

Men and Women in the Early Christian Centuries

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Men and Women in the Early Christian Centuries

Edited by

Wendy Mayer and Ian J. Elmer

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Mayer and Ian J. Elmer
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Abbreviations

<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
<i>AJA</i>	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BSAC</i>	<i>Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur <i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
<i>CIG</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum</i>
<i>CIJ</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum</i>
CPG	Maurits Geerard, <i>Clavis Patrum Graecorum</i> , 5 vols (Turnhout 1974–1987)
CPL	Eligius Dekkers, <i>Clavis Patrum Latinorum</i> (3rd edn; Turnhout 1995)
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
<i>CTb</i>	<i>Codex Theodosianus</i>
ECS	Early Christian Studies
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ESV	English Standard Version (2001)
ET	English translation

FOTC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderts
GNO	<i>Gregorii Nysseni Opera</i> , various editors, 10 vols, multiple parts (Leiden 1958–2014)
GNT	Good News Translation (1976)
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Version (2004)
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>HibJ</i>	<i>Hibbert Journal</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IG	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
JAEMA	<i>Journal of the Australian Early Medieval Association</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
J ECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i>
JK	P. Jaffé, <i>Regesta Pontificum Romanorum ab condita ecclesia ad annum post Christum natum MCXCVIII</i> , vol. 1: <i>A. S. Petro ad a. MCXLIII</i> , rev. F. Kaltenbrunner (rev. edn; Leipzig 1885) 1–140
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i> , Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> , Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i> , Supplement Series

<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MES	The Message (1991–2000s)
NAB	New American Bible (1970, 1986, 1991)
NASB	New American Standard Bible (1971, 1995)
n.d.	no date
NEB	New English Bible (1961)
NET	New English Translation (1996)
NIV	New International Version (1984)
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible (1986)
NKJV	New King James Version (1982)
NovTSup	<i>Novum Testamentum</i> , Supplements
NPNF	P. Schaff (ed.), <i>A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i> (various editions)
n.s.	new series
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PL	Patrologia Latina
<i>PLRE</i>	<i>Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire</i> , 3 vols., ed. John R. Martindale et al. (Cambridge 1971, 1980, 1992)
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veterus Testamenti Graece
RSV	Revised Standard Version (1952)
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SC	Sources Chrétiennes

SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>StPat</i>	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TCH	The Transformation of the Classical Heritage
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TNIV	Today's New International Version (2001, 2005)
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Preface

A number of the articles in this volume started out as papers presented at the conference *Early Christian Centuries I*, held at the Melbourne campus of Australian Catholic University, 3–5 October 2013, on the theme *Men and Women in Early Christianity*. This inspired such a wealth of perspectives on the topic from the New Testament period into the eighth century and beyond, in addition to highlighting the continuing maturing and growth of scholarship in early Christian studies in the Asia-Pacific region, that it was decided to make this scholarship more widely available in a themed volume.

This is not the proceedings of the original conference. Far from it. Only those scholars who initially contributed papers directly on the theme were invited to contribute. Since that time many of the authors have substantially revised or augmented their arguments, producing more or less fresh studies. Other articles have been added to help redress the bias towards studies of women. All of the articles published were subjected to double blind peer review prior to acceptance. An introductory article tracing the history of scholarship on the topic and providing a select bibliography for further study has also been produced by us as editors of the volume in order to situate the articles it contains in context.

Wendy Mayer and Ian J. Elmer
August 2014

Table of Contents

Ian J. Elmer and Wendy Mayer	
Reading Men and Women in the Early Christian Centuries	1
Elaine M. Wainwright	
Threads of Tradition Weaving a Complex Web: The Challenge/s of Reading Women in Early Christianity.....	25
William Loader	
To God and Back: Projections of Male Grandeur.....	41
David C. Sim	
Men and Women in the Gospel of Matthew	55
Ian J. Elmer	
Neither Male nor Female: The Eschatological Family in Paul and Mark ...	73
Michael P. Theophilos	
New Evidence from the Papyri: The Portrayal of “the Woman” in Revelation	93
Basil Lourié	
The Liturgical Calendar in the <i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>	111
Miyako Demura	
The Relationship between Man and Woman in the Alexandrian Exegetical Tradition	135
Anna Silvas	
Basil of Caesarea and his View of Women in a Christian Anthropology....	149
Mary Sheather	
Macrina the Model Philosopher?.....	161

Pauline Allen	
Bishops and Ladies: How, if at all, to write to a Woman in Late Antiquity?	181
Raymond Laird	
It's all in the Mindset: John Chrysostom and the Great Moments of Personal Destiny.....	195
Wendy Mayer	
John Chrysostom and Women Revisited.....	211
Chris L. de Wet	
Virtue and the (Un)-making of Men in the Thought of John Chrysostom	227
Nozomu Yamada	
Equality of Men and Women in Free Will: The Narrative Technique of Pelagius' Letters and Pauline Commentaries.....	251
Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides	
Sexual Ethics and Unnatural Vice: From Zeno and Musonius Rufus to Augustine and Aquinas.....	271
Geoffrey D. Dunn	
Clerical Marriage in the Letters of Late-Antique Roman Bishops.....	293
Youhanna Nessim Youssef	
Paesia between the <i>Apophthegmata patrum</i> and the Liturgical Texts.....	315
Adam G. Cooper	
Nuptial Mystery or Sacrament of Sin? Maximus the Confessor on Marriage and Sexual Intimacy.....	331
Doru Costache	
Gender, Marriage, and Holiness in <i>Amb. Io.</i> 10 and 41.....	351

