by the text with the capacity of handling the significance that later biblical writers may place on that meaning.

Chrysostom's conception of Scripture's authority can be summarized in three observations. He assumed its authority was absolute in the life of the church. Further, his attention to every detail of the biblical text reflects his mindset toward the Bible's authority. Finally, Chrysostom called for believers to devote themselves to reading and studying the Scriptures because it is saving, sanctifying, and edifying truth. This view of Scripture's authority also intertwined with Scripture as inspired revelation from God.

Chrysostom built his interpretive principles and method upon these presuppositions about the nature of Scripture. His views about revelation, inspiration, and authority shaped how he approached the text in interpretation, which in turn accounted for how his expository ministry was publicly communicated. While these positions overlapped with his contemporaries in many ways, the differences in interpretive product must now be explored.

CHAPTER TWO: JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON INTEPRETATION

A necessary response to Scripture is to interpret it in accord with its nature. Since Scripture is divine revelation given in written form and its meaning is capable of being understood, the act of interpretation seeks to discover meaning through attentive observation of the text's grammatical features and informed by its historical context. Likewise, since Scripture is divinely inspired, interpreters presuppose that the meaning of the text is ultimately God's message to mankind. Because Scripture is authoritative revelation, interpreters recognize that interpretation must not add to or take away from what they discover in the text. Thus, interpreting Scripture is a response to its nature. It follows then that the interpretive method employed is vital to a right response to Scripture.

Today it is common to appeal to the grammatical-historical method of exegesis as the most reliable method for understanding the meaning of Scripture.[1] Moreover, it is also normal to understand this meaning to be the literal meaning of Scripture.[2] What is meant

[1] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 89. Evidence that the GH method is commonly understood as the most reliable—and even a given for interpretation—may be seen in how scholars add to GH with terms such as "literary," "canonical," typological," etc. For example, see Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 37–39; G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 24–25; Beale and Carson, "Introduction," xxvii–xxviii. For a justification of the sufficiency of GH as a term and method, see Abner Chou, "The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," *MSJ* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 73–74.

[2] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 88; Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 13.

by "literal" is usually the plain sense of the words in their literary context.[3] However, many during the patristic period understood "literal" in a different way. Young explains, "The Fathers distinguished wording from sense, and the normal sense of a word from its use as a metaphor, so that they would argue that 'God is my Rock' is an absurdity 'according to the letter,' and so one must take it . . . metaphorically or tropologically."[4] For them "literal" meant what is commonly referred to as wooden literalism. That is, God is not literally a rock, and neither does he belong to the psalmist as "my rock."

Having asserted a generic distinction between contemporary and patristic interpretation about the meaning of "literal," Young also notes that other patristic interpreters did account for a sense of "literal" wherein "the wording [of the text] was the dress for the idea."[5] Patristic interpreters captured the idea communicated by the wording of the text in their explanations. This idea was the straightforward literal sense of the text.[6] Therefore, for many patristic interpreters the meaning of "literal" dynamically

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[3] See Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 73. Young notes about contemporary interpretation that "'literal' may mean the 'plain sense' of the words, taking full account of context and including metaphors such as 'God is my Rock'" (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 187). Young's explanation that "literal" accounts for context and metaphors supports Chou's assertion that literal interpretation refers to "upholding authorial intent" ("The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," *MSJ* 34, no. 1 [Spring 2023]: 62–63). He explains that "literal refers to authorial intent" because "such reading does not prohibit metaphorical language by any means as authors have the prerogative to utilize such figures of speech. However, it does emphasize that the author is the decider on such speech as opposed to the reader" (63n21).

[4] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 187.

[5] Young, 188.

[6] Young continues, "Interpretation 'according to the letter' could simply focus on the words; but one understood 'according to the letter' when idea and wording were taken to correspond straightforwardly without figures of speech, or other divergences between the expression and what it signified" (188).

communicated an understanding of the word that escaped the charge of wooden literalism.[7]

In this diversity of patristic interpretation, Young highlights one school that saw the literal sense as a pointer to another referent—and one that did not necessarily correspond to the literal sense.[8] This lack of correspondence between the wording and the idea communicated is a part of what some Antiochene interpreters reacted against.[9] The Antiochene answer to how to interpret the literal sense without appealing to ideas and referents foreign to the context emphasized the intention of the human author of Scripture.[10] A prime example of this emphasis was John Chrysostom.

This chapter develops Chrysostom's view on the nature of Scripture by showing its correlation with his principles and method for interpretation. After an initial survey of his background and training in interpreting texts, it is first shown that Chrysostom connected the nature of Scripture to interpretation through the principle of ἀκρίβεια. That is, Scripture is a precise text that demands precise interpretation. Second, as a text that ultimately originated with God and was written by various human authors (συγκατάβασις), interpretation's goal is to discover and articulate the intended meaning of the text's author. The intended meaning of the text was its literal sense. Third, the

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[7] Understanding a text and its communicated idea is similar to how some contemporary scholars describe the relationship between meaning and significance. For example, see Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 32; Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 15. Both refer to distinctions between meaning and significance according to the wording used in a text. Furthermore, both refer to significance as the relationship between the wording of a text and the idea it communicates.

[8] The example Young gives is Origen's dismissal of the literal sense of the laws and prophecies of the Old Testament (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 189).

[9] Young writes that the Antiochene reaction to Alexandrian interpretation was due in part to its "[shattering] the narrative coherence of particular texts, and the Bible as a whole" (182).

[10] Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, 73–74.

divinely inspired text produced by the human authors was an historical text and a text that expressed a literal sense in accord with its wording and context (ἱστορία). Fourth, having determined the literal sense of the text, Chrysostom recognized that various texts needed to be related to other texts. This recognition led to an appeal to the οἰκονομία of God, which was an orienting point for interpreting individual passages. By using these interpretive principles—grounded as they were in Scripture's nature—Chrysostom regularly championed the literal sense as intended by the author.

Chrysostom's Interpretive Background

As a member of the Antiochene school of biblical interpretation,[11] Chrysostom's education influenced the way he approached Scripture and explained its meaning. His education in grammar and rhetoric played an ongoing role in his pursuit of the biblical text's literal sense. His training under the Antiochene interpreter Diodore further refined and sharpened his application of rhetorical interpretive. These two influences on Chrysostom's interpretive method are surveyed below.

First, one's educational background often shapes his approach to authors and their texts.[12] Beginning with grammar school, Chrysostom was taught "correct reading,"[13] which Young describes as "analyzing [a book's] sentences into parts of speech and its verses into metre, noting linguistic usage and style, discussing different meanings of

[11] de Wet, "Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12," 45.

[12] Lauri Thurén, "John Chrysostom as a Rhetorical Critic: The Hermeneutics of an Early Father," *BibInt* 9, no. 2 (2001): 183. Parts of the following paragraphs expand upon Hartmetz, "Expositional Method of Chrysostom," 410–13.

[13] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 77.

words, elucidating figures of speech or ornamental devices."[14] Furthermore, this educational curriculum "involved the investigation of the 'story' presented in the text being studied."[15] Consequently, Chrysostom was trained to read a text as an exercise of observation—to follow the author's line of thought without introducing his own opinions to the text's interpretation.

Having completed grammar school, Chrysostom next entered rhetorical school where he studied texts for how their respective authors presented the subject-matter through the use of style and vocabulary. Students also analyzed how a text was presented to produce an effect on the audience, understanding that the author intended to produce that effect.[16] Just as he learned to follow the author's argument in grammar school, Chrysostom's training in rhetorical school trained him to analyze how an author presented his discourse in order to accomplish a desired outcome.[17] Both of these emphases—reading a text and analyzing its presentation—involved submission to the author as he expressed himself in his use of words and the order of those words. As a reader, Chrysostom's training promoted submission to authorial authority.

Second, Chrysostom's training continued with the Antiochene interpreter Diodore. Hill identifies Diodore as "the man who would be responsible (after Lucian, martyred in 312) for developing the distinctive exegetical and hermeneutical method

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[14] Young, 78.

[15] Young, 79, 80.

[16] Young, 81.

[17] This type of analysis corresponds with some contemporary articulations of authorial intent. E.g., Vanhoozer, *Meaning in This Text?*, 198–210; Abner Chou, "'They Were Not Serving Themselves, But You': Reclaiming the Prophets' Messianic Intention," *MSJ* 33, no. 2 (Fall 2022): 221–22.

subsequently associated with Antioch."[18] According to Diodore, Antiochene interpretation intended to explain the ἱστορία—the story presented in the text[19]—and the λέξις—the plain literal sense intended by the text.[20] Young adds that explaining the story's literal sense came in the form of "summary and paraphrase" so that an explanation of the text's main idea or meaning would cohere with the text's context.[21] Antiochenes arrived at this explanation by observation of the ἀκολυθία—the sequence of the argument or story.[22] Next, Antiochene interpretation exercised θεωρία, or insight into the text.[23] This insight sought to determine the significance of the text as governed by the text's meaning. Diodore was careful to explain that the contribution of θεωρία to interpretation must be submitted to the text's meaning and not be allowed to escape the authoritative boundary of the text's message and intent. He wrote, "History is not opposed to *theoria*.

[18] Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch*, 6. Alongside Chrysostom, Diodore also trained Theodore (ca. 350–428), another important Antiochene and future bishop at Mopsuestia. For a selection of Theodore's works, see McLeod, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*.

[19] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 80. Martens glosses ἱστορία as the text's subject matter (Peter W. Martens, ed., *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures: An Antiochene Handbook for Scriptural Interpretation*, OECT [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017], 23).

[20] Karlfried Froehlich, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, SECT (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 85. Young understands λέξις to refer to "the actual wording" of the text (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 175).

[21] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 172.

[22] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 172; Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 47; Peter W. Martens, "Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures and Greco-Roman Rhetorical Theory on Style," *JR* 93, no. 2 (2013): 213. Speaking of another Antiochene exegetical instructor, Martens adds, "This insistence for Adrian on identifying a biblical book's purpose or basic subject matter was not an exercise without consequence for the commentary that followed. It was intended to govern this exegesis by providing readers with a basic framework that helped them not get lost in the minutiae of the text or wander away from the topic so that they foisted 'random and disconnected explanations' onto Scripture" (*Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 47).

[23] So Diodore, as quoted in Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 85.

On the contrary, it proves to be the foundation and the basis of the higher senses."[24] Furthermore, "*Theoria* must never be understood as doing away with the underlying sense; it would then be no longer *theoria* but allegory."[25] Put another way, the text's significance was tied to its literal sense and did not contradict it.

Dating to the middle of the fifth-century, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures* reinforced many of Diodore's earlier principles for interpretation, which he gave one hundred years prior.[26] Although without an explicit appeal to Diodore, *Adrian's Introduction* echoed many of the elder Antiochene's guidelines and emphases in interpretation. The *Introduction* addressed three elements of interpretation: the message of the text, the wording of the text, and the syntax of the text.[27] The task of the interpreter was to determine the text's aim (σκόπος) and subject matter (ὑπόθεσις) before pursuing

[24] Quoted in Froehlich, 85.

[25] Quoted in Froehlich, 85. Young clarifies that the terms *anagoge* and *theoria* "are not about 'senses' of the text so much as activities of the exegete." That is, the interpreter first studies the text and then "probe[s] the narrative and by 'insight' (*theoria*) and 'elevation' (*anagoge*) perceive[s] the moral and spiritual import built into the text's wording and content" (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 175). DeCock elaborates that Antiochene interpretive principles rested on the unity of Scripture, the ability of Scripture to interpret Scripture, and that nonliteral interpretation is indicated both in the text and by the text in accordance with its context (DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, 60–62). DeCock defines "nonliteral" interpretation as "interpretation that follows an explicit exegetical move beyond the narrative to provide additional insight or contemplation" (24). This explanation coheres with a contemporary definition of significance. For Antiochenes this "exegetical move" was indicated by the text itself. For example, Theodore stated that additional insight into the text is appropriate when the text leads the interpreter toward it through "hyperbolic language" or a correspondence between a narrative and its significance. However, a text's significance must cohere with the text. That is, according to DeCock, nonliteral interpretation "must reflect the narrative itself" (67–68).

[26] The extant Greek text of *Adrian's Introduction* has been reproduced and translated in Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*. The *Introduction* was a manual that primarily discussed principles for interpreting the style of the Scriptures. Martens identifies it as "a rhetorical treatise intended to facilitate literary analysis" (Martens, "Adrian's Introduction and Rhetorical Theory," 213).

[27] Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 22–24.

commentary on each verse.[28] In other words, interpretation handled the parts of the biblical book in light of the whole. These elements of interpretation would have sounded familiar to an Antiochene interpreter like Chrysostom.[29]

In sum, Antiochene interpretive methodology involved reading the text's ἱστορία, λέξις, and ἀκολυθία for its meaning. That is, the meaning of the text's story or discourse was interpreted according to its wording, grammar, syntax, and structure. The activity of θεωρία addressed the text's significance.[30] Exposure to Diodore's method, in combination with an educational background that read texts for how authors communicated their intent, trained Chrysostom to interpret according to authorial intent

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[28] Martens, 43–45.

[29] Chrysostom demonstrates that he follows this method by the way he introduces a series of homilies on a particular book (e.g., John Chrysostom, "Homily 1 Colossians 1:1," in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021], 30–33). First, he provides historical and canonical background and describing the circumstances of the writing. Next, he identifies the recipients of the book, if it can be determined. Finally, he sets forth the argument of the book. In the case of the Letter to the Colossians, Chrysostom identifies Paul as the author and locates him in prison at the time of writing. He also suggests that Colossians was written after Romans and Philippians, before 2 Timothy, and in connection with Philemon. He succinctly identifies the argument of the letter to be the correction of the Colossians' habit of approaching God through angels and observing a conglomeration of Jewish and Greek observances (31, 33).

[30] It is noteworthy that this training background is absent any explicit philosophical foundation. When Diodore outlines the interpretive method that he practiced and taught to his students, he made no appeal to Greco-Roman philosophy as a basis for an interpretive framework or a source for stimulating theological reflection. Wallace-Hadrill writes, "Antiochene Christianity was in its essence unphilosophical . . . [since it] characteristically thought in terms of history and Scripture. . . . We may look in vain for [a basis] upon a logical or metaphysical foundation derived from Aristotle. The Antiochenes appear to have been unaware of the possibility of such support or uninterested in making use of it" (*Christian Antioch*, 102–3). Hill concurs, "The Antioch Fathers in their tradition of the faith show little explicit indebtedness to philosophy, though often credited with being Aristotelian" (*Reading the Old Testament in Antioch*, 8). This disinterest in a philosophical school for hermeneutical influence commends Chrysostom and his Antiochene colleagues' convictions about interpreting the biblical text on the basis of the nature of Scripture. Their commitment to literal interpretation removed the necessity for appeal to a philosophical school. Contrast this with the Alexandrian interpreter Origen's integration of his Greco-Roman education with his biblical studies after his conversion and promotion of the same integration in Christian education (Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 35–40). Martens recounts the statement by Porphyry, who objected to "how Origen had 'mingled' or contaminated the [philosophical] *paideia* when he later converted to Christianity. . . . In so doing, Origen 'carried over' his old knowledge into a new way of life, 'mingling' the two with one another" (Martens, 37).

so that he could understand and explain the biblical text for the sake of the church.

Precision in Interpretation (ἀκρίβεια)

As recounted in Chapter One, God has revealed himself in Scripture in a way that is considerate toward the limitations of finite humanity. Chrysostom describes this revelation as God's συγκατάβασις. Regarding interpretation, συγκατάβασις guarantees that the knowledge revealed by God is understandable through a sound interpretive method. It is guaranteed because of Scripture's ἀκρίβεια ("precision").[31] Rylaarsdam observes the connection, writing, "Ἀκρίβεια is also a characteristic of Scripture made possible by συγκατάβασις."[32] Because Scripture is God's benevolent self-revelation to humanity, that self-revelation is inherently precise. Furthermore, precision entails purpose. As Hill notes, for Chrysostom "there is a purpose in everything" that the text records.[33] A considerate revelation requires precision and purpose.

Whether in its overall facets, its purpose, the age of a biblical character, a name, number, time, or specific word choice, Chrysostom asserts that Scripture is precise in what it reveals.[34] For example, when Chrysostom comments on man's formation in Genesis 2, he suggests that the text stands in a precise and purposeful way. He says,

> You see, if he had simply ordered that the human person spring out of the earth, then the object of the order would merely have been produced, would it not? Instead, for the purpose of communicating to us lasting teaching through the manner of creation to avoid an impression false to

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[31] Relative to implications about the nature of Scripture and its interpretation, Lampe glosses ἀκρίβεια in terms of "*accurate account*" and "*exact sense* of a word" (G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961], s. v. ἀκρίβεια [emphasis original]).

[32] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 114.

[33] Hill, "*Akribeia*," 34.

[34] Hill, 33; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 114.

> reality, everything is explained precisely [ἀκρίβεια] in this way, and the text reads, "God formed the human being, taking dust from the earth."[35]

With ἀκρίβεια as his orienting point, the text reads as it does because it communicates a "lasting teaching" about the way things happened at creation and prevents "an impression false to reality." That is, the text teaches believers what ought to be believed about the creation of man and this teaching corresponds to historical reality.

If Scripture possesses precise teaching, then the interpreter is bound to interpret the text with precision. Hill writes about Chrysostom: "*Akribeia* probably sums up best his approach to scriptural exegesis."[36] For Chrysostom, Scripture obligates precise interpretation.[37] However, this rule was not particular to Chrysostom since it was common to patristic interpreters in general.[38] *Adrian's Introduction* expressed it this way: "But it is especially necessary to cling faithfully to the sequence [of words]. Someone who properly grasps this sequence . . . with a view to attaining the precise [ἀκρίβεια] meaning, cannot miss the fitting sense."[39] That is, following the text's wording leads to proper interpretation because the text promotes such precise attention to detail.

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[35] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 13," 171.

[36] Hill, "*Akribeia*," 32.

[37] Hill, "*Akribeia*," 35. One of numerous examples is found in a sermon on Jeremiah 10:23, "Hence the need to give precise attention to the text" (Chrysostom, "Homily 1 On the Obscurity of the Old Testament," 9).

[38] Precision was one characteristic of an ideal interpreter and not a principle confined to Antiochene interpretation. See Origen, *On First Principles*, 270 [4.3.5]; DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, 52n35.

[39] Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 48.

Simultaneously, deriving meaning from the text requires the interpreter to analyze the specifics of the text.[40]

Chrysostom abundantly practices the principle of ἀκρίβεια in his homilies as witnessed in the following five examples. First, in an exposition of 1 Corinthians 10:1–11, Chrysostom discusses why Paul exhorted the Corinthians based on the Old Testament accounts about Israel in the wilderness rather than the warnings of Christ in the Gospels.[41] His answer involves "[examining] each word with detailed attention."[42] Following this is a thorough exposition of the text and various issues surrounding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.[43] Although his general position on the relationship between Old and New is that of type to antitype, he seeks to make Paul's rationale for exhortation clear to his congregation through attending to the details of the text.[44]

Second, Chrysostom's use of ἀκρίβεια finds him discussing the conjunction "but"

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[40] Martens, 48.

