

# RECONCEIVING RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

New Views from the Formative Centuries  
of Christianity

*Edited by Wendy Mayer  
and Chris L. de Wet*

First published 2018

ISBN: 978-1-138-22991-4 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-38766-6 (ebk)

4

## RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, RADICALISM, AND SEXUAL EXCEPTIONALISM IN THE RHETORIC OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

*Chris L. de Wet*

(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

DOI: 10.4324/9781315387666-6

The OA chapter is funded by: Australian Research Council



ROUTLEDGE

Routledge

Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

RELIGIOUS CONFLICT,  
 RADICALISM, AND SEXUAL  
 EXCEPTIONALISM IN  
 THE RHETORIC OF JOHN  
 CHRYSOSTOM

*Chris L. de Wet*

**Monster–terrorist–fag: religious conflict and sexual exceptionalism<sup>1</sup>**

The very nature of religious conflict is intersectional, as theorists and scholars from feminist, postcolonial, and queer studies have demonstrated, and along with instances of religious violence, there are numerous invisible operations of religious conflict at work. Joseph Marchal rightly emphasises that “sexual and gender norms interact profoundly with racial, ethnic, national, and colonial formations.”<sup>2</sup> Relying on the works of Jasbir Puar<sup>3</sup> and Marchal, I wish to explore the locus where sexuality, specifically the formation of masculinity, intersects with religious conflict, notably in the formation of late antique religious radicalism, using the homilies of John Chrysostom (AD 347–407) as a case in point. When I speak of religious radicals and radicalism, I refer to individuals who structure their religious beliefs, practices, and identity in terms of singularity and contrast, who are prone to religious conflict and even religious violence in some extreme cases; singularity of religious identity assumes a “pure” form of the individual’s religion, perceived not to be diluted by what seems to be outside influence, and contrast refers to the creation and structuring of one’s religion as contrary to what outsiders believe.<sup>4</sup> This making of a masculine religious radicalism in Chrysostom is perhaps in response to the fact that many people in his society, as Isabella Sandwell has shown,<sup>5</sup> did not adopt such a puristic view of religious identity, but preferred to intermingle with different religious groups. In this sense, Sandwell has argued that religious identity in late antiquity should not be seen as fixed and clearly delineated, but rather as a *habitus*, in Pierre Bourdieu’s sense.<sup>6</sup>

In terms of modern-day religious conflict, this pluriform manifestation of religious and social identity has been referred to as the so-called grey zone:<sup>7</sup> a discursive (and/or physical) space where non-radicalised members of a religious group find themselves, usually characterised by a form of society or government

in which the adherence to religious moral codes receives less prominence.<sup>8</sup> Grey zones are often the areas in which conflict, both discursive and physical, take place, since polarised members of religious groups aim to increase their ranks by winning over (or eliminating) members from the grey zone.<sup>9</sup> In a study engaging with religious conflict and notions of “just peace” in Augustine’s thought, Serena Sharma highlights the importance of identifying, problematising, and addressing historical discursive grey zones.<sup>10</sup> This study follows a similar approach, with a focus on radicalisation through sexual exceptionalism.

In what way do sexuality and formulations of masculinity impact on religious conflict? To make sense of this question, one needs to delineate the concept of sexual exceptionalism. Jasbir Puar, in her enlightening work, *Terrorist Assemblages*,<sup>11</sup> explains that sexual “[e]xceptionalism paradoxically signals distinction from (to be unlike, dissimilar) as well as excellence (imminence, superiority), suggesting a departure from yet mastery of linear teleologies of progress.”<sup>12</sup> Puar contrasts Muslim and Sikh *bodies* as alterior bodies, corporealities of otherness, which are racially constructed as “terrorists” and sexually constructed as “fags,” with the bodies of exceptional and elite citizens, whose bodies are constructed as patriotic, including homonationals. The sexually exceptional bodies of patriotic citizens are contrasted with the sexually perverse body of the “monster-terrorist-fag,” as Puar calls it. This monster-terrorist-fag must be conquered, judged, and killed by patriotic bodies – the necropolitics of sexual exceptionalism.<sup>13</sup> Marchal is one of the first to successfully apply Puar’s notion of sexual exceptionalism and the model of the monster-terrorist-fag to biblical literature, specifically the Pauline literary corpus, and thereby shows the model’s usefulness not only for understanding terrorism in modern, especially Western, contexts, but also in ancient contexts. Although the invention of terrorism and the terrorist is a modern one at best, Marchal’s study demonstrates that the study of sexual exceptionalism and religious radicalism in antiquity may assist us in feeling the discursive tremors of the process of inventing terrorism already present in antiquity.