Barry M. Craig	
<i>Non sum dignus/digna</i> : Pressing out the Female Voice	373
Indices	
Biblical Citations	391
Primary Sources	395
General Index.....	399

John Chrysostom and Women Revisited

Wendy Mayer

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Status quaestionis

Whether in formal scholarship or in more popular literature, when we read both about the attitude towards women espoused by the prominent late-antique priest and bishop John Chrysostom (c. 350–407 CE) and about the role played by women in his life, opinion varies and a number of truisms that have a lengthy history stubbornly persist. These revolve around two central ideas: that his preaching on and/or theology of women are misogynistic and that only at Constantinople did two women – the empress Eudoxia and the fabulously wealthy ascetic widow and deacon, Olympias – play defining roles in his life. As an example of the long history of the first, in the late 1400s we find the author of the *Malleus Maleficarum* as part of his argument for why women engage in sorcery more than men appealing to the authority of Chrysostom for support, citing the latter’s alleged exegesis of Matt 19:10 (“it is better not to marry”) as follows:

What else is a woman but the enemy of friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary evil...an evil of nature, painted with nice color? Therefore, if it is a sin to send her away, then since it is appropriate to keep her, now there is truly an obligatory sort of torture in that we are either to commit acts of adultery in sending her away or have daily quarrels.¹

¹ H. Institoris, *Malleus Maleficarum* (Speyer 1490) Part 1 Q.6; trans. C.S. Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches: A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge 2009)

A not dissimilar view is evinced by Aideen Hartney in a more recent article, who reads his treatises on *subintroductae* as “bitter invective”.² In regard to the empress Eudoxia, despite a number of earlier studies that argue that she played a less prominent role than the sources portray,³ as recently as 2002 we see Teresa Urbainczyk and Claudia Tiersch continuing to frame her as a key antagonist.⁴ Of equal interest is the feminist scholarship of the 1970s and 80s, in which, despite the more sympathetic view of Anatole Moulard published in the 1920s,⁵ the spotlight shone on Olympias and on John’s praise of her asceticism coincidentally underwrote a negative view of his theology of marriage.⁶

162. The particular citation is not found among John’s genuine works and in fact derives from the roughly contemporaneous *Opus imperfectum in Matthaeum hom.* 32 (PG 56,803 26–33). Regarding the orthodoxy at that time of the negative view of women that underlies Part 1 Q. 6 and the identity of works of earlier mediaeval authors from which Institoris borrowed, in which many of his patristic sources were already cited, see Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches*, 26. The point here is that the attribution to Chrysostom of a negative view of marriage and of women was by the late fifteenth century already of long standing.

² A. Hartney, “Manly Women and Womanly Men: The *Subintroductae* and John Chrysostom”, in L. James (ed.), *Desire and Denial in Byzantium*, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies (Aldershot 1999) 41–48.

³ See F. Ludwig, *Der hl. Johannes Chrysostomus in seinem Verhältnis zum byzantinischen Hof* (Braunsberg 1883); J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, “Friends and Enemies of John Chrysostom”, in A. Moffatt (ed.), *Maistor. Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Bronning*, Byzantina Australiensia 5 (Canberra 1984) 85–111; R. Delmaire, “Les ‘lettres d’exil’ de Jean Chrysostome. études de chronologie et de prosopographie”, *Recherches Augustiniennes* 25 (1991) 71–180 at 83.

⁴ T. Urbainczyk, *Theodoret of Cyrhus. The Bishop and the Holy Man* (Ann Arbor, MI 2002) 12: “brought down by the deadly combination of Pulcheria’s grandmother and the machinations of a rival bishop...”; C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398–404). Weltbild und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 6 (Tübingen 2002) 202–268, who locates the “aktive Frömmigkeit” and “Initiative Eudoxias” “im Gegensatz zur Passivität des regierenden Kaisers”.

⁵ A. Moulard, *Saint Jean Chrysostome: Le défenseur du mariage et l’apôtre de la virginité* (Paris 1923).

⁶ See esp. E.A. Clark, “Sexual Politics in the Writings of John Chrysostom”, *Anglican Theological Review* 59 (1977) 3–20; *ead.*, “The Virginal *Politeia* and Plato’s *Republic*: John Chrysostom on Women and the Sexual Relation”, in *ead.*, *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends. Essays and Translations*, Studies in Women and Religion 2 (New York 1979) 1–34; *ead.*, “Theory and Practice in Late Ancient Asceticism: Jerome, Chrysostom, and Augustine”, *JFSR* 5.2 (1989) 25–46; and also *ead.*, “Friendship Between the Sexes: Classical Theory and Christian Practice”, in *Jerome, Chrysostom and Friends*, 35–105, and “Authority and

As recently as 2011 we see an associated set of ideas persisting in Wolf Liebeschuetz's latest book, where he arrives at the conclusion that "Chrysostom found it difficult to come to terms with women who exercised power outside the household, and...was obviously also deeply suspicious of female attractiveness", a "psychological handicap [that] proved difficult at Constantinople".⁷ A range of studies that have appeared in the past decade – among them the work of Blake Leyerle,⁸ Catherine Broc-Schmezer,⁹ Hans-Ulrich Wiemer,¹⁰ David Rylaarsdam,¹¹

Humility: A Conflict of Values in Fourth-century Female Monasticism", *Byzantinische Forschungen* 9 (1985) 17–33, repr. in *ead.*, *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith. Essays on Late Ancient Christianity*, Studies in Women and Religion 20 (Lewiston 1986) 209–228. Although more nuanced, this same approach underlies F. McLeod, *The Image of God in the Antiochene Tradition* (Washington, DC 1999) 198–211. For a negative view of John's teachings on marriage which anticipates feminist interpretation see G. Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN 1973) 81–90, whom he calls "savage in his indictment of remarriage" and accuses of "frequently fall[ing] into bad taste" (82). Although see C. Scaglione, "Ideale coniugale e familiare in san Giovanni Crisostomo", in R. Cantalamessa (ed.), *Etica sessuale e matrimonio nel cristianesimo delle origini*, Studia Patristica Mediolanensia 5 (Milan 1976) 273–422, who saw John as a staunch defender of marriage and of both male and female sexuality within its bonds.