[41] John Chrysostom, "Hom. 1 Cor. 10:1–11 (In Dictum Pauli, Nolo Vos Ignorare, Etc.)," in *John Chrysostom on Paul: Praises and Problem Passages*, trans. Margaret M. Mitchell, WGRW (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022), 317. He also includes the theological question of whether the God of the Old and New Testaments is the same God (Chrysostom, 325).

[42] Chrysostom, "In 1 Cor. Hom. 10:1–11," 327. The Greek text reads καὶ ἑκάστην διερευνήσασθαι ῥῆσιν μετ'ἀκριβείας ἁπάσης. Mitchell calls this "a close reading of the text" (Chrysostom, 326n56).

[43] Chrysostom, "In 1 Cor. Hom. 10:1–11," 331–37. Chrysostom discusses the issue by comparing the shadow to a body and the sketch to a painting so that his explanation of type (τύπος) to truth (ἀλήθεια) is understood in sacramental terms. First, the baptism into Moses (1 Cor 10:2) prefigures Christian baptism. Second, the food Israel ate prefigured the Lord's Supper. He writes, "Have you seen what is 'prefiguration' and what is 'truth' when it comes to baptism? Come then, I shall show you that both the meal and the communion of the sacramental mysteries are sketched out in this passage, too, as long as you don't ask me again for the whole picture. But you should investigate the past events in such a way that you can gain plausible insight via sketch and prefiguration" (Chrysostom, 335).

[44] At several points, Chrysostom appeals to the text in terms of ἱστορία (see Chrysostom, "In 1 Cor. Hom. 10:1–11," 317, 335). This term will be explained below, but Chrysostom uses it as a shorthand term for the text itself and the historical account to which it refers.

in Genesis 2:20. He concludes that the word highlights the fact that no helpmate was found for the man after the creation of the animals because none were according to his kind.[45] He calls his congregation to "notice . . . the precision [ἀκρίβεια] of Sacred Scripture"[46] and "notice the precision [ἀκρίβεια] of the teaching."[47] Finally, Chrysostom exhorts his people to exercise care to interpret all of Scripture with such diligence: "Let us act so as to interpret everything precisely [ἀκρίβεια] and instruct you not to pass by even a brief phrase or a single syllable contained in the Holy Scriptures."[48] Precise interpretation calls for understanding even the nuance of a conjunction.

Third, in the third homily of his series on Colossians, Chrysostom models the ἀκρίβεια principle when he distinguishes what Paul says from what he did not say in Colossians 1:18. Chrysostom understands the issue of the passage concerns the implications of the resurrection relative to the preexistence and eternal nature of Christ.[49] Paul said that Christ is "firstborn from the dead [πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν]" instead of firstborn "of the dead [νεκρῶν]."[50] Chrysostom's point is that the prepositional phrase is

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[45] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 15," 195. Hill calls this "a classic instance" of Chrysostom's use of precision (195n2).

[46] "In Gen. Hom. 15," 196.

[47] "In Gen. Hom. 15," 198.

[48] "In Gen. Hom. 15," 195.

[49] Chrysostom's aim was to undermine Arian claims that Christ was created first. He asks what "firstborn" refers to, suggesting that he is "consubstantial" (ὁμοούσιός) with those whom he is firstborn (Ἄλλως δὲ ὁ πρωτότοκός ὁμοούσιός ἐστιν ὢν ἐστι πρωτότοκος). Instead of being a reference to being first in order, Chrysostom concludes that Christ's resurrection identifies with those who have died since he is "firstfruits of the resurrection" (τῆς ἀναστάσεως ἀπαρχὴ γέγονεν). In other words, the Arian claims about Christ being firstborn amounts to nothing because it is simply a reference to the resurrection ("Homily 3 Colossians 1:15–18," in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021], 85).

[50] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 3," 85.

the key element for interpreting the passage correctly. Also, he observes that Paul did not say that Christ "was the first to die [ἀπέθαν πρῶτος], but that he rose as '*firstborn from the dead*' [πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν]."[51] Again, Chrysostom appeals to the prepositional phrase ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν to argue for his interpretation.

Fourth, in *Homily 9* of the Colossians series on Colossians 3:16–17, he makes observations about the text's wording in two places. On one hand, "[Paul] says, not simply *dwell*, but with great abundance."[52] On the other hand, he says, "[Paul] didn't simply say, '*Let the word of Christ* be in you,' but what? '*Dwell in you*,' and '*richly*.'"[53] With this interpretive observation about the verb and its modifying adverb, Chrysostom highlights the precision of the text. Because of that he is able to explore what Paul could have said ("be" instead of "dwell") and left unsaid (no adverb instead of "richly"). But because Paul includes both "dwell" and "richly" the text's significance is highlighted. As already noted in Chapter One, it is at this point in the homily that Chrysostom turns to the husbands and fathers in the congregation to exhort them to give their eager attention to the reading of the Scriptures in their homes for the benefit of their families. He emphasizes this because of his observation between what the text says ("dwell richly") and does not say.

Fifth, Chrysostom practices the principle of ἀκρίβεια as he discusses why the Old Testament can seem obscure at times. His explanation focuses on Jeremiah 36 where King Jehoiakim burned Jeremiah's prophecies. At one point in the explanation,

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[51] Chrysostom, 85; emphasis original.

[52] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 9," 207; emphasis original.

[53] Chrysostom, 207; emphasis original.

Chrysostom refers to the reason why Jeremiah's scrolls could have been burned in the first place. He notes the time of year was the winter season and says, "There were hot coals because it was cold."[54] Then he adds, "Do you see how nothing is passed over by the divine Scripture?"[55] By putting the question in this way, Chrysostom's explanation appeals to the principle of ἀκρίβεια. Hill comments,

> We should be precise about this dating, he is saying, as Scripture is precise in relating the destruction of the scroll to the fire and the wintry conditions. It is axiomatic for Antiochenes that "nothing is passed over by the divine Scripture" (and should not be by the commentator).[56]

Chrysostom's expositions were marked by interpretive precision because he believed that precision characterizes Scripture and consequently ought to be characteristic of the Scripture's expositor as a result. Scripture was purposefully precise, so the interpreter of Scripture was called to expose and explain that purpose. Precise interpretation observes the details of the text's wording because the nature of Scripture demands it.

Authorial Intent

Chapter One discussed Chrysostom's presupposition that the nature of Scripture includes its divine inspiration. Furthermore, Chrysostom was seen to be ahead of his time in articulating a view compatible with divine-human confluence in inspiration. In general, this view of inspiration is often confirmed or denied by the expositor's subsequent explanation of the text. Chrysostom's expositions demonstrated that his interpretive

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[54] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1," 20.

[55] Chrysostom, 20.

[56] John Chrysostom, *St. John Chrysostom: Old Testament Homilies*, trans. Robert Charles Hill, vol. 3 (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 131n30.

method cohered with his view of inspiration because he sought to understand and explain the authorial intent of the biblical text, and thereby the text's literal sense. As Mitchell writes relative to his interpretation of the apostle Paul: "*the* interpretive key to John's exegesis [is] his author-centered devotion to the person of Paul. . . . he regards Paul as alive and speaking the very words there penned."[57] Chrysostom's view is that interpreters must submit to the author to understand meaning, which means that the author is in control of the interpretive process and conclusions.[58] Furthermore, the author's meaning is accessible in his writings. Although not distinct to him,[59] Chrysostom read texts with the understanding that they contained the author's speech and intent. Mitchell asserts, "Indeed, a letter was thought to contain the speech of its absent author."[60] This assumption leads the interpreter to seek the meaning of the text by studying the wording of the text.[61]

As Chase notes, giving attention to the meaning of the writer is Chrysostom's "first rule" for interpretation.[62] Commenting on Galatians 1:17, Chrysostom reflects this rule, writing, "It is not the right course to weigh the mere words, nor examine the

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[57] Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, xvii (emphasis original). Mitchell's work focuses upon how Chrysostom made Paul alive in his expositions through his "imperial portraits" (49–66).

[58] Mitchell writes, "Thus for Chrysostom the reader must embrace the sacred author for meaning to be conveyed and apprehended (not surprisingly this is also the content of his exhortation to his hearers to prepare for Scripture study)" (*The Heavenly Trumpet*, 39).

[59] Mitchell notes that, contemporaneous with Chrysostom, a handbook on writing and reading letters said, "There is holiness in honoring one's genuine friends when present, and in speaking to them when absent (through a letter)" (48).

[60] Mitchell, 48.

[61] Mitchell, 43. She writes, "He has utter confidence that Paul's epistles afford the reader an opportunity to 'gaze into Paul's soul, just as into a certain archetypal image.'"

[62] Chase, *Chrysostom*, 105.

language by itself, as many errors will be the consequence, but to attend to the intention of the writer."[63] The scenario he has in mind is whether Paul's words should be interpreted to ridicule the other apostles or promote his authority at the expense of everyone else. This sort of interpretation stems from examining "bare facts, without taking into account the intention of the agents."[64] Chrysostom adds other passages that are affected when the rule of authorial intent is ignored: "Unless we attend to this rule, we shall not be able to discriminate in these matters, but shall call Elijah [1 Kings 18:40] and Samuel [1 Samuel 15:33] and Phineas [Numbers 25:7–8] [murderers], and Abraham a son-slayer [Genesis 22:10]."[65]

The remedy for these sorts of false interpretive conclusions rests in authorial intent. He writes, "Let us then inquire into the intention of Paul in thus writing, let us consider his scope, and general deportment towards the Apostles, that we may arrive at his present meaning."[66] The authority for Paul's meaning is Paul. Thus, understanding Paul in Galatians 1 requires the interpreter to know the author's style ("in thus writing"), his overall goal in writing ("scope"), and his usual manner of interaction with the other apostles. Acquiring such knowledge puts the interpreter in a submissive role in reading the text.

The rule of authorial intent also applied to interpreting Old Testament texts. Although his interpretation of the Old Testament suffered from his lack of facility with

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[63] Chrysostom, "Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians," 11.

[64] Chrysostom, 11.

[65] Chrysostom, 11.

[66] Chrysostom, 11.

Hebrew,[67] Chrysostom's commentary on Isaiah 1–8 finds him regularly appealing to the biblical writer. For example, he appeals to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:2–6 as teaching Scripture's own rule of interpretation for establishing when allegorizing is appropriate. He understands the author to be in control of the meaning of his text and in accord with the text's context, even when it is to be taken allegorically:

> The interpretation of the allegory does not lie in the whim of the readers, but Ezekiel himself speaks, and tells first what the eagle is and then what the cedar is [in Ezekiel 17]. To take another example from Isaiah himself, when he raises a mighty river against Judah [in Isaiah 8:7–8], he does not leave it to the imagination of the reader to apply it to whatever person he chooses, but he names the king whom he has referred to as a river. . . . Therefore, when Isaiah speaks in [Isaiah 5:2–6], he gives us the meaning of the vineyard.[68]

This explanation demonstrates the extent to which Chrysostom held to the principle of authorial intent in his interpretation of the inspired biblical text. The prophets control and dictate interpretation, including when a text should be understood non-literally. Since the author controls meaning, it follows that interpretive freedom is hedged in by that authority. Chrysostom writes, "The reader is not permitted to become lord of the passage and apply the words to whatever events or people he chooses."[69]

Homily 9 on Colossians 3:16–17 offers two focused examples where Chrysostom appeals directly to the intention of the apostle Paul in his interpretation. First, in considering how Christ's word is to richly dwell within believers, he says,

> "*Teaching*," he says, "*and admonishing each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*." See also Paul's leniency. Since reading entails work and its burden is great, he didn't lead them to narratives, but to the Psalms,

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[67] See Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface," 144.

[68] Garrett, *Analysis of the Hermeneutics of Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 110, 111.

[69] Garrett, 110.

> so that at the same time you might refresh your soul by singing and beguile the work.[70]

There are two observations to note. On one hand, Chrysostom appeals to Paul's writing of the text with his insertion of "he says." Chrysostom knows the identity of the writer and thereby reveals his purpose to understand what the writer means by what the writer writes. On the other hand, Chrysostom claims to know what Paul intended when he says, "See Paul's leniency." Chrysostom explains his interpretation when he suggests that Paul's direction to sing the psalms is an accommodation to the labor necessary for having the Scriptures dwell in them. This appeal to Paul's intent demonstrates that he understands what the apostle is doing with his words. Furthermore, Paul's intent sets up Chrysostom to explain the significance of giving attention to the psalms.

Second, Chrysostom appeals to authorial intent in *Homily 9* when he comes to verse 17. He suggests two possible interpretations of the command for a life to be lived to please God. The first interpretation is that living in a way where "everything is done in the name of the Lord" means that "there will be nothing polluted, or unclean, wherever Christ is called on."[71] Nothing is polluted because the believer will call upon God "as a helper." Thus, the Lord's name will be "at the forefront" of believers' activities and engagements.[72] Chrysostom introduces his second interpretation with a direct appeal to Paul's intention: "Or Paul means this."[73] By highlighting Paul, he keeps the interpretation focused on the author's intention, regardless of which interpretation is adopted.

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[70] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 9," 211; emphasis original.

[71] Chrysostom, 217.

[72] Chrysostom, 217.

[73] Chrysostom, 217.

Moreover, the second interpretation brings in the scope or argument of the letter that Chrysostom established in *Homily 1*. He claimed that Paul wrote in part to confront and correct the compromises of the Colossian church regarding angel worship.[74] In *Homily 9*, Chrysostom refers to this angel worship argument, saying, "Or Paul means this: both do and say everything according to God—don't bring in the angels."[75] Chrysostom's point is that the command in Colossians 3:17 excludes angels entirely because of the focus on doing everything in the name of the Lord. His interpretation is based on his understanding of the overall message of Colossians. Furthermore, Chrysostom explicitly appeals to the letter's author when he offers this interpretation. Thus, authorial intent is not far from Chrysostom's interpretation and exposition.

When encountering difficulties in determining authorial intent, Chrysostom's counsel is to observe the text's context. Chase identifies "a close attention to the context" as the Antiochene's "second rule" of interpretation and a tactic for "illuminat[ing] a difficult paragraph or phrase."[76] In a sermon on Jeremiah 10:23, Chrysostom stated that close attention to context will avoid the perils of wrong interpretive conclusions. He identified three ways that context is ignored: by "lifting the words out of context," by outright distortion of the text, and by adding something to the text which is not there.[77] Chrysostom's remedy for the malady of ignoring context is to "learn how [the text] is

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[74] Chrysostom's says, "It's fitting to ask too what we have found in the argument of the letter to be. What, then, is it? They used to approach God through angels; they had many Jewish and Hellenic observances. Therefore, [Paul] is correcting these faults" ("In Col. Hom. 1," 33).

[75] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 9," 217.

[76] Chase, *Chrysostom*, 106.

[77] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1," 9–12.

written."[78] He explains, "Not only should a text not be taken out of context: it should actually be proposed in its entirety, with nothing added."[79] In other words, context is adhered to when the whole of the text is considered and explained without addition or subtraction.[80] Because author's establish context in their writing, an appeal to context is also an appeal to authorial intent.

Chrysostom's adherence to the authority of the author as a rule is a sound principle. However, his intention in articulating the rule should be clarified. As noted above, his rule highlights the "intention of the agents."[81] To explain his meaning, he returns to his examples about drawing wrong conclusions from the actions of Old Testament characters. Samuel should not be called a murderer when the text says that he "hacked Agag to pieces" (1 Sam 15:33). Neither should Abraham be accused of filicide when he raised his blade against Isaac (Gen 22:10). Instead, the intention of their actions should determine the conclusions of the interpretation. In both cases, the text emphasizes the obedience of Abraham and Samuel.[82]

Such a point would not be noteworthy except that Chrysostom was prone to take the agent's intention to produce a conclusion that was contrary to the text's wording. For example, Chrysostom concludes that Paul's confrontation with Peter, recorded in

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[78] Chrysostom, 11.

[79] Chrysostom, 11.

[80] This agrees with the general Antiochene position of following the text's sequence to ascertain and explain its argument. See Martens, "Adrian's Introduction and Rhetorical Theory," 213; Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 172.

[81] Chrysostom, "Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians," 11.

[82] Chrysostom, 11.

Galatians 2:11–14, was the result of the apostles' collusion for the sake of the edification of those present. In his commentary he writes, "We shall discover great wisdom, both of Paul and Peter, concealed herein for the benefit of their hearers."[83] He adds in his homily on the passage: "What appears to be a battle . . . was actually more beneficial than any peace."[84] In both places, he makes his case based upon what the encounter produced. Rather than argue from the text, Chrysostom argues from the intention of Peter as an agent within the text and Paul as both an agent and the text's author. Thus, the rule of authorial intent could stray into the "intentional fallacy," whereby the interpreter seeks to understand the mind of the author apart from and even despite the author's text.[85] While Chrysostom is right to emphasize interpreting a character's actions in accord with his intent, contemporary interpreters should recognize that the source for sound interpretation of the intent and actions will continue to be the inspired biblical text that expresses the writer's intention. Only the text communicates the intent through its wording and context.[86]

Having qualified his view of authorial intent, Chrysostom's adherence to authorial intent should be recognized for its connection to Scripture's nature, especially its

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[83] Chrysostom, 18.

[84] John Chrysostom, "Hom. Gal. 2:11–14," in *John Chrysostom on Paul: Praises and Problem Passages*, trans. Margaret M. Mitchell, WGRW (Atlanta: 2022, SBL Press), 507.

[85] See Wimsatt, Jr. and Beardsley, "Intentional Fallacy," 469, 470.

[86] Chrysostom was not alone in defending the actions of biblical characters. For example, Augustine went to great lengths to defend Abraham in his lie about Sarah being his sister rather than his wife in Genesis 20 (see Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 145–46). In addition to lives of biblical characters was a general promotion of martyrs and saints. In general, their lives were interpreted as being unable to do wrong. E.g., see Chrysostom's positive disposition toward the martyrs in "A Homily on Martyrs" in Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom*, ECF (New York: Routledge, 2000), 93–95. For an overview of Chrysostom's view of the authority of the saints' lives, and in particular the life of Paul, for Christian discipleship, see Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 43–47.

inspiration. As noted in Chapter One, Scripture is the product of dual authorship, which the Fathers consistently affirmed in principle.[87] Furthermore, it was explained that Chrysostom's doctrine of inspiration anticipated the development of divine-human confluence—the divine and human authors were fully engaged in the process of writing, and God's integrity as the ultimate author was not compromised by the instrumentality of the human author.[88] Chrysostom's view of inspiration correlated with his method of interpretation. Just as he considered "the reading of the Scriptures [to be] an opening of the heavens,"[89] so also his rule was that interpretation is controlled by the author of the text. The author has authority over the meaning of his own text. It is not the reader, nor is it the text apart from its author that determines meaning. Instead, the author has sole authority to dictate his meaning by his words.[90] Finally, because the text interpreted is Scripture, yielding interpretive control to the author was also an act of submission to the divine author of Scripture. His role was simply to explain what had already been revealed.

