ANCIENT JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS AS CRISIS MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

Thematic Studies from the Centre for Early Christian Studies

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CONTENTS

List of Contributors
Abbreviations

Introduction
Pauline Allen

1. The Jewish War as a Response to the Crisis of Flavian Propaganda
   James S. McLaren

2. Coping with the Present by Inventing the Future: Jewish
   Apocalyptic Texts as Crisis Management Literature
   David C. Sim

3. Family Feud: Paul’s Response to the Internecine Crisis in Galatia
   Ian J. Elmer

4. Fighting on All Fronts: Crisis Management in the Gospel of
   Matthew
   David C. Sim

5. Monitoring Women’s Roles: Luke’s Response to a Crisis of
   Acceptability in the Roman Empire
   Elizabeth Dowling

   (John 3.1-10)
   Mary L. Coloe

7. The Roman Response to the Ecclesiastical Crises in the Antiochene
   Church in the Late-Fourth and Early-Fifth Centuries
   Geoffrey D. Dunn

8. John Chrysostom as Crisis Manager: The Years in Constantinople
   Wendy Mayer
of Caesarea. While the rival bishops and communities themselves in Antioch devised a strategy to handle this crisis locally, which basically involved them enduring the situation; trying to reach agreement on theological formulae and promising not to replace bishops when they died until there was only one left, changes of emperor and the refusal to compromise on certain key principles of what constituted legitimate authority saw this conflict drag on and have consequences for Antioch's relationship with the other major churches. While the exiles of John Chrysostom from Constantinople were not directly related to the Meletian schism in Antioch (but one can never be sure if Theophilus of Alexandria continued to bear a personal grudge against John for being a supporter of Meletius and Flavian, even though Theophilus had reconciled with Flavian), what they reveal, like the Meletian schism, is that the other major churches could do little other than support one side and break off communion with the other.

What Alexander did was new was to seize the opportunity presented by the rift between Rome and Alexandria to supplant the latter as Rome's closest ally in the East by being the first of the major churches to reconcile with Rome. Only history would reveal how successful he was.

Chapter 8

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM AS CRISIS MANAGER: THE YEARS IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Wendy Mayer

In a previous study we combed the letters John Chrysostom (d. 407 CE) wrote in the first few months of his second exile for evidence of the strategies he employed as a bishop in response to a limited set of crises. We argued that it is only in his letters that we are likely to find reliable evidence of his modus operandi; it followed that once this modus operandi had been established, it might prove possible to read backwards into the years when he resided as bishop in Constantinople (February 398 to June 404) to analyse with any confidence the traces that survive of his strategies there. This roundabout approach was necessitated by the often problematic character of the writings ascribed to John for this period and the peculiarities of the external sources for his episcopate. While a significant number of the latter purport to describe this period (in particular, the Dialogue of Palladius, the funeral oration of Ps-Martyrius, the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret), all were produced within a 50-year time span following his second exile and are heavily biased in consequence of the factionalism that developed in its wake. Without the foundation established on the basis of his correspondence, we would have no reliable framework for testing the assertions of both partisan and hostile witnesses. The question that we seek to explore here is thus whether, with this foundation in place and given the biases of the sources that describe or deliberately gloss over his actions at Constantinople, we can now gain a more accurate picture of John's management of crises from the episcopal throne.

The crises with which John was obliged to engage as bishop of Constantinople

were numerous and, to a large extent, artefacts of the peculiar character and status of the see that he administered. In contrast to its relatively compact topography and small population at this time, and despite the fact that in the latter half of the fourth century, much of its essential infrastructure was still under development, Constantineople grew significantly in stature in 381 when, as a result of the influence of Theodosius I at the Council of Constantinople, its see was declared second only in status to that of Rome, elevating it in the East above the influential and ancient apostolic sees of Alexandria and Antioch. It continued to grow in stature after 395, when the imperial court became fixed in the city on a permanent basis. In consequence, by the time that John arrived there in late 397 the city was swollen with visitors from the provinces of the East, both secular and religious, seeking favours from the imperial court and its satellites, whose interests, as often as not, ran contrary to those of the Constantinopolitan see. To complicate matters, despite the status enjoyed by the Constantinopolitan bishop after 381, by the time that John inherited the position Nicene Christianity had been dominant in the city for only 17 years, and the community remained relatively small in comparison to the Homanian Christian community. The latter were banned from worshipping inside the city walls, but remained active in the city’s life regardless. The Novatians in the city, on the other hand, another not insignificant Christian community, retained imperial support after 380 and they and their bishop continued their life within the city walls unaffected. The position that John inherited was thus a vulnerable one that required careful negotiation and defending.