⁷ J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose and John Chrysostom: Clerics between Desert and Empire* (Oxford 2011) 231, drawing on his discussion at 152–158 and 177–184.

⁸ B. Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives. John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage* (Berkeley–Los Angeles–London 2001), who defuses Hartney's charge of invective by revealing the rhetorical framing of the two treatises. See also J.A. Schroeder, "John Chrysostom's Critique of Spousal Violence", *JECJ* 12 (2004) 413–442, who argues that, despite the limitations of his view of marriage, John's support of the abused spouse is much stronger than that of his contemporaries.

⁹ C. Broc-Schmezer, *Les figures féminines du Nouveau Testament dans l'oeuvre de Jean Chrysostome*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Antiquité 185 (Turnhout 2011); *ead.*, "Les femmes de la bible, reflets de l'évolution de Jean Chrysostome: A propos d'un passage du *Traité sur la virginité* (XLVI, 2)", in P. Delage (ed.), *Les Pères de l'Église et les femmes, Actes du Colloque de la Rochelle, 6–7 sept. 2003*, Ars, Histoire et culture (Rochefort 2003) 150–168; *ead.*, "La figure d'Anne, mère de Samuel, dans l'oeuvre de Jean Chrysostome", *StPat* 41 (2006) 439–444; and *ead.*, "La femme de Job dans la prédication de Jean Chrysostome", *StPat* 37 (2001) 396–403.

¹⁰ H.-U. Wiemer, "Konkurrierende Geschlechterdiskurse in der Spätantike: der Lehrer Libanios und der Prediger Johannes Chrysostomos", in R. Rolling and C. Ulf (eds), *Frauen und Geschlechter. Bilder – Rollen – Realitäten in den Texten antiker Autoren der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Wien–Köln–Weimar 2006), vol. 2, 379–403. Wiemer does not so much negate negative readings of John's view of marriage and the role of women as situate it carefully within contemporary non-Christian rhetoric on the topic, with which it holds a number of key ideas in common.

¹¹ D. Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of his Theology and*

and my own¹² – serve to nullify or moderate various aspects of these views. The aim of the present study is thus not to overturn a uniformly hostile view of John’s attitude towards (non-ascetic) women – for the past sixteen centuries the readings of this have ranged between both ends of the spectrum – but to adduce a previously overlooked body of evidence that questions a number of assumptions behind the more negative views and to thus further undermine the monolithic set of ideas – some originating from the bitter schism that erupted over John’s deposition and exile,¹³ others perhaps from the initial positive reception of his views on marriage by western bishops labelled heretical¹⁴ – that has led to their persistence.

To set what this body of evidence has to tell us in perspective, it is helpful first to outline some less explicitly expressed premises that have become part of the received tradition regarding John’s relations with women. The focus in scholarship on John’s “friendship” with Olympias has been overwhelming.¹⁵ On the few occasions that this focus has been

Preaching (Oxford 2014), who in chapter 3 roots “[t]he strong moralistic themes in Chrysostom’s homilies...in his theological convictions about God’s gracious, patient adaptation throughout history”. The conclusions of Pak-Wah Lai, “John Chrysostom and the Hermeneutics of Exemplar Portraits”, unpub. PhD diss, Durham University, 2010, esp. 161–172, regarding the transcendence of human nature in Christian salvation in John’s theology of deification, likewise argue that within John’s soteriology gender is transcended.

¹² W. Mayer, “Constantinopolitan Women in Chrysostom’s Circle”, *VC* 53 (1999) 265–288; *ead.*, “Doing Violence to the Image of an Empress: The Destruction of Eudoxia’s Reputation”, in H. Drake (ed.), *Violence in Late Antiquity. Perceptions and Practices* (Aldershot 2006) 205–213; and *ead.*, “Media Manipulation as a Tool in Religious Conflict: Controlling the Narrative Surrounding the Deposition of John Chrysostom”, in W. Mayer and B. Neil (eds), *Religious Conflict from Early Christianity to the Rise of Islam*, AKG 121 (Berlin 2013) 151–168.

¹³ On this point see Mayer, “Media Manipulation”. Concerning the schism itself see now P. Van Nuffelen, “Palladius and the Johannite Schism”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64 (2013) 1–19.

¹⁴ E.g., Pelagius and Julian of Eclanum. In countering the views of Julian Augustine cites a number of John’s sermons that had become available to Julian and others in the West in Latin translation. See G. Bady, “Les traductions latines anciennes de Jean Chrysostome: motifs et paradoxes”, in S. Giovanni and B. Grévin (eds), *Formation et transmission des collections textuelles de l’Antiquité tardive au Moyen Âge central (IV^e – début XIII^e siècle)*, Collection de l’École Française de Rome (Rome 2008) 303–316.