In sum, one of Chrysostom's chief contributions to biblical interpretation is his rule of authorial intent. His approach and example remind contemporary interpreters that interpretive conclusions ought to be dictated by the author through careful textual study. With the author as the authority, interpreters are directed to consider how a text's context

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[87] Hill, "Psalm 45," 95; Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 194–95; Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, 73.

[88] Cf. Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 228.

[89] Quoted in Hill, "Chrysostom's Teaching on Inspiration," 33.

[90] Hill notes that Chrysostom's unfolding of the Scriptures "is both demonstrated and assisted by the method of exegesis he consistently employs: he adheres to the literal meaning of the text and refuses to move on till he has wrung the last drop of meaningfulness from it" (33).

provides the framework for valid interpretation. These dual rules of text and context are the sufficient components for understanding an author's intent. Put another way, Chrysostom holds that the biblical text conveys meaning apart from the subjective whims of the interpreter. Chou's contention echoes Chrysostom's practice: "The text is not a series of interpretative possibilities or the ideas of the reader but the intent of the Lord. That meaning cannot be broken (John 10:35). The text is not a blank slate upon which one can impose his ideas but fixed to the author's intent."[91]

Genre and the Literal Sense (ἱστορία)

Understanding the author's intent meant understanding the text according to ἱστορία.[92] Identifying the text as ἱστορία meant one of two things. In one sense, ἱστορία had to do with a text's literary genre. For a text to be ἱστορία—"history"—it had to deal with deeds and events that happened in history.[93] Chrysostom's mentor, Diodore, defined ἱστορία as "the pure account of an actual event of the past."[94] It was these accounts of events that undergirded the doctrines of the Christian faith.[95]

In another sense, ἱστορία was part of the interpretive method applied to a text. To be precise, ἱστορία refers to the text's literal sense—the meaning indicated by the text's

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[91] Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 28.

[92] This section expands on Hartmetz, "Expositional Method of Chrysostom," 422–23.

[93] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 166.

[94] Quoted in Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 91.

[95] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 167. Young also notes that the text's ἱστορία is why the Antiochenes objected to the application of allegorical interpretation to the text.

wording and context.[96] In contrast to genre, ἱστορία in reference to the literal sense is not isolated to a chronicle of historical events "but history encapsulated in the Biblical text."[97] Furthermore, rather than seeking the facts of history behind the story, ἱστορία was "the investigation of the story being presented in the text being studied."[98] When understood in this light, ἱστορία was an interpretive method of any type of text, such as a narrative or a letter, because its goal was the meaning of the text. Thus, ἱστορία concerned both the genre of a biblical text and an interpretive principle for determining its meaning. For the Antiochenes, ἱστορία grounded interpretation in the history presented by the text and was itself a component of literal interpretation.[99]

By contrast, an allegorical hermeneutic neglected attention to ἱστορία. For those who stressed an allegorical sense in the text—whereby words say one thing but refer to another thing that is not conveyed by their meaning—ἱστορία is only a vehicle for the interpretation of truth and is replaced by it.[100] As a proponent of allegory, Origen

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[96] *PGL*, s. v. ἱστορία.

[97] de Wet, "Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12," 52n101.

[98] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 80; see also Martens, *Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 23.

[99] DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, 24.

[100] de Wet, "Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12," 53. de Wet writes, "Every inch of *historia* has an opposite *allegoria*. The sole purpose of *historia* is to provide the interpreter with *allegoria*. History is replaced by allegory." Allegorical interpretation of the sort described by de Wet already had a long history by Chrysostom's day. Its roots were in the soil of symbolic interpretation that began around 300 BC. As Struck explains, the view of symbolic interpretation regarding the relationship between a text and its referent was "never reducible to a straightforward representation." Instead, "the reality it points to in the world will itself have signifying power . . . . The urge to go on with interpretation, when a reader is perched at the limits of the text, emerges from a belief that the poem signifies in a way that is more akin to the language of oracles, esoteric philosophy, and secret rites than to the language of the public orator" (Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004], 75). Among other Christian interpreters, Struck cites Origen and Augustine as practitioners of a symbolic interpretive method (171, 190n63).

downplayed ἱστορία. Hall notes, "In fact, Origen asserts, not all events portrayed as history by biblical writers actually occurred."[101] Instead, according to Origen, some events are "actually irrational and impossible," while other events did happen as they are written.[102] Such a view about Scripture's historicity was coherent for Origen because Scripture was a spiritual book so that "all of it has a spiritual meaning, but not all of it has a bodily meaning."[103] To be sure, Origen believed that the majority of Scripture's historical events did happen in history and Scripture accurately recorded most of the events recorded in its narratives.[104] However, Origen also believed that the reader served as arbiter of an event's truthfulness or accuracy. He writes, "One who reads in an exact manner must . . . carefully ascertain where the meaning according to the letter is true and where it is impossible."[105] The historical details that are impossible for the allegorist serve as "a 'stumbling block' to goad the interpreter to deeper musings."[106] As a result, historical details became avenues for ascending into allegory, which is where spiritual edification was found.

For example, regarding Genesis 2:8–9, Origen finds it "foolish" that "*God*, as a human gardener, planted trees *in paradise, in Eden towards the east*, and planted *a tree of life* in it, that is, a visible and palpable tree of wood, so that anyone eating of this tree

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[101] Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 146.

[102] Origen, *On First Principles*, 268 [4.3.4]. See also Michael W. Holmes, "Origen and the Inerrancy of Scripture," *JETS* 24, no. 3 (September 1981): esp. 221.

[103] Origen, *On First Principles*, 270 [4.3.5].

[104] Origen, 268 [4.3.4]; Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 50.

[105] Origen, *On First Principles*, 270 [4.3.5]. Origen offers a list of questionable passages and a model for how to determine historical accuracy in *First Principles*, 4.2.8–4.3.5.

[106] Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, 147.

with bodily teeth would gain life."[107] The historicity of the garden is regarded as an impossibility. Therefore, Origen concludes, "No one, I reckon, really doubts that these things are related by Scripture figuratively, so that certain mystical truths are indicated through them."[108] Having discovered an impossibility in the text, Origen's counsel is to "trace out, by means of similar expressions, the sense, scattered throughout Scripture, of that which is impossible according to the letter."[109] For Origen, an historical impossibility of the text directs the interpreter to other places of Scripture to determine meaning.

Origen's brief statement about the incredulity of the creation account in Genesis 1:5–13 provides another example. He writes, "To whom, possessed of understanding, I ask, will it seem a reasonable statement that the first day and the second and the third, in which are also mentioned both evening and morning, existed without sun and moon and stars, and the first day without even a sky?"[110] The possibility of a day to be recorded without sun, moon, or stars is unreasonable. Therefore, the text records an impossibility, which indicates to the interpreter that he must look elsewhere in Scripture to understand the meaning of the passage. Regarding these passages in Genesis 1 and 2, on both accounts the history recorded by the text is suspect based upon the interpreter's own reasoning. Therefore, the meaning of the text and its benefit must be found in other portions of Scripture.

Chrysostom considered this approach unacceptable because the text's ἱστορία was

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[107] Origen, *On First Principles*, 263 [4.3.1]; emphasis original.

[108] Origen, 263 [4.3.1].

[109] Origen, 270 [4.3.5].

[110] Origen, 263 [4.3.1].

the ground for its edification. If that was disregarded, then the attempt to draw out significance from the text was undermined as arbitrary. However, because the biblical text is inspired Scripture, it must be useful for God's people.[111] And for it to be useful, it ought to have concrete meaning or be rooted in history. This became a pillar of Chrysostom's expositional task.

For example, Chrysostom considers why Genesis 1 records God's creation of the world over the course of six days when he could have created everything in one day. Chrysostom suggests that, in addition to marking God's considerateness (συγκατάβασις),[112] the text not only records the history accurately, but also that the events recorded by the text have an instructive purpose. He explains, "[God] created things in sequence and provided us with a clear instruction about created things through the tongue of the blessed author, so that we might learn about them precisely and not fall into the error of those led by purely human reasoning."[113] For Chrysostom, the creation account and its sequencing is purposeful. First, the sequence of days in creation is given for instruction. Second, the instruction concerns the things created. Third, that instruction is precise (ἀκρίβεια). Finally, the instruction leads away from error. In giving this explanation, Chrysostom's point is that the teaching of the text rests on its historicity, which is presented with precision. To suggest otherwise is to interpret the text falsely and

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[111] DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, 216.

[112] He says, "Now, we are in a position to learn from the Holy Spirit, through the tongue of this blessed author, what things were created on the first day and what things on the other days. This itself is a mark of the considerateness [συγκατάβασις] of the loving God. I mean, his all-powerful hand and boundless wisdom were not at a loss even to create everything in one day" (John Chrysostom, "Homily 3 Gen. 1.1, 5," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986], 44).

[113] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 3," 44–45.

according to human reason, rather than in accord with its nature as divine revelation. In contrast to Origen, Chrysostom understands the meaning of the passage is tied to its historicity.

Chrysostom interprets Genesis 2:8–9 according to similar interpretive principles.[114] The interpretive choice before readers is whether the text records the history accurately or if the absurdity of taking it in a woodenly literal way suggests the meaning is other than what is written. The latter option is due to thinking about God as being a gardener with tools preparing the ground and growing a garden. Because the essence of God requires this option to be an impossibility, Chrysostom says they take "a direction opposed to a literal understanding of the text, and [think] that what is said on the question of things on earth has to do with things in heaven."[115] Chrysostom opposes this interpretation because it contradicts the "precision" (ἀκρίβεια) of Scripture.[116] Instead, the text is comprehensible if "we . . . understand the word 'planted' in this sense—namely that [God] commanded a garden to be created on the earth that the human being he had produced should live in the garden."[117] In other words, a woodenly literal approach is unnecessary because the text is comprehensible as it is. It can be understood "in a sense appropriate to God."[118] Simultaneously, and specifically regarding the text's

[114] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 13," 174–75.

[115] Chrysostom, 175.

[116] Chrysostom, 175. He states, "You see, despite the use of such precision [ἀκρίβεια] by Sacred Scripture, some people have not questioned the glib words of arrogant commentators and far-fetched philosophy, even to the extent of denying Holy Writ and saying the garden was not on earth, giving contrary views on many other passages, taking a direction opposed to a literal understanding of the text."

[117] Chrysostom, 174–75.

[118] Chrysostom, 175.

historicity, Chrysostom adds, "Believe that a garden came into being, and in that place that Scripture indicated."[119] He concludes that the passage teaches that God made a real, physical garden on the earth in a specific geographical location. Thus, again in contrast to Origen's allegorical approach, Chrysostom's position on the historicity of Genesis 2:8–9 is that the text refers to a real place created by God at a specific time.[120]

Chrysostom's explanations of Genesis 1–2 demonstrate that he understood the Bible to be an historically rooted text. As also noted, he believed that its history could not be separated from its interpretation without doing violence to the Scriptures. Another example of the connection between history and the biblical text appears in his exposition of 1 Corinthians 10:1–11. There Chrysostom uses ἱστορία to refer to the historical events of prior passages on the wilderness wanderings of Israel. Regarding historical events, he says, "For it seems fitting to search out, first, why it was that he made mention of these parts of the ancient scriptural history."[121] This statement suggests that Chrysostom assumes three things about the historicity of what Scripture records. First, he assumes that the text records an accurate account of historical events ("these parts of the ancient scriptural history"). Second, he assumes that the apostle Paul believed the text accurately recorded the historical events ("why it was that he made mention"). Finally, he assumes that the interpreter can cross-check Paul's understanding of the historical events recorded in Scripture. Not only are the historical events in Scripture, in fact, historical, but

[119] Chrysostom, 175.

[120] Chrysostom adds that to believe otherwise is spiritually dangerous. He states, "Not to believe in the contents of Sacred Scripture, and introduce instead other views from one's own reasoning, is in my opinion to bring great peril to those rash enough to attempt it" (175–76).

[121] Chrysostom, "In 1 Cor. Hom. 10:1–11," 315, 317.

Scripture also accurately records them. Thus, Scripture is a reliable source for later interpreters to consult in their investigation of the text.

For Chrysostom, to ignore the principle of Scripture's historicity was to slide into interpretive misrepresentation. For example, he appeals to the historical nature of the Bible as the way to correct a faulty interpretation of Haggai 2:8. The text, which says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," was commonly augmented with the words "and I shall give to whomever I wish" to justify conduct that was contrary to its intended meaning. Chrysostom responded,

> Now, the prophet Haggai did not say that. When in fact the Jews returned from the foreign land, and were bent on rebuilding the Temple and restoring it to its former magnificence, they lacked resources, with enemies surrounding them, a great need felt, no supplies evident anywhere. So with the aim of bringing them to firm hope and of persuading them to be confident of the outcome, he said on God's part, "The silver is mind, and the gold is mind, and the final glory of this house will exceed the former."[122]

Hill comments, "The only way to detect the distortion [of how Haggai 2:8 is falsely used] is to trace the verse back to its historical context."[123] Further, "[Chrysostom] insists that, in quoting the Bible, [interpreters] need to take account of the historical and literary context of individual verses."[124] In other words, acknowledging and adhering to the factuality of historical events is a critical component for interpretation.

Chrysostom's discussion of Haggai 2:8 serves as an example of ἱστορία as referring to historical events recorded by the text. However, ἱστορία also referred to an

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[122] Quoted in Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch*, 144.

[123] Hill, 144.

[124] Hill, 143.

interpretive principle for determining the text's literal sense. As already noted, this category of ἱστορία referred to the literal interpretation of the text. An example of the value that ἱστορία offers for Antiochene interpretation is found once again in *Homily 9* on Colossians 3:16–17. Chrysostom engages in the practice of literal interpretation by following the text in its order. This begins immediately in *Homily 9* when he notes what precedes his text and what comes next as the subject for that day's sermon. He says, "Having exhorted them to be thankful, he also shows the way, which we have recently discoursed on to you."[125] His initial words ("having exhorted them to be thankful") demonstrate that Chrysostom is referring to the previous passage in the previous sermon (Col 3:15, "and be thankful"). Following this is likely a reference to the day's text and sermon: "[Paul] also shows the way."[126] While this could be taken to be a continuation of a reference back to *Homily 8*, it makes better sense to understand Chrysostom to be referring to the next verse in Colossians and his understanding of the logical connection between verses 15 and 16. That is, according to Chrysostom, the means for expressing gratitude is set forth in verse 16. Following these opening words, he immediately goes to verse 16 when he asks, "What does Paul say? '*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*.'"[127] This is an example of Chrysostom's application of ἱστορία as literal interpretation carried out in a verse-by-verse fashion. He follows the order of the wording of the text in part because the nature of the biblical text—even as an epistle—is ἱστορία.

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[125] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 9," 207.

[126] Chrysostom, 207.

[127] Chrysostom, 207; emphasis original.

Included in this is ἱστορία as the literal interpretation of the text by the straightforward progression of a clause-by-clause or phrase-by-phrase analysis.

In sum, the process of interpreting the literal sense includes accounting for what kind of text is being studied and whether the content of the text should be understood as reflecting history. These interpretive principles of genre and historical background are reflected in the term ἱστορία. For Chrysostom, acknowledging a text as ἱστορία protected interpreters from unwarranted interpretive conclusions. At the same time, ἱστορία provided a valid interpretation with historical support. In addition to genre and background, ἱστορία also summarized the goal of interpretation. Discovering the text's literal sense, that is, the meaning conveyed through the text's grammar and context, was interpretation according to ἱστορία. Thus, with its attention to historical background, the reality of the historical events conveyed in the text, and determining the text's literal sense, ἱστορία may be understood as a precursor to the later grammatical-historical method of interpretation.

Biblical-Theological Framework in Interpretation (οἰκονομία)

By observing ἱστορία, Chrysostom's interpretive method accounted for the text's context and the historical reality in which it was rooted. In addition, his reading of Scripture also sought to follow its redemptive arc and highlight Scripture's climax in Christ's incarnation. The term used by Chrysostom and other patristic-era interpreters for this framework was οἰκονομία. Echoing Paul's use of the word in Ephesians 1:10, these interpreters understood οἰκονομία to refer to God's plan of salvation or an account of

salvation history.[128] The term gave him a warrant for his interpretations of the prophets' writings and their predictions of salvation for the Gentiles through Christ's death on the cross. Chrysostom's understanding of the term highlighted Gentile salvation in a promise-fulfillment structure of the Bible and Christ's coming as the climax of history. Both aspects are explained below.

First, when discussing οἰκονομία as referring to the redemptive arc of Scripture, Chrysostom understood the Bible to possess a basic promise-fulfillment structure.[129] The Old Testament contained the promises, while the New Testament recorded the fulfillment of those promises. Although this structure was basic in nature, Chrysostom's explanation could become elaborate. For example, the Bible's promise-fulfillment structure explained why the Old Testament prophecies could be fulfilled in the church. For the Jews, the prophets' predictions of future difficulty led some to reject the prophecies. He says the prophets "forecast many troubles for Jews as well as the fact that whereas they will be rejected, we will be given a place, and the fact that the Temple will be destroyed to rise no more, while Jerusalem will fall and be trampled on by all."[130] The Jews' rejection, the temple's destruction, and Jerusalem's collapse are for the sake of the church's security in God's plan ("we will be given a place").

At times, Chrysostom also appealed to typology to establish a promise-fulfillment structure. Commenting on the genealogy of Christ in Matthew 1, Chrysostom identifies

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[128] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 171–72; R. B. Jamieson, *The Paradox of Sonship: Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SCDS (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 31–32. Jamieson notes that οἰκονομία was also used in reference to the incarnation since the Son of God's taking on human flesh initiated the fulfillment of God's saving plan in history (32).

[129] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 171.

[130] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1," 13.

the twins born to Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38:27–30 as types of Israel and the church.[131] In the course of their birth, Zerah's hand came out first, to which the midwife tied a scarlet thread before the hand withdrew. But then Perez was born, followed by Zerah. Chrysostom sees a parallel between Zerah and the church, and Perez and Israel, respectively. Just as Zerah came out first, but did not show himself entirely, so also was the case with the church since "the polity of the Church had been manifested in the times of Abraham, and then had been withdrawn in the midst of its course."[132] He links Perez to Israel based upon the Greek translation "hedge" (φραγμός)[133] and its metaphorical use for the law in Psalm 80:12, Isaiah 5:2, and Ephesians 2:14.[134] For Chrysostom, then, the church was always the people toward which the promises of the Bible were going to be realized. In fact, he is explicit in his commentary on Isaiah 2, writing, "What is so amazing if the prophet now sets forth the names of Judah and Jerusalem but makes predictions about the church?"[135] Thus, for Chrysostom, God's οἰκονομία accounts for the rejection of Israel and the church's enjoyment of the fulfillment of Israel's promises.

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[131] John Chrysostom, "Homily III Matthew 1:1," in *Homilies on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 10, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 16–17.

[132] Chrysostom, 17.

[133] Chrysostom uses φραγμός when he quotes Genesis 38:29, demonstrating that today's LXX critical edition parallels the translation he used for this passage.