Nowhere is this more clear than in the letter, preserved as Chapter 2 in the Dialogue of Palladius, allegedly sent by John to the bishops of Rome, Milan and Aquileia (Innocent, Venerius and Chromatius) between Easter and June 404. Detailing the complicated relationships between John and his supporters, imperial authority and the bishop of Alexandria and his supporters, the letter was sent at a time when John was under house arrest, Nicene Christians, including members of senatorial families, had been attacked by soldiers, and John’s capacity to hold onto the Constantinopolitan see was in question. This was close to the height of the crisis, only months from John’s deposition for a second and final time. Before we discuss the implications of the letter’s contents, however, a number of caveats need to be set in place. The letter’s authenticity is widely accepted, but a degree of suspicion attaches to the relationship between the version that survives and the original, by virtue of the neat correlation between the careful legalism of the arguments presented in the letter in its present form and its publication within a work framed as a piece of judicial rhetoric. Additionally, G. Dunn describes it as ‘reconstructed’, drawing attention to Coleman-Norton’s speculation that Dialogue 2 may represent a free translation of the letter into Greek from an original written in

HE 6.8; GCS NF 1, 325; Soz., HE 8.8; FChr 73/4, 980-82.
9. For the date see A.-M. Malinsey, SC 342, 47. Malinsey views the letter as genuine, arguing that it must have been inserted into the Dialogue no earlier than the seventh century, after the production of the Vita by ‘George of Alexandria’ (SC 342, 55-58).
12. Dunn, ‘Roman Primacy’, 687 n. 3. On the other hand the term Ἰωάννης that introduces
Latin, seeing that the letter was addressed to Italian bishops. The possibility both that the letter published as Dialogue 2 is a translation into Greek from Latin and that its language has been adapted to some degree at some point in its transmission history to accommodate it to the judicial rhetoric and arguments of the Dialogue must be taken into account when assessing its value. With these caveats in place, what is of foremost interest in this letter with regard to the question of episcopal crisis management is not the specific complaints that John makes to his colleagues, but what the letter itself tells us about the conventions and roles of episcopal embassies. If we consider all letters between bishops as diplomatic and their carriers as envoys comparable to the imperial envoys of late antiquity analysed by A. Gillett, then we can begin to see how a letter of this genre played a much more significant role in the management of crises than our analysis of John's initial letters from exile indicated.

First, the letter, as confirmed by Palladius, was accompanied by an embassy of no fewer than four eastern bishops and two deacons. That this was normative, and not indicative simply of the recipient's status as bishop of Rome, is supported by the account within the letter of John's response to a demand by Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, that he appear before a judge. In that instance John did not respond to his peer in person, but sent three eastern bishops and two presbyters to convey the substance of his response. Similarly, in describing John's response to the Synod of the Oak, ps-Martyrius describes the role of the multiple bishops and clergy the bishop sent to negotiate with his hostile colleagues. The number and status of the envoys was an important element in diplomatic intercourse, communicating the level of honour being accorded the recipient. In political embassies, for instance, bishops were employed precisely because of their high status, with Gillett positing that their most important role was perhaps to serve as oath-takers. At the conclusion of successful negotiations, oaths were sworn between the recipient of the embassy and the envoys to whom the principal had delegated his right. The office of bishop, he argues, constituted a trustworthy proxy. In the communications between John and his supporters and the bishop of Rome, the proxy bishops played an additional role, as trustworthy witnesses to the claims made in the accompanying letters. In a letter from Innocent to the supporting clergy and laity of Constantinople preserved by Sozomen, he indicates at the conclusion that he has been able to interrogate his fellow bishops, Demetrius, Eulysius, Kyriakos and Palladius, during their various embassies to Rome. Likewise, at the conclusion to John's own letter to Innocent, he indicates that the role of the accompanying four bishops is to provide Innocent with more precise detail. By contrast, the role of the letter-carriers (in this instance, two deacons) is to convey the substance of the letter in summary. In sending four of his esteemed eastern colleagues and two of his clergy to Innocent, John at one and the same time thus conveys his respect for his Italian colleague and presents him with a statement of his situation plus request for assistance, which is initially summarised verbally for Innocent's convenience, formally presented in writing for consideration, and accompanied by trustworthy witnesses who are available for questioning at length regarding the veracity of the written claims. Afterwards they act as proxies for Innocent's formal response to John, the petitioner.