¹⁵ Recent examples are R. Teja and M. Marcos, “Modelos de ascetismo femenino aristocrático en la época de Juan Crisóstomo: Constantinopla y Palestina”, in *Giovanni Crisostomo: Oriente e Occidente tra IV e V secolo*, *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 93

broadened and it has been allowed that in his life this relationship was not unique, it has been assumed that for John similar relationships were restricted to a narrow range of women – at the very least, ascetics;¹⁶ more probably, deacons¹⁷ – and, moreover, that he developed relationships with this exclusive group only upon his arrival in Constantinople.¹⁸ It has been assumed equally that the Antiochene women among his correspondents fall into this same category (i.e., that they are ascetic and his relationship with them was initiated during his Constantinopolitan years). Views that admit a change or progression in attitude towards women on John's part do not fundamentally alter this set of assumptions. They situate his misogynistic theology during his years at Antioch, locating its origins in his enthusiasm for asceticism, and suppose a modification of his views after his arrival in Constantinople effected by personal experience, namely his development of actual relationships with women, meaning Olympias.¹⁹ Another, not unrelated view, posits a juvenile fervour in his writings and preaching for the life of virginity, while his mature pastoral direction is seen to be expressed in virulent invective against the wealth, vanity, vainglory and pride of women.²⁰ This mature pastoral concern for

(Rome 2005) 619–625; C. Badilita, “Figures et biographies de femmes aux IV^e et V^e siècles”, in *ibid.*, 627–648; M. Cricovean, “Reprezentanti de seama ai epocii patristice: Sfântul Ioan Gura de Aur și diaconita Olimpiada”, *Altarul Banatului* 18/10–12 (2007) 54–62; F. Rivas Rebaque, “Vidas paralelas: Olimpia (ca. 360–410) y Pulqueria. *Auctoritas versus potestas*”, in C. Bernabé Ubieta (ed.), *Mujeres con autoridad en el cristianismo primitivo* (Estella [Navarra] 2007) 125–181. Literature on John's correspondence similarly disproportionately addresses the corpus of letters addressed to her. See, e.g., the article by Pauline Allen in this volume.

¹⁶ Clark, “Friendship Between the Sexes”, and “Theory and Practice”.

¹⁷ C. Militello, “Amicizia tra asceti e ascete”, in U. Mattioli (ed.), *La donna nel pensiero cristiano antico* (Genova 1992) 279–304; C. Broc, “Le rôle des femmes dans l'Église de Constantinople d'après la correspondance de Jean Chrysostome”, *StPat* 27 (1993) 150–154. In addition to lengthy sections on Olympias and Eudoxia, Henri Dacier, *Saint Jean Chrysostome et la femme chrétienne au IV^e siècle de l'église grecque* (Paris 1907), devotes short chapters to John's mother, Anthusa, and a number of deacons. No other women receive mention.

¹⁸ Clark, “Friendship Between the Sexes”, 46, and “Theory and Practice”, 37 n. 50.

¹⁹ Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition*, 83; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops. Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford 1990) 179–180; R. Brändle with V. Jegher-Bucher, art. “Johannes Chrysostomus I”, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 18 (1997) 426–503 at 474.

²⁰ C. Militello, *La concezione teologica del femminile secondo Giovanni Crisostomo* (Palermo 1980)

restoring such women to the *koinonia* of the body of Christ and the church is seen as distinct from, but not incompatible with his mature theology on the nature of woman and her role in marital relationships.²¹

John's correspondence with women in Antioch

It is in this light that I turn to an analysis of a neglected subcorpus within John's 237 letters from exile.²² Contrary to the persons of Eudoxia and Olympias, in regard to whom it is becoming increasingly clear that the images projected in the primary sources tell us more about the authors' agenda than about the women themselves,²³ the

57.

²¹ Although note that in regard to the latter, too, opinion remains varied, particularly in regard to his teaching on creation and the subjection of woman to man. These issues have been raised and debated with particular interest among Greek Orthodox scholars in North America. For more positive readings see V. Karras, "Male Domination of Woman in the Writings of Saint John Chrysostom", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36 (1991) 131–140; and D.C. Ford, *Women and Men in the Early Church: The Full Views of St. John Chrysostom* (South Canaan, PA 1996). For a more negative reading see Nonna V. Harrison, "The Inevitability of Hermeneutics: David C. Ford on St John Chrysostom", *SVTQ* 44 (2000) 195–205, and *ead.*, "Women and the Image of God according to St. John Chrysostom", in P. Blowers *et al.* (eds), *In Lordly Eloquence/In dominico eloquio: Essays on Patristic Exegesis in Honor of Robert Louis Wilken* (Grand Rapids, MI 2002) 259–279. See also E. Pagels, "The Politics of Paradise: Augustine's Exegesis of Genesis 1–3 versus that of John Chrysostom", *Harvard Theological Review* 78 (1985) 67–99; and, more recently, E.A. Clark, "Genesis 1-3 and Gender Dilemmas: The Case of John Chrysostom", in B. Feichtinger, S. Lake, and H. Seng (eds), *Körper und Seele: Aspekte spätantiker Anthropologie* (München 2006) 159–180. J. Heaney-Hunter, "'Disobedience and Curse' or 'Affection of the Soul?': John Chrysostom, Marriage, and Sin", *Diakonia* 24 (1991) 171–186 – based on her unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Links between Sexuality and Original Sin in the Writings of John Chrysostom and Augustine", Fordham University, NY 1988; and M.-F. Polidoulis Kapsalis, "John Chrysostom's Interpretation of *Kephale* in 1 Corinthians 11:3–16", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 49 (2004) 321–356 – based in turn on her unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Image as Authority in the Writings of John Chrysostom", University of Toronto, St Michael's College, 2001 – nuance this debate. The most recent discussion of John's views on this point, B.H. Dunning, "Chrysostom's Serpent: Animality and Gender in the *Homilies on Genesis*", *JECs*, forthcoming, agrees with Harrison's more pessimistic conclusion.