[134] Chrysostom quotes each passage in support of his assertion that "the law coming in had broken in upon the freedom of the polity. For indeed the Scripture is ever wont to call the law a hedge" ("In Matt. 3," 17).

[135] Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 63. See pp. 61–71 for the entirety of his exposition on Isaiah 2:1–4 where he sets forth the blessings to come as belonging to the church while the nation of Israel experiences curses for their disobedience.

Second, the fulfillment of God's οἰκονομία comes through Christ's death on the cross. In 1 Corinthians 2:8, Chrysostom highlights two reasons that God hid his intention for the cross. On one hand, God intended to keep the rulers ignorant of the saving effects of the cross. Drawing from Jesus's words spoken from the cross in Luke 23:34, Chrysostom explains, "In that passage also He said not, 'They know not Me,' but, 'They know not what they do;' that is, the dispensation [οἰκονομία] which is being accomplished, and the mystery, they are ignorant of."[136] In other words, God's οἰκονομία was fulfilled in the cross. On the other hand, God demonstrated his wisdom in extending salvation to the nations through Jesus's death on the cross. He says, "They knew not that the Cross is to shine forth so brightly; that it is made the salvation of the world and the reconciliation of God unto men."[137] Thus, the cross fulfilled God's οἰκονομία through Jewish rejection and Gentile salvation.

Gentile salvation is the focus of Chrysostom's explanation of οἰκονομία in his exposition of Colossians 1:24. Chrysostom considers the passage's enigmatic turn in subject matter from the supremacy of Christ to the apostle Paul's role in proclaiming Christ according to God's οἰκονομία.[138] He works through a few possibilities of what the apostle may mean by the term. Paul may simply be referring to Christ's plan that his

[136] John Chrysostom, "Homily VII 1 Corinthians 2.6-7," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 12, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 36.

[137] Chrysostom, 36.

[138] John Chrysostom, "Homily 4 Colossians 1:21–22," in *Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 108–11.

people carry on the work of advancing the gospel.[139] Or he may have in mind his own apostolic role in God's saving plan, using a former persecutor of Christ to preach Christ.[140] Or οἰκονομία is a reference to how God saves Gentiles through "faith and baptism," rather than "deeds, good works, or accomplishments."[141]

The final explanation seems to be Chrysostom's interpretive choice since he explains that without this οἰκονομία it would be impossible for the Gentiles to embrace such doctrines. While Paul filled a vital role in being an instrument of God to bring salvation to them, Chrysostom understands the focus to be God's plan to save the world. The means for the nations' reception of the gospel was through faith and the rite of baptism rather than works. Thus, the οἰκονομία of God includes the coming of the gospel to the Gentiles and their reception of it.

In explaining his interpretation, Chrysostom contrasts the means of Gentile reception (faith and baptism) with works that presumably stand for a Judaizing emphasis on works of the law. Furthermore, salvation has come to the Gentiles because it is God's plan to save the world. In other words, the gospel's advancement among the Gentiles and their reception of it is central to understanding what God is doing in the present age. Based upon Chrysostom's typology of Perez and Zerah from Genesis 38, Gentile salvation was also what God intended to do from the beginning.

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[139] Chrysostom explains, "That Christ so willed that after his departure we should succeed to the plan, so that you might not feel so deserted (for he's the one who suffers, [he] is the ambassador)" (109).

[140] Chrysostom paraphrases Paul: "That me who of all people was a persecutor he allowed to persecute, so that by my preaching I might be credible" (109).

[141] Chrysostom, 109. Chrysostom believed baptism was efficacious for salvation since it is what the Spirit uses to begin a Christian's restoration and renewal to fellowship with God. For a detailed account of his position, see Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 145–46.

Although Gentile salvation in a promise-fulfillment structure of the Bible was central to Chrysostom's understanding of God's οἰκονομία, this salvation was only possible because of the climax of οἰκονομία: the coming of Christ. He explains the climax in a variety of ways. For example, Moses's veil foreshadowed Christ's coming (2 Cor 3:12–14)[142] and Jesus's birth in Bethlehem rather than Nazareth are both explained by appeal to οἰκονομία.[143] Furthermore, the disciples' initial difficulty in understanding Jesus's ministry is attributed to the outworking of God's plan that was formed long beforehand. Specifically, their apprehension afforded an opportunity for God to provide teachers to the Jews as he executed the plan and they, in turn, would receive Christ. Chrysostom explains,

> So why was the prediction [that Christ would be raised from the dead in three days, see John 2:18–19] made at that time? So that when he did come they [i.e., the Jews] might have teachers of their own number to prompt them, and they might realize that what was happening was no novelty nor was the plan [οἰκονομία] recently formed, and instead that this had been proclaimed ahead of time from on high even a long time before—a fact of no little significance for winning them over to the faith.[144]

The focus throughout God's οἰκονομία is on Christ's coming as the climax of history. When Christ came, that climax was revealed to have been the plan all along. And

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[142] Chrysostom states, "Now this happened for two reasons, both for making the lawgiver appear more credible to those who were due to accept the Law provided through him, and also for the purpose of having a type of the truth foreshadowed in him and the reason for the divine plan (οἰκονομία) regarding Christ forecast ahead of time" ("De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 1," 23).

[143] Chrysostom says, "'But why,' one may say, 'if He was to come from thence, did He live in Nazareth after the birth, and obscure the prophecy?' Nay, He did not obscure it, but unfolded it the more. For the fact, that while His mother had her constant residence in the one place, He was born in the other, shows the thing to have been done by a Divine dispensation (ἐξ οἰκονομίας)" ("Homily VII Matthew 2.4-5," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 10, NPNF [New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888], 44).

[144] Chrysostom, "De Proph. Obsc. Hom. 2," 29.

even the disciples' initial struggle to comprehend Jesus's death and resurrection contributed the outworking of God's οἰκονομία for salvation.

Perhaps one of the clearest places where Chrysostom identified the coming of Christ as the climax of God's οἰκονομία is in *Homily II* on the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1.[145] He asks why Matthew begins his Gospel with the "'book of the generation of Jesus Christ,' while yet this book hath not the birth only, but the whole dispensation [οἰκονομία]?"[146] Chrysostom's question suggests the Gospel includes more than Jesus's birth. That is, the οἰκονομία concerns Jesus's life, death, and resurrection. He confirms this conclusion in his answer: "This man hath named his book from that which is the sum of all the great things done."[147] He continues, "For that which teems with astonishment, and is beyond hope and all expectation, is that God should become man. But this having come to pass, all afterwards follows in reasonable consequence."[148] In other words, the incarnation is the focal point of the Gospel. With the accomplishment of the incarnation, Chrysostom considers the fulfillment of the rest of God's οἰκονομία as an inevitable conclusion.

Included in God's οἰκονομία as Christ's climactic coming is the indispensability of his resurrection. Chrysostom discusses this point in *Homily XXXIX* of his exposition of

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[145] Chrysostom, "In Matt. 2."

[146] Chrysostom, 10.

[147] Chrysostom, 10.

[148] Chrysostom, 10.

1 Corinthians.[149] Coming to 1 Corinthians 15:13, he echoes Paul's incredulity at the Corinthians' waffling over the necessity of the doctrine of resurrection. Echoing Paul's inference about the impossibility of Christ's resurrection if resurrection is generally denied, Chrysostom asks, "Seest thou by degrees the whole economy [οἰκονομία] overthrown by those words of theirs and by their unbelief in the resurrection?"[150] By this question, Chrysostom reflects his understanding of God's οἰκονομία as climaxing in Christ. If the resurrection is denied, then Christ's resurrection is denied. If Christ's resurrection is denied, then God's οἰκονομία is toppled. If God's οἰκονομία is toppled, then sin, death, and the curse remain.[151] Thus, God's οἰκονομία is Christ-centered by nature. Such a view of Christ's coming as climactic also lends interpretive freight to Chrysostom's conclusion that Gentile salvation in the church was God's salvation plan all along.

The Christ-centered nature of God's οἰκονομία served Chrysostom's need for interpreting texts with a point of orientation. A promise-fulfillment structure to the biblical storyline functions the same way. Arguably, this interpretive orientation suggests a parallel with the contemporary discipline of biblical theology. Put another way, Chrysostom's appeal to what the prophets were doing with their prophecies in view of achieving the goal of Jesus's coming is similar to contemporary efforts to articulate the

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[149] John Chrysostom, "Homily XXXIX 1 Corinthians 15:11," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, ed. Philip Schaff, First Series, vol. 12, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 233–43.

[150] Chrysostom, 235.

[151] Chrysostom states, "Seest thou how great is the mystery of the economy [οἰκονομία]? As thus: if after death He could not rise again, neither is sin loosed nor death taken away nor the curse removed. Yea, and not only have we preached in vain, but ye also have believed in vain" (235).

theology of the biblical writers. As Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell write, "Biblical theology done today represents an effort to recapture the *biblical* way of doing biblical theology—drawing inner-biblical connections, tracing intertextuality, and following thematic threads that are unfolding progressively along the salvation-historical metanarrative of Scripture."[152] At the same time, οἰκονομία for Chrysostom functions as a sort of *analogia fidei*.[153] If the coming of Christ is the climax of Scripture, then the point of orientation for any text will eventually settle on that climactic event. If Gentile salvation was a purpose of Christ's coming, then the fulfillment of God's promises will settle on the church, despite those promises being originally addressed to national Israel. The advantage of biblical theology and *analogia fidei* is the provision of a thematic focal point that protects interpretations from transgressing the boundaries of Christian doctrine. As the above explains, for Chrysostom, οἰκονομία offered a similar benefit.

However, Chrysostom's οἰκονομία also shared the drawbacks that accompany contemporary biblical theology and appeals to *analogia fidei*. That is, having predetermined the content of the text by way of an understanding of the end of the biblical storyline, the distinctive contributions that a single text offers to God's revelation in Scripture are effectively silenced. For example, aside from him being led astray by the Greek text he used, Chrysostom's typological explanation of the twins' birth in Genesis

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[152] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell, *Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2023), 3; emphasis original.

[153] *Analogia fidei* is being used here in the sense that it would take on later in the history of biblical interpretation during the Reformation and Post-Reformation periods. That is, *analogia fidei* refers to the core doctrines of the Christian faith taught in Scripture that may not be contradicted in an interpretation of any text. For discussions of *analogia fidei*, see Richard A. Muller, *Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, PRRD (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 493–97; Henry M. Knapp, "Understanding the Mind of God: John Owen and Seventeenth-Century Exegetical Methodology" (PhD diss, Grand Rapids, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2002), 63–72.

38 is coherent only if one holds the position that the church fulfills the role promised to national Israel. However, he misses the point of the account within the larger context of Genesis 12–50. Instead of Zerah's delayed birth foreshadowing the church, the point of the text highlights the struggle of the twins over their birth order and the consequent family inheritance issues that arise because of the disorderly nature of their births.[154] Chrysostom fails to grasp this emphasis of the text because his view of the whole Bible overshadowed the single text. Such a failure highlights the limitations of οἰκονομία as an interpretive tool.

Rather than allowing a text's content to be predetermined, interpreters may use the insights of biblical theology to observe how a text contributes to a theological theme. It may also note how the biblical authors use its content for explanation or application. *Analogia fidei* may be employed to place a negative check on exegesis and interpretation to ensure the conclusions do not contradict the content of other passages. Furthermore, the negative check is applied only after the exegesis is completed so that the text may contribute its voice to the symphony of Scripture's message.[155] Overall, authorial intent offers value when drawing conclusions about a text's meaning and its significance for canonical themes and other passages. Interpreting according to the authorial intent of each passage will guide expositors toward valid inferences when incorporating the contributions of biblical theology and *analogia fidei* in their interpretations.

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[154] K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 703; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1994), 369.

[155] Henri Blocher, "The 'Analogy of Faith' in the Study of Scripture: In Search of Justification and Guide-Lines," *SBET* 5 (1987): 17–38; Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 136; Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 241–42.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to develop the correlation between Chrysostom's views about the nature of Scripture and how he handled Scripture in his interpretation. Because the biblical text is precise, it demands precision from the interpreter (ἀκρίβεια). Because the biblical text is divinely inspired according to the use of language by various human authors, interpretation's goal is the discovery and articulation of authorial intent. For Chrysostom, interpretation was about the literal sense of the biblical text. The text produced by human authors under divine inspiration (συγκατάβασις) was a text that faithfully recorded historical events and a text that conveyed a literal sense or meaning as indicated by its wording and context (ἱστορία).

By using these interpretive principles, he was able to determine the meaning of the biblical text's literal sense. When a passage needed to be related to other passages in the Scripture, he was helped by the οἰκονομία of God, which kept the storyline of the Bible and the climatic event of Christ's coming in view as he interpreted individual passages. By attention to the context, the precise wording, and an approach to interpretation that sought the authorial intent of the passage, Chrysostom discovered and articulated the meaning of the text. Having determined that meaning, Chrysostom's role as an expositor of God's word directed him to take that meaning and communicate it to God's people. This is the topic of Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ON PREACHING

Preaching is central to the life of the church. The apostle Paul asserted its centrality through his command to "preach the word" in 2 Timothy 4:2. He modeled it in his own ministry by prioritizing the preaching of the cross (1 Cor 1:18–25). Preaching is also a product of study and interpretation of the biblical text (2 Tim 2:15), and the fruit of the study is employed for the sake of edifying the church (Eph 4:11–14; 1 Tim 5:17). However, an unavoidable danger confronts every preacher. The desire to please people has the power to undermine and supplant Scripture's authority. For this reason, preaching models are valuable for the church to recognize and analyze.

The strengths and weakness of preachers in church history have the potential to inform and shape a future generation. John Chrysostom is such a model for the present generation of preachers because of how his views of preaching and his engagement in the task are evident in his writing and preaching. Furthermore, his exegetical sermons function as the fitting capstone to his view of Scripture and interpretive method. The correlation between Scripture and expositional method climaxes in the expository sermon. Chrysostom's preaching ministry is evidence of it.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate that Chrysostom's expositions consistently reflected his view of Scripture and his interpretive method. His expositions demonstrated a straightforward handling of a book's overall argument and a single passage within the

book. Furthermore, his use of θεωρία as a homiletical tool for developing significance from the biblical text modeled how exposition is bound to meaning. However, before advancing into this study, it is helpful to consider Chrysostom's view and practice of preaching as an informing backdrop for his expository ministry.

Chrysostom's View of Preaching

The priority Chrysostom placed on preaching was rooted in his study of Scripture. He appealed to the example of the apostles when they were confronted by the controversy concerning the widows of the church in Acts 6. Chrysostom notes, "[The apostles] all together at that time entrusted to those who accompanied Stephen, the management of the widows, for no other reason, than that they themselves might have leisure for the ministry of the word."[1] The apostles' unanimous priority was the study and explanation of God's word. Anything that distracted them from that priority required a solution that would protect their focus on the ministry of the word. Word ministry was necessary because God's people need the text unfolded for them. Chrysostom makes this point in his exposition of Romans 1:4: "What is said has been made obscure by the close-folding of the words, and so it is necessary to divide it."[2] Therefore, without sound and consistent preaching there is no corporate opportunity for the meaning of the text to be explained.

The Profitability of Preaching

In accord with Paul's instructions about the word ministry of elders in Titus 1:9,

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[1] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4.3.

[2] John Chrysostom, "Homily I Rom 1:1, 2," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 11, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 340.

Chrysostom considered a sound preaching ministry to be profitable for the church in two ways. First, there was the profit of being able to refute false teaching. He writes, "It remains that we must fortify ourselves with [the ministry of the word], that we may not be smitten by the arrows of the enemies, and that we may smite them. Wherefore we must be greatly concerned, that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly."[3] Preaching was designed to protect the church against false teaching, so the church ought to promote its practice and welfare.

In the context of the early post-Nicene era, Chrysostom used the opportunity afforded him by a text to expose and correct false Christological teaching.[4] For example, when he came to Colossians 1:15–18 at the beginning of *Homily 3*, he twice confronted Arian teaching that contradicted the deity and pre-existence of Christ. In each case, he appeals to the wording of the text. On the one hand, the words "he is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) indicate that Christ did not change in his essential deity when he took on flesh.[5] On the other hand, the wording "for in him all things were created" (Col 1:16) exposes Paul of Samosata's adoptionist Christology, which, among other things, held that the humanity of Jesus was divided from the deity of the Logos.[6]

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[3] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4.3. Chrysostom also viewed the Scriptures themselves to be a defense and security for the church, which implies that their exposition will also defend and secure the church in sound doctrine. On 2 Tim 3:1, he comments about the biblical text, "For the apostolic letters are walls for the churches; through them Paul grants security not only to the people alive back then, but also to those who will come later" (John Chrysostom, "Hom. 2 Tim. 3:1," in *John Chrysostom on Paul: Praises and Problem Passages*, trans. Margaret M. Mitchell, WGRW [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022], 649).

[4] For an introduction to this period of church history, see Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

[5] Chrysostom comments, "If he *is* like God and a Son of God, an image of God, it demonstrates lack of change. What's the reason that nowhere has an angel been called either image or Son, but the human being has been called both?" (Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 3," 83: emphasis original).

[6] Chrysostom, 85, 87. On Paul of Samosata, Allen writes, "Much reviled in the history of Christology, Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch between 260 and 270, supposedly advocated a

Preaching was intended to expose and refute false teaching so that the church's doctrine would be protected and its people edified.

Second, preaching profited the church through the opportunity to hear consistent exhortations about living life in such a way that it matched the truth of the Scriptures. Chrysostom writes,

> Not for the overthrow of spurious doctrines alone, and the defense of the genuine, are his writings proper for us, but they contribute in the greatest degree, to our living aright. For our prelates, by using these even now, frame and fashion, and lead on to spiritual beauty, the chaste virgin which he betrothed to Christ. By these they repel the diseases which threaten her, and preserve the health she gains.[7]

By way of the analogy used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:3, Chrysostom highlights how preachers use exhortations to present a pure bride to Christ. Employing exhortations would protect and preserve the church. Thus, Chrysostom sought to afford his people the opportunity to profit from the word by way of both a doctrinally protected faith and a consistently lived faith.

Of course, the preacher's exhortations needed to be rooted in a sincere life of integrity. In explaining 1 Timothy 5:17, Chrysostom called for such integrity from preachers so that they would both speak sound doctrine and model it for the congregation. He writes, "For this is the most perfect method of doctrine, when by what they do and what they say they conduct their disciples to the blessed life which Christ ordained. For doing is not sufficient for teaching."[8] From his initial statement, it may be

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monarchian or adoptionist Christology, whereby the union between Jesus and the Logos was a moral one" (87n38). Generally speaking, Paul of Samosata appears to have been a part of the Apollonarian controversy (see Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, 242–43, 247–50, 258–59).

[7] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4.7.

[8] Chrysostom, 4.8.

added that teaching is not sufficient for doing. Therefore, profitable preaching necessitated the refutation of false teaching and the encouragement toward faithful living from preachers worthy of imitation.