The sending of envoys to a fellow bishop in a time of crisis is thus not a simple matter, but involves a complex protocol in which the breach of that protocol at any point on either side has the potential to exacerbate circumstances or even stimulate a new crisis. This observation nuances the constant complaints of
isolation that permeate John's letters from exile. While in exaggerated form these primarily serve the purpose of stimulating a sense of urgency in recipients who have the potential to influence those in power, and while it is true that John was not as isolated as he claims (he instead had a number of clergy at his service throughout the three years of his exile), it also now becomes clear that being isolated from the services of individuals of the rank of bishop for the role of envoy was a significant component of the penalty of exile. Because his access was restricted to lesser-ranked clergy (presbyters and deacons) to fulfill this role, the effectiveness of that portion of John's correspondence aimed at achieving rehabilitation was from the beginning compromised, with the potential of effecting the opposite result to that intended. John's only recourse in exile was reliance on the networks previously established with individuals of high secular and ecclesiastical rank in both East and West, if those in receipt of his letters were not to take offence at the inappropriate status and number of the accompanying carriers.

The number and status of envoys was only one aspect of the delicate matter of communicating by envoy for a bishop intent on mitigating a crisis. Hospitality played an equally critical role in the expected protocol. Thus in John's letter to Innocent the very first charge exploited by the translator/redactor in his representation of events to the bishop of Rome and his Italian colleagues is the alleged breach of protocol in this respect by the bishop of Alexandria. Here the latter's actions are construed as a public statement of his hostile intent: Theophilus had been summoned by imperial command to appear in Constantinople alone; he arrives with a large retinue of Egyptians (an openly hostile act); on disembarkation he does not enter the bishop's church, avoids meeting with his counterpart, exchanges no word, no prayer and no communion (all required by ecclesiastical law); instead, he bypasses the church entrance and seeks accommodation outside the city.

As receiving bishop, the letter proceeds to relate, John for his own part did everything required of the resident bishop: he invited his visiting colleague to share his hospitality and prepared accommodations and everything else required by protocol. In Sozomen's account of events it is Theophilus' proxy, the bishop Epiphanius, who deliberately commits this breach in protocol, thus insulting his peer. If we translate the role of envoys and political communication into the ecclesiastical realm, we begin to see what is at stake here. In outlining the framework and conventions of classical embassies on which their late-antique counterparts were closely based, Gillett observes that in classical Athens the role of the envoy was not one of negotiation but of advocacy. The envoy carried letters conveying a sparse statement of an assembly's decree, with the primary role of the advocate being to persuade the recipient to agree with his party's proposals. If we view ecclesiastical sees in the light of independent city states, with the encyclicals conveyed to his peers by envoys on a bishop's consecration as statements of his theological (= political) position, then we begin to understand the mechanisms of ecclesiastical communion. Palladius, for instance, is at pains to point out that Innocent's first reaction on receipt of multiple letters and envoys from the bishops of both Constantinople and Alexandria was to send letters and envoys in return to each, confirming his own communion with each of the two peers who were in conflict. Having taken that delicate step, only then does he make pronouncement on the validity or otherwise of Theophilus' judgement. In this light, the charge in John's letter to Innocent that Theophilus on arrival in Constantinople not only snubbed his hospitality, but bypassed the required meeting with the incumbent bishop and statement of communion, is equivalent in political terms to a statement of war between the two independent sees. That the middle part of the letter is full