²² For the limitations of this corpus see W. Mayer, "The Ins and Outs of the Chrysostom Letter-Collection: New Ways of Looking at a Limited Corpus", in B. Neil and P. Allen (eds), *Collecting Early Christian Letters: From the Apostle Paul to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

²³ Regarding Eudoxia see Mayer, "Doing Violence", and "Media Manipulation". This is

relationship that operated between John and women resident in or near Antioch is one area where we can recover more rather than less information than has previously been supposed. During his exile he writes to seven women from that location (Carteria, Adolia, Asyncritia, Chalcidia, Bassiana, Namaea, and Severa). Of those seven, three (Carteria, Bassiana and Severa) are from the highest social strata,²⁴ another three are of an only slightly lower rank (Adolia, Asyncritia and Chalcidia),²⁵ and the status of one (Namaea) is unknown.²⁶ With the exception of Namaea, all of the women are closely associated with Antiochene clergy who visit John at Cucusus (see Fig. 1).²⁷ Adolia, Carteria and Severa move in the same circle as the presbyter Libanius²⁸ (a circle which includes the presbyter Constantius 1²⁹ and John's close friend Helpidius,³⁰ bishop of Laodicea). Chalcidia and Asyncritia are associated with the presbyter Constantius 2³¹ (the candidate displaced as bishop of Antioch by Porphyrius), who moves in the same circle as the brothers and decurions, Marcianus and Marcellinus.³² Carteria is also linked into a circle connected to the deacon Theodotus,³³ which includes Bassiana, Marcellinus I³⁴ and the lector Theodotus,³⁵ who is in

consistent with the pessimistic conclusion eventually reached by Elizabeth Clark in "The Lady Vanishes: Dilemmas of a Feminist Historian after the Linguistic Turn", *CH* 67 (1998) 1–31.

²⁴ See Delmaire, "Les lettres", 114, 116, 158.

²⁵ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 103, 112, 119, describes Adolia and Asyncritia as women of quality, and Chalcidia (who is closely connected to Asyncritia) as from a good family.

²⁶ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 144.

²⁷ For the significance of this point and further background see W. Mayer, "Patronage, Pastoral Care and the Role of the Bishop at Antioch", *VC* 55 (2001) 58–70, and "John Chrysostom: Deconstructing the Construction of an Exile", *Theologische Zeitschrift* 62/2 (2006) 248–258.

²⁸ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 137–138.

²⁹ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 120.

³⁰ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 130–131.

³¹ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 120–121.

³² Delmaire, "Les lettres", 139–140.

³³ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 165–166 s.v. Theodotus 3; and see *ep.* 44 (PG 52,633–634), which makes it clear that Theodotus is situated at the centre of a particular circle of Johannites at Antioch, which includes Carteria.

³⁴ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 138.

³⁵ Delmaire, "Les lettres", 166–167 s.v. Theodotus 4.

turn the son of the ex-consul Theodotus.³⁶ The women, and the clergy associated with them, it appears, move in elevated circles at Antioch.

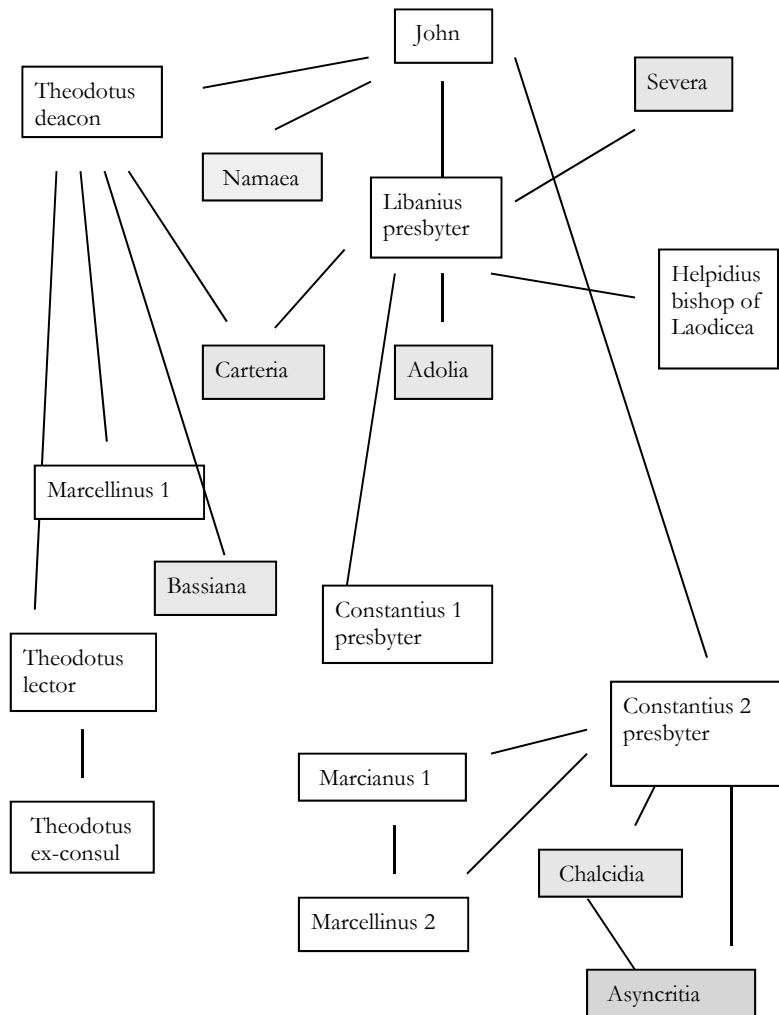


Fig. 1 Network of relationships evidenced in his letters between the women in Antioch with whom John corresponded and the Antiochene clergy who visited him in exile in Armenia.