A Pitfall of Preaching

Having such a high view of the public ministry of the word, Chrysostom was not blind to the danger involved in exercising the ministry. From his perspective, a sound word ministry is in constant danger of succumbing to people-pleasing. The church needed preachers who preached powerfully, yet despised applause. Chrysostom writes, "Here then is a demand for a noble soul . . . so that the people may follow and yield to him, and not be led by their likings. This however, can in no wise happen, except by these two means—by despising applause and by power in speaking."[9] Pursuing the desire to please people distracts the church from what is profitable. Furthermore, this problem is exacerbated by the church's own tendencies toward myopic gratifications.[10] Nevertheless, the problem of people-pleasing can be too overwhelming for a preacher to overcome "since he is more anxious to speak for the gratification of his hearers, than for their profit, owing to his love of praise."[11] The glory of praise can be too attractive to deny and too consuming to neglect.

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[9] Chrysostom, 5.2. "Power in speaking" suggests that Chrysostom has in mind bringing his congregation into an encounter with God and the fearful prospect of His judgment. Cook writes, "For Chrysostom, to be an effective preacher means to warn terrifyingly of God's judgment to come and, using fear of future punishment as a goad, to urge his congregation to cast themselves upon God's mercy and grace before it is too late" (*Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 137).

[10] He writes, "A noble soul . . . [must] be able to divert their attention to something more beneficial: so that the people may follow and yield to him, and not be led by their likings" (*On the Priesthood*, 5.2).

[11] Chrysostom, 5.2.

The answer to this problem involves "despising applause" and "power in speaking." However, Chrysostom notes that powerful preaching and disdain for applause is a difficult balancing act. In fact, he confessed he was not sure that he could find and maintain the balance. He writes,

> Here then is the demand for a noble soul, and one which far surpasses my mediocrity. . . . If one of these [despising applause and power in speaking] should be wanting, that which remains becomes useless by being disjoined from the other. If he who despises applause, should not give out a doctrine which is "with grace, and seasoned with salt," he is readily condemned by the many, and gains nothing by his nobleness of mind.[12]

Nevertheless, a faithful ministry of the word is marked by a rejection of people pleasing through speaking the truth with power. He concludes, "The best kind of leader, then, must be strong in both respects; that the one may not be nullified by the other."[13] By avoiding the pitfall of people pleasing, Chrysostom was confident that placing the word ministry as the priority for the church could be justified, and its profit consistently applied to the people. Despising applause for the sake of prioritizing preaching was necessary because preaching was meant to secure the church in spiritual health and protect it in the spiritual battle. These metaphors for preaching oriented the expositional task.

Metaphors for Preaching

Chrysostom used multiple metaphors for describing the preaching task.[14] Two are

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[12] Chrysostom, 5.2. Although he could not have known it at the time, Chrysostom pinpoints a reason for his eventual removal from the bishopric of Constantinople and exile from the capital city. See Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, 120–27.

[13] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 5.3.

[14] One of these metaphors was that of the preacher as edifier: "Instead, it is for me to utter something useful and relevant to your salvation, and for you to profit from what is said and so to leave here for home after gaining much benefit" (John Chrysostom, "Homily 1," in *Saint John Chrysostom: Homilies*

explored here.[15] First, the preacher was the spiritual physician for the congregation. The word ministry, he suggests, fulfills a surgical need in the hearers' lives:

> If there must be cautery and incision, one must perforce use this. If this avail not, everything else goes for nothing. By this we arouse the dejected soul, and reduce the inflamed, and amputate [disfiguring lumps], and supply defects, and do all that contributes to the health of the soul.[16]

The spiritual physician skillfully executes his preaching task so that his congregation of patients would be protected from spiritual disease.

Such a view of preaching was commonly expressed by Chrysostom. Cook writes, "Chrysostom primarily saw his role as preacher as a spiritual physician exercising a Christianized therapy of the soul."[17] For example, as he began an extended series on Genesis, he looked forward to how he would be used as the instrument for healing in his congregation. He comments, "So naturally I myself arose this morning with more than the usual enthusiasm since I was to share with you this spiritual happiness and I wanted to become a herald for you on the approach of Lent—the medicine, I might say, for your souls."[18] This physician role for the preacher supported his overall view of one of the purposes of the church: "The church, you see, is a pharmacy of the spirit, and those who come here ought acquire some appropriate remedies, apply them to their own complaints,

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on Genesis 1–17, trans. Robert C. Hill, FC 74 [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986], 21).

[15] Cook discusses another metaphor: the preacher as prophet. See Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 105–38.

[16] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4.3.

[17] Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 137.

[18] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 1," 20.

and go off the better for it."[19] That is, the church is the place for spiritual remedies and the expositor's task is to prescribe them.[20]

Second, Chrysostom also considered the preacher as a defender of the church in spiritual battle. The preacher must be dynamically skilled in defending the faith: "He that is going to enter into battle with them all [i.e., false teaching], must know the tactics of them all, and the same man must be archer and slinger, centurion and commander of a cohort, private soldier and general, footman and horseman, marine and artilleryman."[21] A dynamically skilled defender of the faith is necessary because of the devil's various schemes. He writes, "The devil knows how to plunder the sheep by leading in his bandits through the one place which may be overlooked; but not when he perceives a shepherd to be coming who has perfect knowledge, and well understands his devices. Therefore we must be well defended on all sides."[22]

In his tenth sermon of the Genesis series, Chrysostom fulfills the calling of a military commander when he exhorts his church to be watchful of the devil's external attacks and the internal rebellion of the flesh:

> Do you see how it never becomes us to drive this awareness from our soul, but rather to have it engraven [*sic*] on our conscience; we should be constantly on the alert and never allow ourselves respite, but rather remain sober and watchful in the knowledge of the fury of the one bearing hostility against us; we should repel his attacks and never neglect our

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[19] Chrysostom, 21.

[20] A spiritual remedy was necessary because of the proximity of divine judgment. Cook explains, "The ultimate goal of therapy [was] not in the achievement of present happiness or well-being . . . but in avoiding God's judgment for sin and receiving the blessings of eternal life" (*Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 137). Cook contrasts this homiletical purpose with that of ancient philosophical schools' rationale for its teaching (84–104).

[21] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4.4.

[22] Chrysostom, 4.4.

> spiritual nourishment. This, after all, is the secret of our salvation, our spiritual riches, our security. If we defend ourselves in this way day by day, through reading, through listening, through spiritual discourse, we will be able to keep ourselves unharmed and render the devil's wiles ineffectual.[23]

Vigilance against the hostile and assorted attacks of the devil and constant regard for their own spiritual health through exposure to the Bible will keep the congregation from danger and frustrate the enemy's schemes. Thus, whether as a physician prescribing and applying spiritual remedies, or as a soldier standing to defend sound doctrine, the preacher fulfilled a vital role for the church in its pursuit of faithfulness in healthy living based on faithful teaching.

Preaching as a Response to Scripture

Chrysostom did not view preaching to be an end in itself. Instead, it served the goal of edifying the church. He writes, "This is the ultimate aim of teaching: to lead their disciples, both by what they do and what they say, into the way of that blessed life which Christ commanded."[24] In other words, Chrysostom considered the exhortatory function of preaching to serve the end that the people would live according to the word that was preached. Thus, preaching was a response to the nature of Scripture, especially because of Scripture's ethical purpose.

The purpose of Scripture was given in part to accomplish the transformation of the human mindset (γνώμη). Nassif writes, "According to Chrysostom, the main purpose

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[23] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 10," 141–42.

[24] Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*, 4.8. Hill comments, "Julian of Eclanum observed, [Chrysostom's] mediation of the Scriptures was 'rather by exhortation than by exposition.' This was partly due to a judgment about his pastoral role and the needs of his congregation: they got what he thought they needed, even if at times not in keeping with the stage of development of the *Genesis* text" (*Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, 11: emphasis original).

of Scripture is to bring salvation to everyone who reads it."[25] Chrysostom reflects this understanding of the purpose of Scripture as he ends his tenth sermon on Genesis. He appeals for the church to give itself to the subject-matter of Scripture because of their saving effect:

> If we have a precise realization of this [that any time is suitable for spiritual discourse], we will be able while relaxing at home, both before eating and after eating, to take the Scriptures in our hands and gain benefit from them and provide spiritual nourishment for our soul. . . . This, after all, is the secret of our salvation, our spiritual riches, our security.[26]

In other words, exposure and submission to the Scriptures provides assurance for a secure salvation. Preaching was one way that security was facilitated because its source material was Scripture.

Chrysostom's emphasis on the ethical purpose of Scripture provides an impetus for preaching. When his doctrine of man is added to the mix, preaching the biblical text becomes essential and non-negotiable. Raymond Laird's research on Chrysostom's use of γνώμη—the mindset—supports this assertion. According to Laird, Chrysostom believed man is "noble, rational, humble and endowed with the knowledge of what is good and what is evil."[27] The problem is that man "suffers what appears to be a great weakness, the lack of decisive ability to effect moral human action."[28] Thus, Chrysostom emphasized

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[25] Nassif, "Antiochene Θεωρία in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 55.

[26] Chrysostom, "In Gen. Hom. 10," 141–42. In another place, Chrysostom exhorts his people to not only listen to the word, but to follow up their listening by implementing its teaching in their lives. He says, "Since we know that no benefit comes to us from listening unless it is brought to its completion in the good works that follow, let us not be listeners only but doers, so that the works following the words may be for us grounds for confidence" ("In Gen. Hom. 1," 21–22).

[27] Raymond Laird, *Mindset, Moral Choice and Sin in the Anthropology of John Chrysostom*, ECS (Macquarie Center, Australia: SCD Press, 2012), 255.

[28] Laird, 255.

the human capacity for ethical choice that was free from the effects of sin.[29] Man's ethical choices are governed by γνώμη—the mindset. Such a faculty orders "the passions, impulses and desires of the soul."[30] Accordingly, the mindset is under reformation and is to be educated by "careful exposition" of the Scriptures for transformation.[31] Furthermore, Laird writes,

> It was this understanding of the γνώμη as a work in progress that made Chrysostom such a great educator of the church. It explains his methodology of careful exposition, and his confidence in the power of the Christian Scriptures and the sacraments of the church to transform people. It lay behind his conviction of the efficacy of preaching.[32]

Chrysostom's theological convictions explain why he concludes virtually every sermon with a moral exhortation, even if all appearances suggest his exhortation has only the slightest connection to the text he expounded. However, Chrysostom's approach to preaching essentially divided the sermon into two parts: exposition and exhortation. He considered the exposition of Scripture to be for the education of the congregation and a sufficient foundation for spiritual transformation. The exhortation portion focused on the need for the lives of the congregation to reflect that spiritual transformation. Therefore, the exposition taught the congregation's mind and the exhortation appealed to the congregation's will. Thus, for Chrysostom, a textual connection between exposition and

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[29] Calvin critiqued Chrysostom's position on free will, writing, "He obscure[d] somewhat the grace of God in our election and calling." Calvin listed two reasons for his assertion. First, Chrysostom linked election to works. Second, Chrysostom credits a believer's calling in part to works. Calvin concluded, "Therefore, he also ascribes more to works than is right, since he appears to base our righteousness in the eyes of God on them to some extent" (Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface," 146–47).

[30] Laird, *Mindset, Moral Choice and Sin*, 255.

[31] Laird, *Mindset, Moral Choice and Sin*, 260. Also tied to the Scriptures' power was his view of the efficacy of the church's sacraments, particularly regeneration in baptism. Laird writes, "Regeneration in the process of baptism effects an initial transformative change in the γνώμη" (258–59).

[32] Laird, *Mindset, Moral Choice and Sin*, 260.

exhortation was unnecessary.[33] This observation explains why Chrysostom's emphasis on human freedom and his approach to homiletical exhortation do not undermine the exemplary nature of his expositions. While his exhortations, often divorced as they were from exposition, were grounded in a doctrine of man that exposed itself to the charge of works-based salvation,[34] his expositions grew out of Scripture's nature and correlated with his interpretive principles.

That being the case, Chrysostom's homiletical approach was based upon his understanding of Scripture's purpose being to transform lives. Rylaarsdam explains,

> When Chrysostom urges his listeners to ethical improvement in the latter part of his biblical homilies, he assumes that they are already clear about the narrative of redemption which forms the basis of his exhortations, for he taught this narrative in the first part of his homilies by commenting on Scripture verse by verse. He also assumes that the biblical education in the initial part of the sermon contributes to reshaping a listener's mindset (γνωμη), the faculty or power of the soul which governs moral choice (προαιρεσιζ) and is ultimately responsible for sin. After educating the γνωμη through an exposition of the biblical text, Chrysostom seeks to persuade people that they have the capability and responsibility to respond to the grace of the divine economy.[35]

In other words, the concurring purpose of Scripture and the sermon was essentially the starting point for Chrysostom's approach to biblical application.

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[33] Cook notes that Chrysostom's exegetical sermons were closer in style to a lecture in a classroom setting, "more informal and partly extemporaneous reflections of a teacher before a classroom of students, and meeting a variety of perceived pastoral and liturgical needs of the moment" (*Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 53). This reflected Chrysostom's overall view of the role of the sermon in the church: "For Chrysostom, coming to church was akin to going to school: members of the congregation came to learn lessons, and if they went home without having done so, their time at church had been in vain. Throughout, Chrysostom refers to himself and other priests as *didaskaloi*, and the Church itself he calls, among other things, an 'academy of philosophy and a school of the soul'" (53).

[34] See again Calvin's critique in Hazlett, "Calvin's Latin Preface," 146–47.

[35] Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 148–49. Edwards adds, "His one overriding interest was in persuading the people of God to live consistently with their calling" (*A History of Preaching*, 1:80).

An example of the concurring purpose between Scripture and sermon is found in *Homily IX* on Romans 4:23–5:11. Chrysostom concludes an exposition of the love of God demonstrated in the giving of his Son by exhorting the congregation to "love with this love (for there is not anything equal unto it) both for the sake of things present and for the sake of things to come. Or rather, more than for these, for the nature of the love itself."[36] Rather than draw out implications about the indicative statements used throughout Romans 4 and 5, Chrysostom turns to what he sees as the believer's necessary response to the love of God in Christ: the obligation to love others. If the love of God is understood to be a theme from the text as demonstrated in the exposition, then it follows that the congregation should be exhorted to greater love for neighbor. This application was consistent with his theology, his view of preaching, and his understanding of the purpose of Scripture.

Establishing the Argument and Themes of a Book

In Chapter One it was argued that Chrysostom's view of the nature of Scripture included its authority. He often established the biblical text's authority by highlighting the overall argument at the beginning of an expositional series. As noted in Chapter Two, his attention to the occasion and historical context of the book was an exercise of Scripture's authority over his interpretive method. Building on that foundation, this section demonstrates how his view of Scripture and interpretive method directed his expositions of large portions of the Bible. As witnessed in the opening homilies to Colossians,

[36] John Chrysostom, "Homily IX Romans 4:23," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 11, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 400–401.

Philippians, and Acts, he did this by identifying the argument of a book and discussing major themes in accordance with its contents.

Before giving attention to these points, it should be noted that Chrysostom approached an introduction to a book in more than one way.[37] He might set forth the argument in a brief statement that appears not to have been part of the expositional series.[38] Other times, he established the argument as its own homily.[39] Still other times, he would include an introduction to the book as the opening statement to the first sermon of the series before his exegesis began.[40]

In the opening homily on Colossians, Chrysostom sets aside time to introduce the argument of the epistle. He highlights how Paul corrects the Colossians at various points, specifically referring to the mediation of angels and observation of both Jewish and Greek religious practices.[41] Additionally, Chrysostom appeals to the letter's opening words as support for his claim about the epistle's argument, saying, "This is why [Paul] says right at the beginning '*by the will of God*'. See, again he has used the word '*by*'."[42]

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[37] Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 59. Cook notes that book introductions were not unique to Chrysostom. Beginning with Origen, similar introductions to biblical books were a common occurrence for both commentaries and expositional series.

[38] Examples include short statements of aim and purpose for 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy, Philemon, and Hebrews.

[39] Examples include the first sermon of each exposition of Matthew, John, Romans, Philippians, and 2 Thessalonians.

[40] Examples include the first sermon in the expositions of Acts, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Cook highlights that of all Chrysostom's extant exegetical series, only 1 Thessalonians contains no record of an introduction to the book of any kind (*Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 59n43).

[41] Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 1," 33.

[42] Chrysostom, 35; emphasis original.

Thus, Chrysostom's attention to the use of a preposition is the basis for his articulation of the argument.

For his series on Philippians, the first sermon is set aside to discuss the historical circumstances of the letter.[43] This includes Paul's previous interactions with the Philippians and his writing from prison. For support, Chrysostom looks to Acts 16–18 as his source material for establishing the relationship of the apostle to the Philippians. He also references various points in the letter for indications of the mutual love that existed between the two parties, such as their commissioning of Epaphroditus to bring financial support to Paul while he was in prison. Finally, before a concluding exhortation, Chrysostom states the main point of the letter, saying, "Then he gives them advice about unity and humility, teaching them that this is their greatest safeguard and the way in which they'll easily be able to overcome their enemies."[44] Thus, Chrysostom identifies three main themes of the letter that are ascertained through a cursory reading of the entire letter: unity, humility, and safeguards against false teaching.

For his series on Acts, Chrysostom's first homily combines introductory material with exegesis of the first five verses.[45] His introduction includes arguments for Lukan authorship that links Acts to the Gospel of Luke. Further, he explains how Acts can be seen as a demonstration of the progress of revelation. He states,

> The way the Apostles have of coming down to the wants of their hearers [is worthy of admiration]: a condescension [συγκατάβασις] suggested by

[43] John Chrysostom, "Homily 1: An Account of the Letter to the Philippians," in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2013), 2–15.

[44] "In Phil. Hom. 1," 7.

[45] John Chrysostom, "Homily I Acts 1.1, 2," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 11, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 1–10.

> the Spirit who has so ordered it, that the subject on which they chiefly dwell is that which pertains to Christ as man. . . . Wherefore [in Acts] gently and by degrees he leads them on to higher truths.[46]

Note that Chrysostom appeals to God's συγκατάβασις in his explanation of the purpose of Acts relative to the Gospels. God's considerateness is found in both the Gospels and Acts and relates to the progress of revelation that emphasizes the centrality of the resurrection and its proclamation in Acts. For Chrysostom, the apostles' teaching highlights the resurrection of Christ and serves as the overarching scope of the book:

> Therefore it is that gently and little by little [the apostles] carry them on, with much consideration and forbearance letting themselves down to their low attainments, themselves the while enjoying in more plentiful measure the grace of the Spirit, and doing greater works in Christ's name than Christ Himself did, that they may at once raise them up from their grovelling [*sic*] apprehensions, and confirm the saying, that Christ was raised from the dead. For this, in fact, is just what this Book is: a Demonstration of the Resurrection.[47]

Finally, he emphasizes the nature of Acts, questioning whether it is only concerned with history and divorced from the Holy Spirit's engagement. He denies this conclusion at a fundamental level. Instead, the Holy Spirit is actively engaged in the apostles' eyewitness testimony about Christ's ministry and resurrection. He also concludes that the Spirit is intimately involved in revealing God's word through their ministries.[48]

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[46] "In Act. apost. Hom. 1," 2.