25. This helps to explain the emphasis upon established patron-client networks that emerged from the analysis of his initial correspondence from exile in Mayer, 'Bishop as Crisis Manager'. It also raises the question of the distinction between diplomatic correspondence and letters of amicitia in a time of exile. It seems to me that precisely because the correspondent is directed at managing a crisis situation, in John's letters from exile we see the lines between these two epistolary genres on occasion becoming blurred. Regarding letters of amicitia see S. K. Stowers, Letter-Writing in Greek-Roman Antiquity (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989) 58-60. For a case-study of episcopal letters that allows us to see how John might have been employing correspondence to manage crises during the course of his episcopate, thus providing context for the letters from exile, see the study by A. Schor, Theodoret's People: Social Networks and Religious Conflict in Late Roman Syria (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011).
26. See Gillett, Envoys, 228-29 and 239.
27. Chrys., ep. 1 ad Innoc.; SC 342, 70 II. 22-33.
29. Soz., HE 8.14.6-7; FChr 73/4, 1000: Epiphanius arrives at Constantinople; John goes out with all his clergy to meet him; John offers hospitality; Epiphanius refuses and privately assembles all of the bishops in Constantinople (a further breach in protocol); John continues to invite Epiphanius to meet with him and to enjoy his hospitality; Epiphanius continues to breach protocol. Note that in this construction of events, the additional mention of the occurrus (John goes out to meet Epiphanius with his entire clergy) is intended to convey that John has observed all of the requirements of meeting an envoy of high status. Regarding the close relationship between meeting embassies and adventus ceremonial see Gillett, Envoys, 251. A similar account of the reception by John of Epiphanius in Constantinople is supplied by Socrates, HE 6.12; GCS NF 1, 333-34.
32. Pallad., Dial. 3; SC 341, 64. Regarding the envoys from Theophilus to Innocent see Dial. 3; SC 341, 66.
33. See Chrys., ep. 1 ad Innoc.; SC 342, 74-82.
of accounts of envoys between the two bishops and appeals to both emperor and ecclesiastical canons, with resultant imperial letters to a wide circle of bishops, gives some indication of the chief mechanisms available to bishops in the management of a crisis of this magnitude. That John moved to bolster his alliances and attempted to bring pressure to bear on Theophilus by the latter's peers in the West by appealing not just to the bishop of Rome, but also sending personally addressed letters and the same or similar envoy to the bishops of Aquileia and Milan, demonstrates John's familiarity as bishop with the fragility of his own authority and with the difficulty of defending it against a bishop with overlapping alliances.

In order to avoid becoming unduly influenced by the sources associated with the period that led up to John's final exile and consequently overemphasising the role played by letters and envoys, it is important to turn also to the evidence supplied by sermons. Once again there are difficulties with the authenticity and transmission of sources and so what survives is less useful than we would like. It is nonetheless still possible to garner some information about the tactical role played by preaching in John's approach. The sermons on which we base our analysis are associated with three different crises that arose in Constantinople: the deposition of the consul-eunuch Eutropius; the exile of Saturninus, Aurelianus and the comes John in association with Gaius' military coup against the emperor Arcadius; and the dispute between John and Severian, bishop of Gabala, allegedly mediated by the empress Eudoxia. That there are three different kinds of crises involved allows us to diversify our understanding of how, as bishop, John managed a range of emergency situations.