³⁶ Delmaire, “Les lettres”, 164–165 s.v. Theodotus 2.

There is, moreover, no evidence that any of the women are deacons or ascetics,³⁷ and several indications that his relationship with at least four of them is of long standing, most likely predating the period of his episcopate at Constantinople.³⁸ Only in the case of Severa do we learn that John has never met her.³⁹ He initiates a correspondence with her because the presbyter Libanius has indicated to him that she might be able to further his cause. Of the four women with whom he has a long-standing pre-existing relationship (Carteria, Adolia, Chalcidia and Asyncritia), Carteria acts as his patron in exile in much the same way as Olympias appears to have done. She sends gifts, including medications to alleviate his ill health.⁴⁰ He in turn exhibits greater than usual care not to offend her.⁴¹ In a letter to her written in October 404 (the second surviving letter dated to that month) he indicates that at this point she is writing to him frequently. There he also indicates that she was responsible for persuading the presbyter Libanius to journey to his place of exile in Cucusus via Laodicea, an action which facilitated communication among the members of that particular extended network of supporters, most particularly the bishop Helpidius.⁴²

With Adolia John adopts an unusually familiar tone. In his first surviving letter to her he tells her that her problems are her own fault and indicates that he is not only familiar with them but has given the same advice to her many times before.⁴³ It is also noteworthy that by November 404 (the fourth month of exile) he claims to have written six letters to her,⁴⁴ only two less than the number he has sent by this point

³⁷ Adolia has been identified with the Adolia, sister of Hosia, mentioned by Palladius in the *Historia Lausiaca* 41 (ed. Butler 1898, 128; see E.D. Hunt, "Palladius of Helenopolis: A Party and its Supporters in the Church of the Late Fourth Century", *JTS* n.s. 24 [1973] 456–480 at 476), which is by no means certain. Even if the identification is accepted, Palladius in fact indicates that she did not pursue the asceticism of her sister, and the letters to her (In Chrys., *ep.* 133, 231, 57, 179, 52, 33) suggest likewise that she was secular.

³⁸ For both the evidence which supports this conclusion and a more in depth statement of this case see Mayer, "Patronage".

³⁹ In Chrys., *ep.* 229; PG 52,737.

⁴⁰ *Epp.* 232, 34; PG 52,738 27–31 *a.i.* and 629 5–15 *a.i.*

⁴¹ *Ep.* 232; PG 52,738–739.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ep.* 133; PG 52,691–692.

⁴⁴ See *ep.* 179; PG 52,713. Three of the preceding five survive in the letter collection (*ep.* 133, 57, and 231).

in time to Olympias.⁴⁵ That the remaining two, Asyncritia and Chalcidia, are readily identified within the region of Antioch as close and long-standing supporters of John is indicated in the letters he writes to them after the promulgation of the edict of 18 November 404.⁴⁶ The two women had been targeted in the persecution of his followers in that city and were suffering in ways that echo those experienced by Pentadia and Olympias at Constantinople.⁴⁷ As with Adolia, John is familiar with Chalcidia's personal situation, in particular the difficulties experienced by her earlier in life.⁴⁸ Recognition that his relationship with these women can scarcely have been initiated from Constantinople and established to this degree via correspondence alone (that is, that these relationships are as intimate as they are because he has maintained already existing relationships throughout the period of his episcopate) sheds significantly new light on his relations with women. It indicates that he had already had experience as a client of women of high social standing prior to his arrival at Constantinople, that he was used to counselling women of the upper echelons in person pastorally, and that he valued those women sufficiently (either personally or because of their importance to his ministry) to work at sustaining his relationship with them even though he was no longer resident at Antioch – and is, indeed, unlikely to have thought that he would ever return. The traceable networks between these women, other (male) members of the Antiochene aristocracy, and the three clergy who visit John support this reading. That clergy–patron relationships were normative at Antioch adds weight to the likelihood that as a presbyter in that city John himself had as a client been linked into a particular circle or circles of elite men and women.⁴⁹ This is a markedly different picture from the John who is distant from women until his arrival at Constantinople, let alone the John of Liebeschuetz's psychologising analysis who “found it difficult to

⁴⁵ *Epp.* 1–8 *ad Olymp.*; SC 13 bis, 106–216. For the dates of both sets of letters see Delmaire, “Les lettres”, 176–180.

⁴⁶ *CTb* 16.4.6; SC 497, 224, mandating excommunication of those who refuse communion with the bishops Arsacius of Constantinople, Theophilus of Alexandria, and Porphyrius of Antioch (adversaries of John).

⁴⁷ *Epp.* 40, 29, 105, 106; PG 52, 632, 627, 664–645.

⁴⁸ See *ep.* 105.

⁴⁹ This is not surprising, if we accept that prior to being elected bishop of Constantinople John was being groomed to replace Flavian as bishop of Antioch. See Mayer, “Patronage”, 61–69.

come to terms with women who exercised power outside the household". It also challenges the image of a John who in his years at Antioch extended his admiration only to women who pursued the ascetic life.

Placing this correspondence in perspective

In order to avoid over-interpreting the importance of these findings, we need to shift our focus back to the broader perspective of John's correspondence. Two facts are indisputable. John's surviving body of correspondence with Olympias contains letters which are in the main considerably longer than any addressed to the remainder of his correspondents, male or female;⁵⁰ and, given the constraints of the corpus, it appears that along with the bishop Helpidius of Laodicea she is one of only two people with whom he sustained correspondence throughout the full length of his exile.⁵¹ Delmaire interprets this to mean that the two are the only friends who over the course of his exile remain loyal to John.⁵² The impression that John's relationship with Olympias is particularly close is sustained by a comparison between his correspondence with each of these two "friends". His letters to Helpidius are comparatively brief in length, relatively formulaic in style and fewer in number (six, compared to seventeen).⁵³ John's body of correspondence with Olympias is larger, longer, less formulaic and on occasion more personal. He at times quotes back to her what she has written to him,⁵⁴ a tactic which he rarely pursues in other letters.⁵⁵ In *ep.*

⁵⁰ See *ep.* 7–10, 13 and 17 *ad Olymp.*; SC 13 bis, 132–305, 328–349 and 368–389. In length, the remainder of his correspondence averages a single column in Migne.