[47] "In Act. apost. Hom. 1," 2–3.

[48] "In Act. apost. Hom. 1," 3. Noteworthy in this regard is what seems to be Chrysostom's affirmation of Luke's inspiration as the author of Acts. He comments, "Now that Luke was a partaker of the Spirit is abundantly clear" ("In Act. Apost. Hom. 1," 3). However, Chrysostom's support for this assertion assumes that Luke was gifted by the Holy Spirit to perform miracles.

Thus, in establishing the argument of a biblical book, Chrysostom often used the first sermon of his expositional series to highlight a basic theme of the book. For Colossians, the theme was the correction of various doctrinal errors that were having a detrimental practical effect on the church as indicated by a prepositional phrase. For Philippians, Chrysostom observes in broad terms how the apostle addresses unity, humility, and opposing false teaching. Mixed into these themes are Paul's love for the church and his reassurance to them despite the concerning circumstances of his imprisonment. For Acts, the apostolic proclamation of Christ's resurrection is the central feature of the sequel to the Gospels. In turn, the resurrection and the ministry of its proclamation points to God's συγκατάβασις and the progress of his saving acts. These introductions demonstrate that Chrysostom appealed to his views of Scripture's nature and utilized his interpretive method to establish the argument and themes of a biblical book at the outset of an expositional series.

Following the Order of the Text

Although Chrysostom came out of the rhetorical schools, where skill in original composition was a focus, Hill suggests, "There was . . . little of the original and spectacular in the structure of the homilies."[49] Put another way, Chrysostom's homiletical structure was consistent. This consistency stemmed from his submission to the order of the text. However, this point has not been emphasized in studies of Chrysostom's

[49] Hill, *Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, 10. Edwards concurs, "By and large . . . he did eschew the classical *genera dicendi*, speaking only in the rather amorphous homiletic genre that offers less room for oratorical display than most other types of speeches" (*A History of Preaching*, 1:77).

preaching.[50] For example, Broadus offers the following analysis, "His homilies are not directly a model for us, as regards the construction of discourse. The early Christians disliked to hear, or make, a smoothly symmetrical and elegantly finished oration like those of the secular orators."[51] Broadus's critique compares the listening preferences between Chrysostom's day and his own. Rather than appeal to preference, this section considers how Chrysostom's expositional method was a product of his view of Scripture and interpretive practice. This suggests that his preaching practice—especially in his exegetical sermons—was driven more by principle than preference.

Before examining Chrysostom's homiletical structure, a definition of an exegetical sermon is needed. An exegetical sermon expounds a passage of Scripture as the main source of subject-matter of the sermon and in a manner that explains the text clause-by-clause or phrase-by-phrase.[52] For the patristic period, this sermonic method built upon the settings of the Jewish synagogue and the Greco-Roman philosophical school.[53] In these settings, a text was chosen, read, and explained by an authorized teacher.[54] More often than in the Greco-Roman schools, Christian sermons followed the

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[50] Recent research explains the harshness of Chrysostom against the background of Greco-Roman pedagogical practices and rationales. See, e.g., Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 65–73; Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 273–74, 274–82.

[51] Broadus, "St. Chrysostom as a Homilist," vi. Broadus continues, "They wished for familiar and free addresses, such as we call a prayer-meeting *talk*; and this was precisely the meaning of their words 'homily' and 'sermon.' The preacher took up his passage of Scripture—usually somewhat extended—in a familiar way, sentence by sentence, with explanations and remarks, as he saw occasion."

[52] Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 5, cf. 60–64. For a contemporary presentation and defense of exegetical sermons, see MacArthur, "The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," *MSJ* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2023), 325–35.

[53] Cook, 54.

[54] Cook, 57, 58. He writes, "Like teaching in other contexts, Christian preaching, and the Jewish preaching out of which it originally developed, was at its heart an exposition of the tradition's key texts" (58). Cook proceeds to explain that in the Greco-Roman grammatical and rhetorical schools, which

explanation of the text with ethical exhortation.[55]

Chrysostom's contribution to this homiletical tradition includes a two-part sermonic structure of exegesis—τὸ ἱστορικόν—and exhortation—or the ethical section (τὸ ἠθικόν).[56] His exegesis followed the text closely, usually phrase by phrase. For example, Chrysostom's *Homily 2* on Colossians 1:9–14 attends to every clause in the passage. Occasionally he addresses every word within a clause. Usually, he explains different components of a phrase within a clause.[57] He ends his exegesis by indicating that it is best to pause after having made his point.[58] This comment is significant because it shows Chrysostom was aware of natural breaks in the text that provided stopping points for his exposition. Although he proceeds into his exhortation at length at that point in the sermon, his procedure through the text and his decision to stop were motivated by the

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Chrysostom participated in as a child, "a text was studied under two main headings: τὸ μεθοδικόν and τὸ ἱστορικόν. The former concerned lexical analysis, and began with διόρθωσις (roughly equivalent to our concept of textual criticism) and ἀνάγνωσις (the correct enunciation and expression of the text), both relating to the establishment of the correct text" (61). From this followed the exegesis of the text, focusing on lexical explanations and identifying rhetorical devices. Finally, the text's ἱστορικόν was explained, which addressed background details and investigated the narrative or argument presented by the text (61; see also Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 76–81).

[55] Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 61, 64.

[56] Cook, 62, 63–64. See also Hill's summary of Chrysostom's homiletical practice: "Normally, there was the opening reading of the day's verse(s). Chrysostom would then link the day's sermon with the previous day's . . . this could occasionally develop into a lengthy moral/dogmatic/polemical excursus unrelated to the . . . text and supported from other Scriptural loci. Then . . . he would take up the day's text for exegesis/commentary. Finally, after a substantial time on the text, he would move to a parenetic conclusion, quite perfunctorily done by way of "supplying you with the customarily *paraklesis*," and not always arising naturally from the exegetical material. . . . Finally and invariably, as became the pastor and theologian that he patently was, came the brief prayer for congregation and preacher, and the trinitarian doxology" (*Homilies on Genesis 1–17*, 10–11).

[57] John Chrysostom, "Homily 2 Colossians 1:9–10," in *John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians*, trans. Pauline Allen, WGRW (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2021), 56–81.

[58] "In Col. Hom. 2," 69. He comments, "At this time it's necessary for us to put a stop to this homily [τὸν λόγον] when we have made one point."

textual content.[59]

His method of exposition often involved asking the text various questions so that its meaning would be unfolded.[60] Other times he straightforwardly explained the meaning of different terms or the topic to which they referred.[61] Still another tactic of explanation was the use of denials and affirmations to highlight the actual meaning.[62] This was accomplished through using a "not that, but this" formula. A fourth tactic for explanation involved showing what could have been said and thus why the text's wording is significant for its meaning.[63]

Added to these expositional tactics were Chrysostom's ventures of taking on the persona of the text's author or a character in the text.[64] Rather than explain the biblical

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[59] Contemporary scholars also break the text at verse 14, with many beginning the pericope at verse 9. See G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 52–53; Murray J. Harris, *Colossians and Philemon*, EGGNT (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 25; David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 67. Douglas J. Moo understands the text to begin at verse 3, but he also sees a break at verse 14 (*The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008], 80–82).

[60] In explaining 1 Corinthians 10:1ff, Chrysostom questions the text's logic, asking why Paul points to examples from the Wilderness Generation instead of teachings from the Gospels. He asks, "So why didn't Paul say these things, but instead, leaving all these things aside, said this: 'And *I do not wish you to be ignorant, sisters and brothers, of the fact that all our fathers were under the cloud*' (1 Cor 10:1), thus reminding them of the events that happened with Moses, but remaining silent about those in the time of grace?" ("In 1 Cor. Hom. 10:1–11," 321; emphasis original).

[61] He concisely explains on terms in Colossians 1:10, "'*Bearing fruit*,' he says, meaning works; '*strengthened*,' meaning trials. *For all endurance and patience*: patience toward each other, endurance toward those outside" (Chrysostom, "In Col. Hom. 2," 61; emphasis original).

[62] On Colossians 1:18, he highlights the meaning of "firstborn," saying, "However, he didn't say 'first-created' but '*firstborn*'" ("In Col. Hom. 3," 85; emphasis original).

[63] On Colossians 1:12, Chrysostom explains, "You see, the honor here is twofold, both the giving and the equipping for the gift. Paul didn't say simply 'to the giver' but '*who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light*,' that is, the one who has appointed us with the saints" ("In Col. Hom. 2," 65; emphasis original).

[64] Cook describes an example in a sermon on Philemon: "Chrysostom slips seamlessly from quoting Paul in the third person, to taking on his character and playing the role of Paul himself. One

text from a distance, this approach brought both preacher and listener into closer contact with the passage. Similarly, Chrysostom also used paraphrased questions from his audience to formulate various ways to understand the text.[65] In any event, his efforts were motivated by exposing the meaning of the passage to his congregation.

Overall, Chrysostom's practice of exposition followed the order of the text and utilized various approaches to explain its meaning. His exegetical portions were attentive to the text and invited the listener to join Chrysostom in a live—and lively—study of the passage. Thus, his exegetical expositions usually focused on the issues raised by the text.[66] By these means, Chrysostom's expositions highlighted the authoritative role of the biblical text in the sermon and in the lives of the congregation. Furthermore, he considered preaching as having the capacity to open the eyes of the congregation so that the people saw what the text displayed.[67] Chrysostom's method demonstrated a confidence in Scripture's nature and flowed naturally from his interpretive method.

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moment Paul is standing next to Chrysostom, the next the two have merged into one" (*Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 63). On this practice of Chrysostom, see Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet*, 34–43.

[65] For example, on Colossians 1:18, Chrysostom says, "What does *firstborn* signify? 'That he is created,' someone says. Very well. If therefore this is so, he also has brotherly affinities. Otherwise the *firstborn* is consubstantial with those with whom he is the *firstborn*" ("In Col. Hom. 3," 85; emphasis original).

[66] Focus on the text entailed a tendency to neglect the audience, except for drawing attention to what Chrysostom was seeing in the text. Cook notes that "in the exegetical parts of his sermons he rarely addresses his audience directly. The main exception to this is when he instructs the congregation to look at what the author or the characters are saying or doing" (*Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 63).

[67] In one sermon, Chrysostom explicitly acknowledges this point, saying, "I shall attempt to demonstrate to you that your eyes also see in the same way as the disciples saw back then, so you might have not just half the blessing but the whole of it" ("Hom. 2 Tim. 3:1," 639).

Insight into the Text's Significance (θεωρία)

The opening of the congregation's eyes through preaching is an apt metaphor for describing how Chrysostom sought to apply the biblical text.[68] Patristic commentators and preachers understood that an element of their task involved the use of θεωρία. The term refers to a biblical writer or interpreter's exercise of insight into the significance of the biblical text for the spiritual benefit of the contemporary audience. At the same time, the significance drawn from the text maintains the integrity and coherence of the text's argument or narrative.[69] This section explains how Chrysostom understood and utilized θεωρία for his interpretive and expositional responsibilities. However, first it is necessary to provide an overview of the term's use by Alexandrian and Antiochene interpreters to demonstrate that Chrysostom's contributed uniquely to this area of patristic interpretation and exposition.

Both Alexandrian and Antiochene schools used θεωρία as a part of interpretive method. The term had already been in use since the fourth-century BC when it was adopted by Plato and Aristotle to describe and legitimize their philosophical pursuits.[70]

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[68] This section expands on Hartmetz, "Expositional Method of Chrysostom," 423–26.

[69] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 212; Westerholm and Westerholm, *Reading Sacred Scripture*, 111; Perhai, *Antiochene Theoria in Theodore and Theodoret*, 113; Walter Kaiser, "Psalm 72," 257; Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 179–80.

[70] See Andrea Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For a broad study of the background and issues involved in symbolic interpretation, see Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). While neither the Alexandrians nor the Antiochenes appealed to the philosophical schools in their use of the term, this background of the term's usage is useful for understanding θεωρία. In the fourth century BC, θεωρία referred to a civic institution where a city would send an ambassador to observe oracles and religious festivals and return with eyewitness reports. Plato used this to conceptualize his journey of detachment from the world to see metaphysical realities which serve as the basis for responses of political and social action. Aristotle removed the element of bringing his wisdom into the practical life of the world and made θεωρία an end in itself and for its own sake (Wilson Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth*, 3–7).

For Alexandrian interpretation, θεωρία was one element of interpretation that provided additional insight into the meaning of the biblical text.[71] While Antiochene interpretation tended to share this view, its distinction was to establish coherence between the text's ἱστορία—its literal sense—and the application of θεωρία.[72] Diodore described the Antiochene understanding of θεωρία as Scripture's development of "a higher vision of other but similar events" to the biblical text, yet without disregarding, repudiating, or abrogating "the underlying prior history."[73] Diodore refers to Galatians 4:21–31 as an example where Paul maintains "the historical account as his firm foundation, [developing] his *theoria* on top of it; he understands the underlying facts as events on a higher level. It is this developed *theoria* which the apostle calls allegory."[74] In other words, when θεωρία is rooted in ἱστορία, θεωρία builds or develops a text's

[71] DeCock, *Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, 24.

[72] Thus, appeal to the text's ἱστορία as a control for interpretation prevented Antiochene interpreters from engaging in allegorical exegesis by θεωρία. For example, Diodore writes in his preface to his Psalms commentary, "History is not opposed to *theōria*. On the contrary, it proves to be the foundation and the basis of the higher senses. One thing is to be watched, however: *theōria* must never be understood as doing away with the underlying sense; it would then be no longer *theōria* but allegory" (quoted in Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 85). Dockery identifies allegorical exegesis as depending "on accidental similarity of language between two passages" while Antiochene interpretation "depended on a historical interpretation of the text" (Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 119). Perhai adds, "Allegorizing looks merely to atomistic symbols in discourses and thereby misses the intentions of the A/author" (*Antiochene Theoria in Theodore and Theodoret*, 265). de Wet succinctly states: "*theoria* cannot exist without *historia*" (de Wet, "Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12," 56). Thus, allegorical interpretation inserts a wedge between the text and its historical referent, essentially making the interpreter the arbiter of spiritual truth. In contrast, Chrysostom himself wrote, "We ourselves are not the lords over the rules of interpretation, but must pursue Scripture's understanding of itself" (Garrett, *Chrysostom's Commentary on Isaiah 1–8*, 110).

[73] Quoted in Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 88. Understood this way, θεωρία is comparable to some understandings of typology and typological interpretive methods (see G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012]; James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible's Promise-Shaped Patterns* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022]). Nevertheless, θεωρία is more broad than typology and Patristic exegetes did not equate them in their employment of the terms. For how θεωρία may be employed in contemporary biblical interpretation, see Kaiser, "Psalm 72."

[74] Quoted in Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 88.

significance[75] for the contemporary audience without compromising its meaning according to its historical context.[76]

By and large, the Antiochenes understood this method to be the practice of the biblical authors and contemporary interpreters.[77] The interpretive process followed a three-step procedure that rooted understanding of the text's significance to its literal meaning.[78] First, the interpreter reads the biblical text according to its ἱστορία—the literal sense. Next, the interpreter exercises θεωρία—insight into the literal sense—for the contemporary significance of the text. Finally, he communicates that significance to his audience.

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[75] Significance is understood as "the various valid repercussions, inferences, or implications stemming from the author's meaning. Significance can include (but is not limited to) the ramifications of a text's meaning on our lives today or its bearing on a theological topic" (Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 32).

[76] Another Antiochene instructor subordinated θεωρία to Scripture's meaning by drawing an analogy between a person's body and a robe wrapped around the body. Martens explains, "The exegete's main goal is to grasp the διάνοια [meaning] of Scripture, that is, to describe the body itself in close and patient detail, and not the garment that drapes it (θεωρία)" (*Adrian's Introduction to the Divine Scriptures*, 283n4). This illustration vivifies Diodore's framework for θεωρία, showing that more attention is paid to the text's meaning so that the text's contemporary significance is validly drawn from its meaning.

[77] de Wet, "Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12," 55–56; Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 296, 329.

[78] When interpreting a prophetic text, both Nassif and Kaiser claim the Antiochenes followed four criteria for determining whether the text was a direct future prophecy or an application of θεωρία. These criteria included (1) distinguishing history from hyperbole, (2) determining whether an intertextual interpretation is happening in the passage, (3) assessing whether the apostles were engaging in "apostolic exegesis," and (4) evaluating if the passage included "corporate solidarity." See Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 159–60; Kaiser, "Psalm 72," 269. However, although both claim that these criteria belonged to the Antiochenes, it is not clear whether that was actually the case since intertextual interpretation and corporate solidarity were developed from twentieth-century scholarship on what may be involved in using θεωρία as a hermeneutical tool. See especially Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 90–91, 146–50. Nevertheless, the history-hyperbole criterion is noteworthy because of its affinities with contemporary scholarship on the issue of partial fulfillment of prophetic texts relative to the first and second comings of Christ. See Nassif, 52–54 with Michael J. Vlach, *Dispensational Hermeneutics: Interpretation Principles That Guide Dispensationalism's Understanding of the Bible's Storyline* (n. p.: Theological Studies, 2023), 57–59 on Zechariah 9:9–10.

To elaborate on the first and second steps of this process, the first step reflects the exegetical method recounted in Chapter Two. The interpreter approaches the biblical text with the goal of discovering the literal sense that was intended by the text's author. According to Young, the second step involves the interpreter's exercise of θεωρία by "'looking through' the *akolouthia* of the text to 'higher things.'"[79] Remembering that ἀκολυθία is the interpretive act of following the text in its order for the discovery of meaning, the exercise of θεωρία roots the text's significance in the literal sense. Young states, "The story retains its integrity, while pointing beyond itself."[80] In other words, narrative coherence was at a premium in the exercise of θεωρία. The text maintained its literal-historical meaning, but it also pointed to something connected to its meaning. As Diodore explained in the case of Galatians 4, rather than a denial of the meaning of the accounts of Sarah and Hagar, θεωρία builds upon the meaning of the text to draw a parallel between the two women and what they represent for first-century AD people.[81] Put another way, the biblical text's meaning was the lens through which an analogous contemporary situation was viewed.

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[79] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 179. Young cites the ancient interpreter Asterius here.

[80] Young, 180.

[81] Young, 180. Chrysostom understands Paul's use of allegory in Galatians 4:24 to be a type, strictly speaking, since Paul's meaning is that "this history not only declares that which appears on the face of it, but announces somewhat farther, whence it is called an allegory" ("Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians," 34). The words "announces somewhat farther" translates the Greek phrase ἀλλά αναγορεύει, which Young notes "consists of the very words from which 'allegory' was derived" (*Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 182).