In the case of the first event, the crisis was catastrophic for its subject, Eutropius, but impacted only marginally on John as bishop. The most powerful individual in the eastern empire, a consul, a cubicularius in the palace and a possessor of extreme wealth, Eutropius fell from favour with the imperial family in the second year of John's episcopate (399). His assets were confiscated, his name and images struck from the public records and he was initially condemned to exile, a sentence rapidly commuted into the death penalty. Eutropius' initial flight from the palace to the Great Church in search of asylum fell on a day immediately preceding a regular synaxis. The Great Church was at this time the episcopal church of the city at which his bishop ordinarily presided. The sensational nature of the event drew a large audience for John's preaching on the succeeding day, presenting him with a set of circumstances ripe for exploitation for his own pastoral purposes. This was particularly the case since Eutropius, a non-Christian, had sought to undermine the power of the church through legislation. Precisely how John approached Eutropius' crisis in his sermon and the lessons that he drew from it are not important to the discussion here. What is significant for our purposes is his claim in the prooimion of this sermon regarding blunt speech (parrhoasia), which he views as a significant episcopal obligation and attribute. In speaking bluntly instead of with flattery John seeks the health of Eutropius and his audience. Unfortunately for John what he viewed as a virtue and an important tool proved to be a two-edged sword. While, through preaching, John was in this instance able to manipulate a major crisis in the city for the furthering of his own pastoral agenda, the

34. Ep. 1 ad Iunius.; SC 342, 94 ll. 248-49. For discussion on this point see Dunn, 'Roman Primacy', 689-93.
35. Chrys., In Eutropium; PG 52, 391-96.
36. Cum Saturninus et Aurelianus (PG 52, 413-20). Opinion regarding the authenticity of the homily De caelo Eutropio (PG 52, 395-414), which has been linked to the exile of the comes John, is varied. A. Cameron, 'A Misidentified Homily of Chrysostom', Nottingham Medieval Studies 32 (1988) 14-48, presents the case that the title is in error and that the homily is genuine and refers to the capture by soldiers of the comes John. S. J. Voicu, 'La volontà e il caso: La tipologia dei primi spuri di Crisostomo', in Giovanni Crisostomo: Oriente e Occidente tra IV e V secolo (Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 93; Rome: Institutum Patrioticum Augustinianum, 2005) 101-18 (111), finds the style of only the first two paragraphs of the homily consistent with the authentic works of Chrysostom. He dates the augmented homily to between the Synod of the Oak (late 403) and John's death in September 407. Voicu's argument regarding the authenticity of only the first two paragraphs of the homily is sound. From that point onwards the argument starts to ramble and the style, vocabulary and thought increasingly diverge from that of John.
37. Chrys., De recipiendo Severiano; PG 52, 423-26; and Severian, De pace; PG 52, 425-28. Both homilies survive only in Latin translation.
38. See P.L. 2, 440-44 s.v. Eutropius 1; and also the discussion of events in Kelly, Golden Mouth, 145-50.
39. Regarding the role of the Great Church in relation to the other churches of the city at this period see W. Mayer, 'Cathedral Church or Cathedral Churches? The Situation at Constantinople (c. 360-404 AD)', Orientalia Christiana Periodica 66 (2000) 49-68. On the liturgical implications of the Eutropius incident see Chapter 10 of this volume.
40. The edict removing the right of churches to provide asylum does not survive, but see Chrys., In Eutropium; PG 52, 394 ll. 27-28; and Soz., HE 8.7.3, FCh 73/4, 978.
42. Chrys., In Eutropium; PG 52, 392 7-12: 'When you objected every time that I spoke the truth, didn't I say to you: "I love you more than those who flatter you. When I criticize, I care more for you than those who aim to please?" Didn't I say in addition to these words that wounds inflicted by friends are more trustworthy than the hewing blows of enemies Prov. 27.6)?' Trans. in W. Mayer and P. Allen, John Chrysostom (The Early Church Fathers; London: Routledge, 2000) 133.
43. In their assessment of this 'virtue' the sources divide neatly along partisan lines.
technique he employed was open to exploitation by his enemies, who used it as an underpinning of his own eventual crisis. Socrates, deriving his source material from hostile witnesses to the events of these years, cites the reading of the sermon on the part of some as too harsh, adding insult to cruelty.  