⁵¹ See R. Delmaire, "Jean Chrysostome et ses 'amis' d'après le nouveau classement de sa Correspondance", *StPat* 33 (1997) 302–313 at 310, and also the chronological outline of John's correspondence (311–313). Note, however, that this should not be interpreted as indicating that other supporters were not still aiding John at this point. In *ep. 17.b ad Olymp.* (SC 13bis, 370), written in spring 407, he indicates that he has recently received medication from the lady Syncretica and asks Olympias to arrange that more be sent. This may suggest that a letter accompanied the package and that what survives conveys a false impression of the number and diversity of the letters that continued to arrive.

⁵² Delmaire, "Chrysostome et ses 'amis'", 303, 310.

⁵³ See *ep.* 114, 230, 25, 138, 131 and 142; PG 52, 669–671, 737, 626, 695, 690, 696–697.

⁵⁴ *Epp.* 7 and 9 *ad Olymp.*; SC 13 bis, 156.49–50, 232.11–13 and 17–19, 234.41–42.

⁵⁵ There exists only a single example in a letter to a male addressee, *ep.* 186 (to Alypius, PG 52, 716). On Alypius' status (a functionary of high standing at Constantinople) see

9 he confides what happened at Caesarea in detail⁵⁶ and then asks her not to relate this version to anyone,⁵⁷ suggesting that she is one of only a few people to whom he feels he can safely debrief.⁵⁸

Again this evidence needs to be placed in context, however. Despite the best efforts of John's supporters⁵⁹ and the compilers of his letter collection, we should not suppose that Olympias was the sole woman of this status in Constantinople to assume either the mantle of wealthy female patron of the incumbent bishop or the position of a central node in Nicene Johannite ecclesiastical networks. That is, when we read his letters more carefully, we find that there was at least one other woman who played a similar role. Again, admittedly, Olympias does play a central role in ecclesiastical networks and affairs and this emerges indisputably in the surviving letters. John expects her to pass on directly to the bishop Cyriacus his excuses for not writing;⁶⁰ he utilises her resources as a conduit for correspondence to the bishop Maruthas in Persia, expects her to find out for him news of the mission there, and leaves Maruthas' situation in her hands.⁶¹ The request by the Gothic ruler for a replacement bishop, and direction of the deacon Moduarius who conveyed that request, are handed over to Olympias to do with them what she can.⁶² However, in the same letter John indicates that it is not Olympias to whom he entrusts handling the situation

Delmaire, "Chrysostome et ses 'amis'", 306–307.

⁵⁶ For the duplicitous behaviour of Caesarea's bishop, Pharetrios, and the hostility of the local monks see J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth. The Story of John Chrysostom – Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (London 1995) 256–257.

⁵⁷ SC 13 bis, 220–230.

⁵⁸ John expects that the praetorian guard will relate the events on their return and in a letter written to Paeanius at Constantinople dating to the same period (end of Nov. 404) assumes that this is what has occurred (*ep.* 204; PG 52,725 39–45). To Paeanius, John says that Pharetrios' behaviour was unforgivable and likewise tells him to keep this to himself so as to avoid aggravating the situation. Regarding the date of both *ep.* 9 *ad Olymp.* and *ep.* 204 see Delmaire, "Les lettres", 147, 149.

⁵⁹ See Palladius, *Dial.* 17, SC 341,348.195–196, who says that Olympias was a major patron of John's predecessor Nectarius, to the point that the latter took her advice in ecclesiastical affairs. That the same privileged relationship continued under John is suggested by *Vita Olymp.* 8; SC 13 bis, 422. Both sources are at pains to suggest that Olympias held a unique status within the church at Constantinople, styling her as its bishop's chief patron and confidante.

⁶⁰ *Ep.* 4 *ad Olymp.*; SC 13 bis, 118.

⁶¹ *Ep.* 9 *ad Olymp.*; SC 13 bis, 236.

⁶² *Ep.* 9 *ad Olymp.*; SC 13 bis, 236–238.

regarding the bishop Heracleides,⁶³ but another female deacon of elite status, Pentadia,⁶⁴ who, along with Olympias and other clergy considered part of John's inner circle, was subsequently arrested, tried on charges of arson, and imprisoned.⁶⁵ It is also noteworthy that in a letter to her written in the winter of 404/5 in response to news that Pentadia planned to join him in exile, John describes her as the mainstay at Constantinople and in an almost panicked tone heaps up reasons why it is better that she remains in the city to support his cause.⁶⁶ Similarly, when he writes to both Olympias and Pentadia in summer 405, by which time Olympias was herself in exile in Nicomedia and John had received no direct communication from Pentadia for some time, he employs the same hyperbolic tone to describe the actions of both women, indicating that these were far-reaching.⁶⁷ It is worth noting further that, just as John wrote almost as frequently to Adolia at Antioch in the first five months of exile as to Olympias, by mid August 404 John had written with the same frequency to another woman of status at Constantinople, Theodora, whom he expected to be able to influence other sympathetic individuals with the power to do so to change his assigned place of exile.⁶⁸

Conclusions

In the end, what this body of letters (his correspondence with women at both Antioch and Constantinople) hints at, I would suggest, is a *modus operandi* consistent across both locations in which John played out his clerical career. A consequence of this reading is that the perceived differences in how he viewed women and in the roles he assigned them in the day-to-day running of the church's affairs at Antioch and Constantinople are seen to be a matter of degree and to prove more

⁶³ For the background to this see D.S. Katos, *Palladius of Helenopolis: The Origenist Advocate*, OECS (Oxford 2011) 27–28.