The Antiochene practice of θεωρία as dependent upon ἱστορία contrasted sharply with allegorical interpretation's use of ἱστορία.[82] As discussed in Chapter Two, allegory uses ἱστορία as a vehicle to communicate truth that is untethered from textual meaning. The text means something other than what the words say because each word points to things that point to still further things. Thus, every word of a text refers to something that itself belongs to a higher reality and is not necessarily bound to the meaning of the word.[83] Moreover, the things to which the words point must also be interpreted to determine the second level of things to which they point. Such a hierarchy of meaning is contrary to how language communicates meaning between speakers or readers who share the communicative rules for the language because it lacks a convincing explanation of the rules for interpreting the second level of things.[84]

In Origen's method, the arrangement of historical events recounted in the text are connected to higher spiritual or mystical events that are similarly arranged. He writes,

> The principle aim [of the Word of God in the arrangement of historical events in the biblical text] being to announce the connection amongst spiritual events, both those that have happened and those to be done, wherever the Word found that things that have happened according to the

[82] Although it is true that allegorical interpretation understands words to refer to things that in turn point to higher realities, this section is limited to a consideration of one element of allegorical interpretation that uses ἱστορία in a categorically different way than Antiochene θεωρία.

[83] de Wet, "Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians 12," 52–53. See also *Saint Augustine: On Christian Teaching*, trans. R. P. H. Green, OWC (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 30–33.

[84] On shared communicative rules for language and its implications for hermeneutics, see Mark A. Snoeberger and Rolland D. McCune, "'Received' Laws of Language: The Existence, Ground, and Preliminary Identification of a Hermeneutically Disputed Notion," *DBSJ* 28 (2023): 25–41. Allegorical interpretation suggests the biblical canon sets the rules for interpreting the second level of things. For example, Chase writes, "Allegorical interpretation is a kind of spiritual reading that needs to be warranted by and grounded in the literal or plain sense of the text as viewed through a canonical lens" (*40 Questions about Typology and Allegory*, Forty Questions Series [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2020], 250).

> narrative could be harmonized with these mystical events, he made use of them, concealing from the multitude the deeper sense.[85]

For Origen, the connection between the historical and spiritual often extended to every word, each of which usually refers to a higher reality that exists in the same sequence as the text's literal wording. Martens writes, "If the stages at the level of the letter were linked together as part of a journey, then the stages in the soul's spiritual journey must also be linked together . . . one must examine 'the entire order of stages.'"[86] In other words, each word stands for something spiritual that is also in that order. Thus, ἱστορία is linked with allegory in that the two follow the same order. However, ἱστορία is only a means used by the interpreter to access a spiritual sense that the text conceals in the wording.

For example, in Origen's twenty-seventh homily on the Book of Numbers, he interprets the forty-two stops of Israel in the wilderness in Numbers 33 with a distinct stage of the believer's spiritual life through the employment of etymological studies of the Hebrew place names.[87] The historical nature of the place names and his etymological study became the basis for his applications to the soul's spiritual journey to heaven. To justify his method, Origen asks, "Why did the Lord want [Moses] to write it down? Was it so that this passage in Scripture about the stages the children of Israel made might benefit us in some way or that it should bring us no benefit?"[88] He thought the answer to

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[85] Origen, *On First Principles*, 261 [4.2.9].

[86] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 60. Martens cites Origen's twenty-seventh *Homily on Numbers*, on which, see below.

[87] Joseph T. Lienhard and Ronnie J. Rombs, eds., *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, ACCS (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 264.

[88] Lienhard and Rombs, 263.

this question was obvious since Scripture was to be useful to the believer. Therefore, Moses wrote of Israel's physical journey "so that when we read them and see how many starting places lie ahead of us on the journey that leads to the kingdom, we may prepare ourselves for this way of life."[89] The historical details of the journey were a vehicle to convey information about the spiritual journey in store for believers.

Origen's approach is representative of allegorical interpretation. Although it followed the biblical text, the interpretation and its significance were not tied to the text's historical meaning in its context. Instead, its goal was to interpret the literal and historical elements of the texts for spiritual import within the scope of canonical context or *regula fidei*.[90]

Rather than approach the text in an Alexandrian manner, the Antiochene interpreter had to put all his interpretive tools to work to seek the significance of a text through applications of θεωρία.[91] In general, the process involved an analysis of the text's structure and narrative development.[92] As a result, the message of the text was maintained while it was probed for "the moral and spiritual import [that was] built into the text's wording and content."[93] Thus, in interpreting the biblical text, Antiochene θεωρία refers to the exercise of insight by an inspired biblical author or illumined interpreter into the

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[89] Lienhard and Rombs, 263.

[90] Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, 61, 63–66; Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture*, 17–22, 24–25. On interpretation according to *regula fidei*, see Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*, 68–69.

[91] For Chrysostom, this meant maintaining his principles of συγκατάβασις, ἀκρίβεια, and ἱστορία (Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 295).

[92] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, 172, 175.

[93] Young, 173, 175.

significance of the biblical text for the spiritual benefit of the contemporary audience while maintaining the integrity and coherence of the text's argument or narrative.

Chrysostom's use of the term θεωρία is rare in his homilies and commentaries. Out of over eight hundred extant homilies and many other written works, he uses the term only 192 times.[94] This relative scarcity from Chrysostom was partly due to his pastoral care for his church. On occasion he would mention that there was significance to the text that he would have explained if he was convinced his people could understand it.[95] At other times, he suggests that he only provides that which the congregation can retain. For example, he explains his reluctance to move faster through the Gospel of John, saying, "The reason . . . is that the retaining what is successively set before you may be easy. . . . For we fear lest, while the first foundation is but newly laid, the addition of the succeeding speculations [θεωρημάτων] may do harm to the former."[96]

Despite his reluctance to engage in an extensive use of θεωρία, Chrysostom employed the concept in his expositions in three basic ways. First, he understood it as

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[94] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 199. The calculation of Chrysostom's homilies is taken from Cook, *Preaching and Popular Christianity*, 5. On the use of θεωρία in Alexandrian and Antiochene interpreters, see DeCock's note that in selected portions of the Gospel of John, Cyril of Alexandria (ca. 376–444) uses the term most often (*Interpreting the Gospel of John in Antioch and Alexandria*, 26n77).

[95] As Nassif explains, "Since *theoria* often refers to the deeper theological truths of Scripture, Chrysostom rarely applies it to his congregation because they were spiritually unprepared for receiving it" ("Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 299–300). This is part of what Rylaarsdam identifies as "lack of progress and painful preaching" (see *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy*, 274–76). One could argue that, having noted their spiritual sluggishness, Chrysostom should have pressed forward with his θεωρία since Hebrews 5–10 follows a similar route of initial hesitancy and warning to subsequent explanation regarding the high priesthood of Christ.

[96] John Chrysostom, "Homily VII John 1:9," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Philip Schaff, vol. 14, NPNF (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 27. The translation "speculations" for θεωρία is unfortunate since it conveys the idea that the interpretive insight goes beyond what the text communicates. A better translation may be "insights" or "observations" in this context.

part of the process of divine revelation to the biblical authors in their writing of Scripture. Nassif comments, "Chrysostom utilizes *theoria* to describe the nature of the prophetic experience as an inspired revelation of heavenly realities or of deeper Christian truths. Such revelations were written down by a biblical author which resulted in its inclusion in the Scriptural canon (inscripturation)."[97]

Second, it is part of the interpretation of the literal sense by a Spirit-illumined interpreter.[98] Specifically, θεωρία maintains its interpretive roots in ἱστορία. Nassif explains,

> Chrysostom's veneration of the historical nature of the narrative, and profound respect for the reality of the Incarnation, leads him to pursue the spiritual content of the text before him through historical, linguistic, and theological inquiry. What separates Chrysostom's single-meaning hermeneutic from Alexandrian *theoria* is the emphasis Chrysostom places on history as a medium of revelation and the context of God's saving activity. By placing the textual control on the historical plane of exegesis, Chrysostom allows the ordinary public meaning of the words themselves to govern the distance between the literal and spiritual significance of Scripture without dichotomizing the text.[99]

Thus, Chrysostom's use of θεωρία was consistent with his Antiochene colleagues in that he connected it to the text's ἱστορία.

Furthermore, Chrysostom's approach to θεωρία incorporated authorial intent in his development of significance. Nassif continues,

> An author's intention should not be viewed as a trivial or entirely irrelevant objective under the assumption that what a text says for the present far outweighs what an author meant in the past. On the contrary, it is primarily through a discovery of the author's past original intent (divine through the human), expressed in the textual features which convey the

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[97] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 296.

[98] Nassif, 329.

[99] Nassif, 297.

> historical and cultural idioms in which he wrote, that a text's present significance can be most fully realized.[100]

Significantly, this summary is in accord with the discussion of authorial intent in Chapter Two. The author controls the meaning of the text through his use of grammar, syntax, and context. Relative to significance, the same means used for conveying meaning extend the author's control into the text's significance for contemporary readers. Put another way, authorial intent exercises authority over both meaning and significance. Exercising θεωρία was a means for ensuring the author retained authority over his text in its interpretation and communication.

Third—and distinguishing Chrysostom from his Antiochene colleagues[101]—θεωρία is part of the activity of preaching.[102] Having identified θεωρία as a revelatory experience of the prophets and apostles, who conveyed that revelation to their readers through Scripture, and as part of the endeavor of interpreting the literal sense of the biblical text, Chrysostom adds the communication of θεωρία to the church via the exposition of the text. Nassif explains, "The static study of the original meaning of the text was never intended to be an end in itself. It must always have as its goal first the personal application of the text to one's personal life, and then the sharing of that text

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[100] Nassif, 314–15.

[101] Nassif writes, "It is this feature which distinguishes Chrysostom from his fellow Antiochene Theodore of Mopsuestia whose scholarly interest tended to constitute the major goal of his exegesis" (326). Based on Diodore's explanation above, Chrysostom's application of θεωρία also differs from his Antiochene mentor.

[102] Nassif, 326–28.

with others via homiletical discourse."[103] Thus, the investigation of θεωρία compels Chrysostom to communicate the significance of the text to the members of his church.

Although he does not use the term θεωρία, *Homily 9* on Colossians 3:16–17 serves as vivid example of Chrysostom's homiletical use of the concept. He demonstrates how the text's meaning relates to the contemporary situation. At the same time, he models how flexible an exposition may be in developing significance within the boundaries of the text's meaning. In other words, he employs θεωρία conceptually in his exposition. Chrysostom understands the participles "teaching and admonishing one another" to reflect Paul's tolerance of the Colossians' weakness by orienting the command toward the Psalms and song-singing.[104] He explicitly refers to Paul's intent, which frames how Chrysostom applies the text to his congregation. Thus, Paul's intent authorizes Chrysostom's explanation of the significance of the passage. Again, although the term is not used, this is θεωρία at work. It sees the meaning of the text warranting a set of ramifications for the contemporary audience. Chrysostom understands the passage to indicate how children ought to be raised with a solid biblical foundation by teaching them to memorize and sing the psalms.[105] Such instruction leads to wisdom, helps them to discern genuine friendship, and reminds parents of their responsibility to protect their

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[103] Nassif, 326.

[104] Allen translates, "See also Paul's leniency. Since reading entails work and its burden is great, he didn't lead them to narratives, but to the Psalms, so that at the same time you might refresh your soul by singing and beguile the work" ("In Col. Hom. 9," 211).

[105] Drawing from a horticultural view of his time, Chrysostom says, "You see, whatever soil the plant stands in, such is the fruit it bears: if it's in a sandy and salty soil, it's of that nature; if it's in a sweet and rich one, again it is similar. So instruction is a kind of fountain. Teach this person to sing those songs that are full of wisdom. . . . When in these matters you've led them on from childhood, little by little you'll lead them on to loftier things" ("In Col. Hom. 9," 211, 213). "Loftier" is Allen's translation of τὰ ὑψηλότερα.

children from the consequences of foolish choices as they learn to live according to a biblical foundation. Although there is nothing explicit in the text about raising children,[106] Chrysostom draws implications from Paul's use of "teaching," "admonishing," and "psalms" to offer guidance to parents about applying the sense of the text. In this way, the specific application is legitimate because it falls within the range of the text's meaning.

Chrysostom's three uses of θεωρία essentially summarize the correlation between his view of Scripture, his interpretive method, and his expositional practice. The biblical writers exercised θεωρία as part of the revelatory process, especially in interpreting and developing the significance of antecedent Scripture. As the Spirit-illumined interpreter studies the text according to its ἱστορία—that is, according to its wording and structure—he not only grasps the meaning of the biblical text, but he also perceives its significance for the contemporary church. At this point, the discoveries of exegesis are merged with the issues and circumstances of the contemporary scene so that they are communicated to the congregation in the sermon.

As Nassif notes, Chrysostom's application of θεωρία to preaching has much in common with expository preaching. Quoting Haddon Robinson's stated goal for expository preaching as "the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality of the preacher, then through him to

[106] Chrysostom may have Colossians 3:20–21 in mind as he applies the text. Earlier in the sermon, he addresses the role of the Scriptures in family-life when he says, "Listen, those of you who are in the world and have charge of a wife and children, how Paul entrusts you too especially to read the Scriptures, and not to do it haphazardly, but with great earnestness" ("In Col. Hom. 9," 207).

his hearers," Nassif concludes, "This is an excellent definition of Chrysostom's use of *theoria* in his preaching ministry of the Word."[107]

Thus, θεωρία provides exposition with a path from ancient text to contemporary significance and serves as the capstone to Chrysostom's interpretive and expositional method.[108] Drawing on the nature of the biblical text as God's συγκατάβασις to mankind—his considerateness of human limitation in accessing and understanding divine truth—Chrysostom studied the biblical text according to his conviction that it was ἀκρίβεια and that it demanded ἀκρίβεια from him as an interpreter. That is, it is a precise text that requires precise interpretation of the author's intent conveyed by the wording of the text. His interpretation adhered to the biblical text as ἱστορία, both as a genre that recorded an accurate account of past events and as an overall method for investigating the text according to how the history is presented in the narrative or argument. Where necessary, the οἰκονομία of God was discussed so that key developments in Scripture were recognized and related to the main text. The interpretive insights up to this point led him to consider the contemporary significance of the text using θεωρία. While maintaining the text's historical grounding, θεωρία connected the text's meaning with its significance for contemporary readers. Chrysostom brought all these interpretive principles to bear upon his expositional task.

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[107] Nassif, "Antiochene 'Theoria' in John Chrysostom's Exegesis," 328; quoting Haddon Robinson, *Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 30.

[108] The NIV Application Commentary Series is one example of contemporary efforts to merge exegesis with exposition. Another example is Abner Chou's recent work *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*.

Conclusion

Chrysostom's view of Scripture and interpretive method reaches its capstone in his exposition of the biblical text. This chapter has sought to demonstrate that first by providing an overview and backdrop for his preaching ministry. Preaching is profitable for the church because it serves as a safeguard against false teaching and it promotes Christian living that matches the truths of Scripture. However, there is a pitfall for the preacher: people-pleasing. This is a danger to the church because its expositor may be distracted from the goal of preaching. The answer is to this danger is to scorn the motivation to be approved by men and to remember that the preacher is tasked with bringing the congregation into an encounter with God. Yet, this encounter was only one responsibility of the preacher. Chrysostom also considered the preacher as the congregation's spiritual physician and defender. This vision of a preacher and his preaching ministry in the context of the church informed how he carried out the ministry. Since preaching was textually-based, the expositor's interpretive principles and method were employed for the sake of explaining the text. Such exposition served the goal of edifying the church, which he also understood to be the purpose for which God gave the Scriptures in the first place.

With these principles about preaching as a backdrop, Chrysostom's expositional method emphasized understanding a book's entire argument and various themes, which would serve the explanation of the various passages within the expository series. After understanding the whole, Chrysostom's exposition of the parts followed the order of the text as he found it. That is, he practiced an exegetical style of exposition, explaining each clause or phrase at it appeared in the biblical text. Finally, Chrysostom's unique

expository use of the interpretive concept of θεωρία offered him a framework for explaining and applying the biblical text. In accord with his Antiochene colleagues, Chrysostom tied a text's significance to its meaning as it is presented in the text. However, Chrysostom also used θεωρία to facilitate his expositional method. That is, he merged his exegesis with the issues that confronted his congregation without compromising the meaning that his exegesis unfolded. Thus, Chrysostom's expositions were submitted to his presuppositions about Scripture and a product of his hermeneutical principles.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that a strict correlation exists between one's presuppositions about Scripture's nature, one's interpretive method, and one's approach to biblical exposition. Such a correlation has been traced in the homilies of John Chrysostom. The Antiochene preacher's presuppositions about the nature of Scripture ordered his interpretive principles and produced an expositional method that followed the biblical text and submitted to the author's intended meaning. His understanding about the nature of Scripture clearly informed his interpretation, and consequently his exposition of the biblical text.

Chrysostom viewed Scripture as divine revelation that was accessible to humanity on account of God's considerate initiative to make himself known in an understandable way to finite creatures (συγκατάβασις). God's revelation was communicated through human speakers and writers through divine inspiration. Neither its accessibility or its inspiration resulted in Scripture being mixed with human fallibility, biases, or error. Instead, the reality that Scripture originates with God resulted in its thorough truthfulness and authority.

This bibliological foundation set the parameters for Chrysostom's interpretive principles that intentionally built upon that foundation. He pursued precision (ἀκρίβεια) in interpretation as submitted to authorial intent. Because Scripture is tied to historical

events, the goal of interpretation is to identify the literal sense of the text (ἱστορία). Because of Scripture's canonical framework, interpretation is helped by that overarching context (οἰκονομία).

Interpretation is not complete without exposition. Exposition offers explanation of the biblical text in the context of the church. Chrysostom's expositional method explained Scripture's literal sense by situating a text within the author's argument and goal for the entire book. With the context established, exposition followed the flow of the text, elucidating the author's meaning in a straightforward manner. Along the way, the exposition offered insight into its contemporary significance (θεωρία). Chrysostom intentionally tied contemporary significance to the text's literal sense so that the authority of application remained with Scripture instead of the preacher. By this expositional methodology, Chrysostom's preaching was the fruit of his interpretive principles and a response to the nature of Scripture.

Arguing for a correlation between Scripture, interpretation, and exposition is an argument that recognizes that virtually everything needed to understand Scripture and how it should be interpreted is contained in Scripture itself. For those who are tasked with preparing and delivering expository sermons on a biblical text, such a correlation is often assumed. This thesis has detailed what is involved in that assumption. The exposition of the biblical text employs an interpretive method for determining the exposition's message. Both the exposition and its interpretive method stand upon Scripture's nature. Bibliology, hermeneutics, and exposition are bound to one another. John Chrysostom recognized their correlation and preached confidently because of it. Arguably, this is one reason why his homilies are still read today, more than sixteen-hundred years later.