The purpose of John’s preaching differs in the case of the sermon Cum Saturninus et Aurelianus and the first two paragraphs of the homily De capto Eutropio. 41 Both are to an extent an exercise in crisis prevention/mitigation and in both instances John trenchingly begins the homily by reinforcing in the minds of his audience his status as bishop. 42 The fact that he feels it necessary to do so implies a less than positive reception to his administrative actions in some quarters, presenting a challenge to his authority. As we showed in an earlier study, at this period in Constantinople preaching in itself was a critical tool for maintaining charismatic authority. 43 Invoking his episcopal status explicitly within a sermon preached in the churches of Constantinople ratchets up what is already a strategic act to another level. Additionally, in both instances preaching supplies John with the means to present in public his own particular spin on events. That spin is partly pastoral and partly apologetic, presented once again with a liberal dose of rhetorical flash and parrhesia. Thus in De capto Eutropio, Socrates, for instance, describes it as a major failing (HE 6.3.13-14; GCS NF 1, 315). Ps-Martyrus, Or. funeb. 50 (eds Walraff and Rici, 102), on the other hand, describes at length John’s representation to Arcadius in Gainas’ presence concerning the latter’s request for a church precisely to highlight the power of his here’s parrhesia. Regarding where Socrates, ps-Martyrus and the other sources concerning John’s episcopal call in partisan terms see M. Walraff, ‘Tod im Exil. Reaktionen auf die Todesschicksale des Johannes Chrysostomos und Konstituierung einer “johannitischen” Opposition’, and W. Mayer, ‘The Making of a Saint. John Chrysostom in Early Historiography’, in M. Walraff, and R. Brändle (eds), Chrysostomobilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenwinters (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 105; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008) 23-37 and 39-59.

44. See, HE 6.5.2-6; GCS NF 1, 316-17. On criticism of John’s parrhesia by his enemies see also ps-Martyrus, Or. funeb. 46; ed. Walraff and Rici, 98.

45. Regarding our acceptance of the authenticity of only the first two paragraphs of De capto Eutropio see n. 36 above.

46. Chrys., Cum Saturninus et Aurelianus; PG 52, 415 l. 3: Κονός γάρ εἰμι ποιύματος πολλοῦ. ... De capto Eutropio; PG 52, 397 l. 24-26: Εἰγών τιναν οἴκετε θάνατος τούτος Σαρακινίων, καὶ εἰς ταύτα τὴν πέτρα όθονομάζεις μου τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν. That this is a deliberate crisis response is indicated by the absence of this rhetorical strategy in homilies unassociated with crises that can be attributed to Constantinople with a degree of certainty. See the lists published in W. Mayer, The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom - Provenance: Reshaping the Foundations (OCA, 273; Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalum Studiorum, 2005) 509-10 (Tables 18-19).


48. De capto Eutropio; PG 52, 395 l. 2 at. l. 397 l. 15.

49. Cf Chrys., Sermo antequam iret in ecclision (PG 52, 427* l. 1-3), where John addresses his imminent exile with a similar public affirmation of his authority: ...οὐ δεδοκιμασθέντας...γάρ μέ τὴν πέτρα οὐκ ὁρθαίνουσαν. Of the four homilies that allegedly derived from the period of his first exile (CPG 4396-99: Sermo antequam iret in ecclision, Sermo cum iret in ecclision, Sermo post reditum a priore ecclision 1, and Sermo post reditum a priore ecclision 2) doubts have been raised concerning the authenticity of all four. For the most extreme view see Voicu, ‘La volonté’, 102-06. A more moderate view, derived not just from internal stylistic analysis, but from a close examination of the manuscript tradition, is in the process of being published by E. Bonfiglio. In his opinion the first three paragraphs of Sermo antequam iret in ecclision (CPG 4396) and the entirety of Sermo post reditum a priore ecclision 1 (CPG 4398) are genuine. It is his view that is adopted here. See further Mayer, ‘Bishop as Crisis Manager’, 159 n. 1.

50. See Synod of the Oak, Chace 11 (John) (SC 342, 104), where John is accused of having denounced the conones John during the coup.