⁶⁴ *Ep. 9 ad Olymp.* 4; SC 13 bis, 234.

⁶⁵ See *Ep.* 94, PG 52,657–659, which, at almost two columns, is a longer than usual letter.

⁶⁶ *Ep.* 104; PG 52,663–664.

⁶⁷ *Ep.* 185; PG 52,716; and *ep. 13 ad Olymp.* 1.a; SC 13 bis, 328.

⁶⁸ See *ep.* 120, PG 52,675, where he says that he has sent three or four letters in advance of that one and makes the plea for her to influence those in power. Regarding her status see Delmaire, "Les lettres", 161.

circumstantial than substantial. The women of Antioch's elite belonged to the curial class of a provincial capital, with its more limited networks – although Antioch's economic role regionally and status as an administrative centre for the diocese of Oriens had a slight magnifying effect.⁶⁹ The women in his circles at Constantinople were of senatorial status, with, at least in Olympias' case, substantially more wealth, power, and extensive patronal networks at their disposal. Many of the members of this second group – whether enemy or friend – can in fact be shown to have moved within imperial court circles.⁷⁰ When we examine the ecclesiastical domain a similar differentiation in degree, not substance, becomes evident. The women at Antioch moved in the same circles as and had at their direction neo-Nicene presbyters and deacons;⁷¹ the women at Constantinople moved in the same circles as and had at their direction, in addition to Nicene deacons and presbyters, an extended circle of bishops. These disparities are a matter of scale, attributable to the difference in status of John at each respective city (presbyter v. bishop) and in the status itself of each city (provincial v. imperial capital).⁷²

If we set these circumstantial differences aside, there are a large number of similarities. What is consistent across his letters to women at both cities is a degree of familiarity with their households, health, and

⁶⁹ On the status of the city see W. Mayer and P. Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300–638 CE)*, *Late Antique History and Religion* 5 (Leuven 2012) 1–2.

⁷⁰ See Mayer, “Constantinopolitan Women”.

⁷¹ In *ep.* 232 it is Carteria who is responsible for the presbyter Libanius' trip to Cucusus, while in *ep.* 76 (PG 52,649) John makes it clear that it is Chalcidia who is putting pressure on him to ensure that the presbyter Constantius 2 returns to Antioch, where the Johannites are suffering. In *ep.* 43, PG 52,633, he implies that the deacon Theodotus is at Bassiana's command.

⁷² This is particularly evident in the expanded ecclesiastical networks available to elite women in the imperial capital, where a large number of bishops from eastern sees were constantly visiting and in residence as they sought senatorial and imperial largesse for local projects. See W. Mayer, “At Constantinople, how often did John Chrysostom Preach? Addressing Assumptions about the Workload of a Bishop”, *Sacris Erudiri* 40 (2001) 83–105 at 101; but note the cautionary comments of Neil McLynn, “Two Romes, Beacons in the Whole World: Canonizing Constantinople”, in L. Grig and G. Kelly (eds), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity*, *Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity* (Oxford 2012) 345–363. This was not the case at Antioch, where visiting clergy tended to be either subordinate to the authority of Antioch's bishop or regional, a situation further complicated by the Antiochene schism.

personal problems.⁷³ Their patronage is important to him and something he is at pains to sustain.⁷⁴ Some exhibit considerable concern for his personal wellbeing and he shares with them his frustration at the lack in Cucusus of doctors.⁷⁵ A number are the direct target of persecution by anti-Johannites, which indicates that they were publicly identified in each city as key Johannite supporters.⁷⁶ The acknowledgement of these points, in addition to the recognition that the patronage of these women was sufficiently important to John for him to sustain it over a long period of time and at a substantial distance – or, if one insists on a more conservative reading of these letters, to, at the very least, re-awaken these relationships at a time of crisis – fills a lacuna and effects a further shift in our perception of his relations with women. Just as his preaching and theology are increasingly being shown to be sympathetic in most respects towards women, this overlooked evidence of his actions and attitude towards women at the day-to-day level disproves the charges both of misogyny and of an exclusive interest in ascetic women.⁷⁷ In the same way, the value of reading through and beyond the prominence (falsely?) accorded the empress Eudoxia and the deaconess Olympias in the propaganda that circulated in the wake of John's exile is usefully demonstrated.

⁷³ Cf. *epp.* 33 to Adolia, 105 to Chalcidia (Antioch) and *epp.* 117 to Theodora, *12 ad Olymp.* (Constantinople).

⁷⁴ E.g. *epp.* 32, 43, 98–99, 104, 178, 185.

⁷⁵ Cf. *ep.* 34 to Carteria, 105 to Chalcidia (Antioch) and *ep.* 15 *ad Olymp.*

⁷⁶ E.g. *epp.* 29, 40, 94, 96, 104, and *14 ad Olymp.*

⁷⁷ That the bulk of the women in his close circle at Constantinople (Olympias, Amprucla, Silvina, Pentadia, Euthalia) are ascetic widows and virgins (see Broc, “Le rôle des femmes”) is again just as likely a consequence of the ecclesiastical climate peculiar to Constantinople as a matter of John's personal choice.