APPENDIX: THE CORRELATION BETWEEN SCRIPTURE AND EXPOSITION

John Chrysostom's homilies demonstrate a correlation between Scripture, his interpretive principles, and expositional method. However, the correlation ought not be unique to him. Instead, the nature of Scripture promotes this correlation with interpretive principles and expositional method. This appendix summarizes that correlation by following the same path that Chrysostom traveled from text to exposition. First, the nature of Scripture as divinely inspired revelation guarantees that God and the meaning of Scripture are accessible to interpreters. Second, inspiration as a confluence of activity between divine and human authors ensures the meaning of Scripture is singular. Third, because of these elements of Scripture's nature, the goal of interpretation and exposition is to identify and explain the text's authorial intent. Finally, the interpretive and expositional methods best suited to achieve this goal are the grammatical-historical method and expository preaching.

Revelation Guarantees God is Accessible in Scripture

Interpretation and exposition share a common starting point with theology in general.[1] The basis for all three is the reality that God has revealed himself to his

[1] The following section is adapted from Hartmetz, "Revelation or Instrument," 3–6.

creation. Feinberg writes, "The doctrine of revelation is foundational to all of theology."[2] Scripture teaches that God reveals himself in different ways. He reveals himself through creation (Ps 19:1–6; Rom 1:18–20; Acts 14:15–17), historical events (cf. Josh 2:9–11), direct speech (Exod 3:2–4:17), prophecies about the future (Isa 42:9), dreams (Dan 2), visions (2 Cor 12:1), angels (Dan 7:15–16), and preeminently in Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14, 18; Heb 1:3).[3]

In addition to these forms of revelation, God especially reveals himself in Scripture.[4] Several passages support this claim. First, Psalm 19:7–9 identifies God's word in Scripture with six different terms, each having the same divine source (e.g., "law of Yahweh," "testimony of Yahweh," etc.).[5] Scripture as revelation is different from general revelation because, rather than revealing God's existence, majesty, and power (vv. 1–2), God's revelation in his word reveals his will, especially his means of redemption.[6]

Second, in Matthew 22:31–32, Jesus is confronted by the Sadducees on the topic of resurrection. His answer begins in verse 29, exposing that his opponents do not know

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[2] Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 33.

[3] Feinberg, 85–105.

[4] J. I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 47; John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, TL (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987), 45; Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 105; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 33.

[5] Psalm 19 concerns both general and special revelation. In vv. 1–2, creation is "telling," "declaring," "pour[ing] forth speech," and "reveal[ing] knowledge." Allen Ross comments, "Psalm 19 is a classic presentation of divine revelation and its intended effects" (*A Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. 1, Kregel Exegetical Library [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2011], 467).

[6] Ross, 1:487.

the power of God to raise the dead.[7] In verse 31, Jesus addresses the Sadducees deficiency in their understanding of Scripture. In doing so, he appeals to Exodus 3:6, saying, "Have you not read what was spoken to you by God?" Jesus quotes from a biblical text and says that it was spoken by God. Therefore, the biblical text is divine revelation.[8]

Third, at the conclusion of Moses's extended exposition of the law to Israel on the plains of Moab (Deut 5–28),[9] the prophet hands over "this law" to the Levites (31:9), which he wrote (31:24), and instructs them to set it beside the tablets from Sinai in the ark of the covenant (31:25–26). In Exodus 31:18; 32:16; 34:1, 28, the tablets are said to be "the writing of God." That is, the tablets are divine revelation. Therefore, the act of setting Moses's writing next to the tablets from Sinai is a claim that Moses's exposition is also divine revelation.[10]

Finally, the apostle Paul regularly identified Scripture as divine revelation. In Romans 3:2, Paul answers a question about the privileges that belong to the Jews. His response includes identifying the revelation they were given as "oracles of God." These

[7] D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 462.

[8] Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 817−18.

[9] Deuteronomy 1:5 specifies that the book is an exposition of the law and thus meant to explain and clarify the law already given. Peter Craigie explains, "The word *expound* (*bē'ēr*) has the sense of making something absolutely clear or plain; the same verb is used in 27:8 to indicate the clarity or legibility with which the words of the law were to be inscribed in stone. . . . It is important to stress that the content of Deuteronomy is an *exposition* of the law" (*The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 92: emphasis original).

[10] Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 404; Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 33−34.

"oracles" refer to the Old Testament Scriptures.[11] In Romans 9:17, Paul quotes Exodus 9:16 where God commands Pharaoh through Moses to release Israel (cf. Exod 9:13). However, instead of writing that God spoke to Pharaoh, Paul writes, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh." In this way, Paul equates the divine revelation given in history with what is recorded in Scripture.[12] Galatians 3:8 is another text that follows the same pattern as Romans 9:17. While referring to God's promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, Paul identifies the one speaking as "Scripture."[13] These examples show that Scripture is divine revelation and that they grant interpreters and expositors access to the knowledge of God.

Inspiration Assures the Meaning of Scripture is Accessible to Interpreters

In correlation with the doctrine of revelation is the doctrine of inspiration.[14] According to Frame, "*Inspiration* [is] a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word."[15] Inspiration is the theological term that describes Scripture as "God-breathed" (θεόπνευστος), which comes from 2 Timothy 3:16, and

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[11] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 157; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 342.

[12] Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 299. Warfield writes, "These acts could be attributed to 'Scripture' only as the result of such a habitual identification, in the mind of the writer, of the text of Scripture with God as speaking, that it became natural to use the term 'Scripture says,' when what was really intended was 'God, as recorded in Scripture, said.'" See also Schreiner, *Romans*, 497. Schreiner's comment is helpful for its pointed brevity: "Here Scripture is personified . . . showing that what Scripture says, God says" (497n15).

[13] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 195. Schreiner makes the same observation as he did in Romans 9:17, writing, "Scripture is personified here, so that what Scripture says is what God himself says."

[14] This section is adapted from Hartmetz, "Revelation or Instrument," 8–14.

[15] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 140; emphasis original.

straightforwardly identifies Scripture as the product of God's activity.[16] Whereas 2 Timothy 3:16 refers to the product of inspiration, 2 Peter 1:19–21 concerns its process.[17] Peter commends to believers the activity of attending to "the word of prophecy" (v. 19) with a fundamental principle[18] in mind ("know this first of all," v. 20). That is, "no prophecy of Scripture comes by one's own interpretation" because, negatively, prophecy is of divine origin ("no prophecy was ever made by the will of man") and, positively, the prophets "spoke from God" (v. 20). Thus, the prophets' words were their words ("men spoke") and the words' origination was with God through the active agency of the Holy Spirit in the writing process ("being moved by the Holy Spirit," v. 21).[19]

Therefore, Scripture came from the process of God's "bearing" (φερόμενοι) the writers (2 Pet 1:20–21) and was the product of God's activity in that process (2 Tim 3:16).[20] The implication of God's involvement in the process and product of inspiration implies that there is no breakdown in the communication between the text's author and the text itself. The biblical text communicates the intent of its author because God's act of inspiration produced the text through the process of carrying along the writers to speak

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[16] On the meaning of θεόπνευστος and its significance for Scripture, see Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 133, 275; Feinberg, *Light in a Dark Place*, 123.

[17] Several note that 2 Timothy 3:16 is about the fact of Scripture's inspiration and 2 Peter 1:19–21 indicates the process of inspiration. See Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 133; Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy & Titus*, 268; Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236.

[18] Peter H. Davids, *2 Peter and Jude: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BHGNT (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 62. Davids notes that the adverbial use of πρῶτον indicates "a marker of degree: 'in the first place, above all, especially' (BDAG, 894.2.b)."

[19] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 324; Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 135–37.

[20] Lea and Griffin note that the passive voice of the participle φερόμενοι in reference to the men who spoke by the Holy Spirit corresponds to the passive meaning of θεόπνευστος in 2 Timothy 3:16 (*1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 236).

his word. In other words, the meaning in the mind of the author is communicated by the text. The paradigm of inspiration does not allow for a failure of the text to communicate its author's intent.[21]

Since Scripture is divine revelation and there is no breakdown in communication between the text and its author's intent, the meaning of Scripture is accessible to interpreters. The apostle Paul encourages his readers in Ephesians 3:4 that, although he was the recipient of revelation that was a mystery beforehand (v. 3),[22] he is confident that his "insight into the mystery of Christ" can be understood through someone reading his words.[23] That the act of reading is what enables understanding of written revelation requires that the meaning of Scripture be accessible to interpreters.[24]

The apostle Peter supports the accessibility of Scripture's meaning from another angle in 2 Peter 3:15–16. He refers to Paul's letters as corroborating testimony for his exhortation to wait patiently for the coming of the Lord (v. 15). While acknowledging that there are "some things hard to understand" in Paul's letters, Peter does not claim they are impossible to understand. Instead, the difficult parts are what "the untaught and unstable distort," which they also do with "the rest of the Scriptures" (v. 16). Following this logic, if the Scriptures can be distorted due to the nefarious intentions of false teachers, then the Scriptures can also be understood in accord with the intention of the

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[21] Chou, *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 28; Chou, "The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," 62–63.

[22] S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 226, 585; Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 187.

[23] Arnold, *Ephesians*, 188; Baugh, *Ephesians*, 228.

[24] The necessity of the Holy Spirit for interpretation and application is explained in 1 Corinthians 2:10–13.

author. As Schreiner puts it, "Misinterpretation . . . is inexcusable."[25] Therefore, Scripture's meaning is accessible to faithful interpreters (cf. 2 Tim 2:15).

Divine-human Confluence Ensures that Scripture's Meaning is Singular

As noted above, Scripture is divine revelation with accessible meaning through the process and product of inspiration. However, more can be said about inspiration that also has significant implications for interpretation and exposition. If inspiration involved men speaking from God as they were borne along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21), that process produced God-breathed writings (2 Tim 3:16), and the communicative result is an integrity between text and author, then there are two further components about Scripture to incorporate into interpretation and exposition. They are the mode of inspiration and the nature of Scripture's meaning.

First, based upon the testimony of 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21, the mode of inspiration should be identified as a confluence between the divine and human authors. Essentially, the divine-human confluence mode of inspiration indicates a unity and harmony between the authorial parties to the degree that the role of either may not be exaggerated or excluded.[26] Neither can their roles be opposing, dividing, or undermining of the other.[27] Instead, Scripture's nature must be understood as being "a divine-human book, in which every word is at once divine and human."[28] Both 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2

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[25] Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 396.

[26] Warfield, "Divine and Human," 543; Chou, "The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," 59–60.

[27] Warfield, "Divine and Human," 545.

[28] Warfield, 546. See also Moses Stuart, "On the Alleged Obscurity of Prophecy," *BibRep* 2, no. 6 (April 1832): 236–37.

Peter 1:21 support this conclusion since the Scriptures are "God-breathed" and "men spoke" in Scripture's writing. Furthermore, the action of the divine and human authors is regularly described as singular. For example, in Matthew 22:43–45 Jesus asks how David's son can also be David's Lord (v. 45) and quotes from Psalm 110:1 to ground his question (v. 44). In verse 43, Jesus sets up the question, saying, "How does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord?'" Jesus identifies David as the author and locates his activity in connection with the activity of God's Spirit, which is a claim about inspiration.[29] Jesus describes the two authors as acting in a singular way.

Second, in light of divine-human confluence, Scripture's meaning is by nature singular. If the divine and human authors act in a singular way, then it follows that the meaning of the biblical text is also singular. This inference is evident from how references to the author of Scripture can alternate between the divine and human authors. For example, in Matthew 1:22, Matthew notes the angel's instructions to Joseph concerning Mary and her child fulfilled "what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet [Isaiah]." Here the speaker is God and the instrument is the prophet Isaiah. On the other hand, in Matthew 15:7, Jesus condemns the Pharisees and scribes who exalt human tradition over God's law, saying, "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you." In this case, the speaker is identified as Isaiah. Together, the two passages alternate between God and Isaiah as the speaker.[30] This alternation demonstrates a unity of

[29] Carson, "Matthew," 467; Osborne, *Matthew*, 828; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, ICC (New York: T & T Clark, 1991), 252.

[30] It should be acknowledged that the instrumentality of the prophet, as designated by the phrase "what was spoken through the prophet," is the normal way that Matthew refers to the human authors (e.g., Matt 3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:25; 21:4; 24:15). Thus, a distinction between the originating agent of God and the instrumental agent of the human writer should be maintained (see the movement from ὑπὸ to διὰ in Matthew 1:22. However, the point being made here is to note how the issue of divine-human confluence

meaning because there is a unity of wording. As Chou writes, "In essence, the human words written down in Scripture are God's words; they are all one and the same words. . . . The human and divine authors are so harmonious that they can be interchanged without issue. Their writing and meaning are one."[31]

The confluence of divine and human authors and their harmonious meaning implies that the interpretive principle of authorial intent stems from the nature of Scripture at least as much as it is involved in interpretive methodology. The biblical testimony about the process and product of inspiration leads to the conclusion that "the whole Bible is recognized as human, the free product of human effort, in every part and word. And at the same time, the whole Bible is recognized as divine, the Word of God, his utterances, of which he is in the truest sense the Author."[32] Since that is the result of inspiration, then determining authorial intent in interpretation must presuppose divine-human confluence. The above examples from Matthew demonstrate this conclusion since God and the prophet expressed an intent in the biblical text. Therefore, authorial intent also concerns the nature of Scripture. Chou summarizes the point made here, writing, "What begins as a hermeneutical argument moves to a bibliological argument about the nature of . . . authorial intent."[33]

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stresses the process and product of inspiration in such a way that there is no way to divide the meaning of God from the meaning of the human author because the biblical testimony offers no ground for holding to a distinction between the two.

[31] Chou, "The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," 59, 60.

[32] Warfield, "Divine and Human," 547.

[33] Chou, "Reclaiming the Prophets' Messianic Intention," 214.

The connection between authorial intent and inspiration clarifies the problems involved in appealing to divine-human confluence as a tool for interpretation.[34] Using confluence as justification for determining divine intent through *sensus plenior*, typological exegesis, or canonical interpretation misunderstands divine-human confluence and authorial intent because divine-human confluence rules out separating divine intent from human intent because confluence rests upon the claim that the two authors cannot be separated. Rather than using confluence to determine divine intent as distinct from human intent, a proper use of confluence maintains the harmony of intent in the divine and human authors in interpretation.[35]

The Correlation Between Scripture, Interpretation, and Exposition

The nature of Scripture as divine revelation written through divine-human confluence and conveying authorial intent logically leads to interpretive principles that discovers authorial intent through attention to the grammatical features of the text in accordance with the text's literary and historical context. The interpretive method that best facilitates these principles in accord with the nature of Scripture is the grammatical-

[34] E.g., Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 24–25; Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, "The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 725–36; Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 23–37.

[35] Another reason that some attempt to divide divine intent from human intent is due to a misunderstanding of the distinction between meaning and significance. For example, Barrett asserts that typological interpretation exposes how a "sharp divide between meaning and significance is artificial and quite narrow, foreign to how language works" (*Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 34n104). However, when divine-human confluence is rightly understood and linked to authorial intent as components of the nature of Scripture, then Barrett's argument fails to convince because interpretation is simplified through observing the difference between meaning and significance. That is, interpreters are able to understand how biblical authors use language to indicate whether they are using other portions of Scripture according to their meaning (e.g., Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:22) or significance (e.g., Zech 8:16 in Eph 4:25). For justification and demonstration of how the distinction may be maintained in interpretation, see Chou, "Reclaiming the Prophets' Messianic Intention."

historical (GH) method. The GH method seeks to discover the meaning of the biblical text that the author expressed through his use of language and in light of its historical context. Regarding grammar, GH interpretation follows an author's use of words in relation to each other, whether in phrases, clauses, or larger units of text. Chou writes, "Grammar can deal with how an entire text coheres together."[36] Regarding history, GH interpretation accounts for the historical background of the text because Scripture was written in various historical contexts and demonstrates an interaction with those contexts (e.g., Amos 1:1; Dan 1:1; Luke 2:1–2). Furthermore, the biblical authors refer to earlier revelation as historically factual events (e.g., Matt 12:39–42; 2 Pet 2:4–9). With this attention to grammar and history, GH interpretation intentionally correlates with the nature of Scripture.

The same methodology ought to apply to the exposition of Scripture since the method should communicate the discoveries and conclusions of interpretation. In addition, one's expositional method ought to communicate contemporary applications of interpretive conclusions. The method that naturally correlates with Scripture's nature and GH interpretation is expositional preaching because it seeks to communicate the meaning and significance of the biblical text.[37] Whether in larger or smaller portions of text, expositional preaching emphasizes the authority of the biblical text and the accessibility of its timeless meaning and manifold significance for its hearers.[38] Moreover,

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[36] Chou, "The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," 67.

[37] John MacArthur similarly states, "By expositionally, I mean preaching in such a way that the meaning of the Bible passage is presented *entirely* and *exactly* as it was intended by God" ("The Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy: Expository Preaching," *MSJ* 34, no. 2 [Fall 2023]: 326: emphasis original).

[38] Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 41; Tom Pennington, "The Pastor and Systematic Theology," *MSJ* 34, no. 2 (Fall 2023): 393.

expositional preaching stresses authorial intent so that divine-human confluence functions as the method's foundational presupposition.[39] Simultaneously, authorial intent sets the parameters for valid application of the text.[40] The genius of expositional preaching is that it straightforwardly explains what is there on the pages of Scripture, following the lead of the biblical writer because the biblical text controls the message of the exposition.[41]

In addition to the nature of Scripture, expositional preaching uses the discoveries of GH interpretation for communicating the message of the text. The expositional preacher appeals to the grammar of the text, following the wording and order of the text in support of his communication of the text's message.[42] He also explains the historical background that clarifies the text's message.[43] Thus, GH interpretation and expositional preaching work together in connection with the nature of Scripture to discover and communicate the message of the biblical text. In turn, Scripture promotes interpretation and exposition that correlate with its nature. Contemporary interpreters and expositors must adhere to the nature of Scripture if they seek to understand and communicate its meaning and significance with precision.

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[39] Holland, "Expository Preaching," 35–36.

[40] Chou, "The Hermeneutics of the Pastor-Theologian," 65–66.

[41] MacArthur, "Mandate of Biblical Inerrancy," 334.

[42] David Allen writes, "True expository preaching should be 'text-driven.' By this, we mean that sermons should not only be based upon a text of Scripture but should also actually expound the meaning of that text. . . . Bottom line: the structure of the text itself should guide the structure of the sermon, since meaning is expressed by an author through the text itself" ("Introduction," in *Text-Driven Preaching: God's Word at the Heart of Every Sermon*, ed. Daniel L. Akin, David L. Allen, and Ned L. Mathews [Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010], 5–6).

[43] See Kaiser's overview of homiletical analysis in *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 145–63.

Conclusion

John Chrysostom tied his interpretive principles and expositional method to the nature of Scripture. He ought not be unique in the history of biblical interpretation and preaching. When Scripture is understood as accessible, divine revelation communicated in written text through the confluence of divine and human authors who expressed a unified and harmonious intent in the text, then interpretation and exposition becomes a straightforward process of following Scripture's lead. This thesis has recommended Chrysostom as an expositor who successfully wedded his interpretive principles and expositional method to the nature of Scripture. There is a correlation between Scripture and its interpretation and exposition. May today's expositors observe John Chrysostom's example and submit to Scripture's nature in their ongoing efforts to interpret the text precisely and explain the text straightforwardly.

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