51. See especially PG 52, 397 l. 32-47.

52. Chrys., Cum Saturninus et Aurelianus; PG 52, 413-415 l. 6.

53. See PG 52, 415 l. 27-50.
states what he has been doing, but implies heavily that as bishop his presence was essential to settling the current political turmoil. As he explains to his audience, he has been on a rescue mission. Rescuing those who have fallen is an essential part of his episcopal mandate. It is only when he has firmly established these points in their minds that he refers to the current civil war and the lurking presence of wolves in sheep’s clothing (hostile Goths). Even the lengthy pastoral exhortation regarding greed and its consequences that follows can perhaps be viewed as part of John’s tactic in reinforcing his claim to authority. As B. Stefiun has recently argued, rather than looking to a Weberian analysis or to Foucault to understand the mechanisms employed by individuals for the establishment of authority at this period in late antiquity, a time when authority itself was fragile, it can prove useful to resort instead to a neo-pragmatist explanation. While this applies particularly well to the model of ascetic teacher (in this case, Evagrius of Pontus), there are elements that, as bishop, John, too, can be seen to employ. Stefiun identifies three broad fields in which Evagrius deploys rhetoric that lends itself to asserting or consolidating authority. Included among these rhetorical strategies are a pervasive discourse of armament and claims to ‘knowledge of the really real’. In Cum Saturninus John employs elements of the same totalising discourse to build anxiety within his audience. Everything is brimming with turmoil and uproar, everything is cliffs and precipices, everything is submerged and hidden rocks, everything is fears and dangers and suspicions and tremors and agonies. No one trusts anyone, each person fears their neighbour. It is John alone who understands the real cause (knows the really real). ‘What’, he asks, ‘is the cause of it all? The love of money...’. The rhetoric of armament emerges in the alleged criticism of his dissemination of that truth: ‘Won’t he stop arming his tongue against the wealthy? Won’t he stop constantly warring against people of this status?’ The final element that Stefiun finds important for the construction of authority, that the claim to authority be disseminated, is satisfied by the act of preaching. John’s homilies were often copied by scribes as he preached, reaching not just the immediate listener, but a more extensive audience. By the various rhetorical strategies he deploys as well as the medium itself John thus both asserts and consolidates his episcopal authority.

The importance of preaching to a bishop at this period for the construction and maintenance of authority is further highlighted by the severing of communion that occurred between John and a more minor Syrian bishop, Severian, whom he had considered an ally and in whom he had invested a considerable degree of trust. John, absent for months in Ephesus following an appeal for assistance with ecclesiastical affairs in that see, had handed over the duty of preaching to Severian as his surrogate. Severian, by all accounts, used the opportunity to the full to build his own alliances and establish his own competing authority. By the time that John returned, his authority within the see had been critically diminished. Both John and Severian by this point enjoyed the favour of the imperial palace, albeit that each had a differing set of inter-episcopal alliances. The sources claim that, when John attempted to exercise his authority by expelling Severian from the see, pressure was brought to bear by the imperial family to re-establish communion. Unfortunately, of the mutual sermons delivered by the two bishops as a public act of reconciliation what survives is again probably at several removes from what was actually delivered. In what are possibly summaries, surviving only in Latin translation, there are nonetheless traces of the same tactic being employed by both bishops. Here what is invoked in their preaching, which is in itself a liturgical act, is a second liturgical act — the declaration of peace — that defines episcopal authority. In what survives of John’s sermon he first stresses his role as head in relation to the audience and calls for their obedience. He then states that he is their father and ready to pour out his blood for his children. In case they have not yet internalised the message, he turns to preaching the charged language of peace

'Audience(s)', 89-90.
60. For an outline of events see Kelly, Golden Mouth, 181-90; and Tiersch, Johannes Chrysostomus, 220-24.
61. In Eph. hom. 11, John allusively describes a situation similar to this one. See the discussion in Mayer, Homilies, 411-16.
62. See Socr., HE 6.11.20-21; GCS NF 1, 332-33; and Soz., HE 8.10.2-3 and 8.10.6; FChr 73.4, 986-88.
63. See Chrys., De s. pentecostis hom. 1 (PG 50, 458 II.47-59), delivered at Antioch (Mayer, Homilies, 337-42), where the bishop pronounces the peace as chief liturgist. Socr., HE 6.16.9 (GCS NF 1, 339), followed by Soz., HE 8.18.7 (FChr 73.4, 1014-16), has the people escort John to the 'church' on return from his first exile, where they urge him to sit on the episcopal throne and pronounce the peace. Both authors clearly view this as a defining statement of the resumption of his episcopal authority.
64. Chrys., De recuperando Severiano; PG 52, 243-24.
65. PG 52, 425 II.6-8.
polishing off his consolidation of his own authority vis-à-vis that of Severian by constructing himself as an envoy to the audience on Severian’s behalf. Conversely, the more rhetorically vivid remnants attributed to Severian evoke the charged language of peace almost immediately and persistently use this liturgical aspect of a bishop’s authority. Through careful repetition, yet without explicitly claiming that authority for himself, the equation of the speaker with that authority is cleverly imprinted in the minds of the audience.

In the above sources we have gained glimpses of a number of management strategies additional to those we derived from analysis of the initial phase of John’s exile correspondence. Whereas there we observed John relying heavily on existing patron-client networks that he sought to mobilise, here we gain a broader insight into the act of epistolary communication at the level of inter-episcopal diplomacy. We also learn that from the moment of consecration a bishop played a delicate game in relation to his episcopal peers that required the constant negotiation and renegotiation of alliances. The delicacy of that game was exacerbated for John as bishop of a high-status see that offered access to the imperial court in addition to high-powered and well-resourced patrons. The insight into the protocols and courtesies that accompanied the reception of the countless episcopal parties drawn to the Constantinopolitan see is critical for understanding the potential for crisis generation in their breach. It is in this light that we should view the consistent emphasis in the sources on John’s failure to dine with his guests. The fact that Palladius spends a considerable part of the Dialogue defending this charge suggests that it was a breach of courtesy that was widely viewed as indefensible. In this respect John helped to generate a crisis between himself and his visitors that could readily have been avoided.

If in the letter to Innocent we gain insight into the delicate negotiation of authority between a bishop and his peers, in the five sermons we have an opportunity to observe the strategies employed by a bishop in consolidating authority over the members of his see. We see the deployment of parrhesia, explicit assertions of episcopal status, the deployment of a totalising discourse and evocation of the definitively episcopal liturgical act of the pronunciation of peace. These were rhetorical strategies employed in the prevention, mitigation or manipulation of explicit crises. We also observed that at Constantinople, constant preaching was essential for the maintenance by the resident bishop of his authority. Interestingly, here, too, ecclesiastical courtesies and protocol can be seen to play a role. As with the maintenance of diplomatic inter-episcopal alliances, when multiple visiting peers were present the act of preaching could prove a delicate balancing act. In a Constantinopolitan homily delivered on a non-crisis occasion John indicates that it was an established courtesy for the resident bishop to yield his liturgical role as preacher to a visiting peer.

To observe this courtesy with consistency, given the pressure of numbers, would have undermined a critical aspect of John’s authority. John’s management of this potential crisis appears to have been to drop the required courtesy in favour of a different protocol, so that he honoured his peers by giving them the opportunity to preach, but not in substitution, ensuring that he himself always had the final word.

The conclusions drawn from this one letter and five sermons offer an important supplement to those gained from analysis of John’s initial spate of letters from exile. Yet in arriving at them, we find ourselves at the limits of our capacity to assess John’s tactics as bishop with any validity. All is not lost, however. If we view the biases of the external sources for John’s episcopate not as a liability, but as an asset, we potentially find ourselves with access to a new dimension, namely how the bishops most intimately engaged in John’s deposition on both sides of the divide (hostile and partisan) themselves manipulated or attempted to manage the crisis. Precisely by treating this group of sources as propaganda and in particular by drawing into the analysis the homilies and letters attributed to John dismissed here for their inauthenticity, we find ourselves once again at a window that offers tantalising glimpses of the complex world of late-antique episcopal crisis management.