According to Walter Laqueur, Chrysostom’s homilies against the Jews were widely cited and even reprinted during the Nazi reign of Germany.<sup>14</sup> The relative ease with which these homilies were transmitted to a Nazi context highlights the potency of past discursive tremors of sexual exceptionalism and the monster-terrorist-fag syndrome. The formation of masculinity in terms of sexual exceptionalism and perversity therefore has a leading role in religious conflict. Marchal states: “Terrorist populations are depicted as failed men, deviant and perverted sexually and racially, but also religiously: their religious difference is marked as part of the reason for their perverse activities.”<sup>15</sup> Two important strategies are at play in the sexual exceptionalism of religious conflict, namely a) inclusion, and b) teratogenisation (that is, making monsters of one’s enemies). While engaging with Puar’s work, what I will do in this study is investigate how Chrysostom utilises these two strategies in the making of religious difference and sexual exceptionalism, and thereby highlight some of the more pervasive strategies of religious conflict in late antiquity. By exploring these two discursive strategies of

sexual exceptionalism, the dynamics between religious conflict, radicalism, and masculinity will become more evident in Chrysostom's thought.

### **A cautionary tale: sexual exceptionalism and the politics of inclusion**

Ironically, inclusion is a very important strategy in the affirmation of sexual exceptionalism and, more generally, religious conflict. Puar deconstructs U.S. homonationalism (as opposed to the terrorist-fag) as an example to demonstrate this point:

For contemporary forms of U.S. nationalism and patriotism, the production of gay and queer bodies is crucial to the deployment of nationalism, insofar as these perverse bodies reiterate heterosexuality as the norm but also because certain domesticated homosexual bodies provide ammunition to reinforce nationalist projects.<sup>16</sup>

By adopting a stance of homonationalism, according to Puar, U.S. nationalism projects itself to outsiders as "inclusive" and "tolerant," yet it insulates itself and manages its agenda and registers of inclusion internally by sanctioning technologies of heteronormalisation for the sake of formerly perverse bodies.<sup>17</sup> In the schema of homonationalism, not all homosexual bodies are included, but only those subject to the technologies of heteronormalisation. The inclusion of some only serves to exclude others more intensively. Marchal shows a similar strategy of inclusion in the context of Paul's outreach to the so-called heathens. Only those heathens who have adopted Paul's own technologies of normalisation, e.g., baptism, not being circumcised, and not taking part in *porneia*, are afforded the luxury of inclusion.<sup>18</sup>

Similar strategies of inclusion are present in Chrysostom, and as Puar and Marchal highlight in their cautionary tales of inclusion, we should read inclusion and tolerance, in the context of religious conflict, as indicative of perhaps a more general strategy of exclusion. The politics of inclusion functions on an ethnic, social, and religious level in Chrysostom's works. As far as ethnicity is concerned, I am still convinced that Chrysostom's mission to the Goths, for instance, should be understood within this framework of inclusion for the sake of exclusion.<sup>19</sup> The inclusion and normalisation of Gothic Christians by means of their adopting Nicene orthodoxy and especially the monastic life may have served, directly or indirectly, as a safeguard, albeit minor, against a looming political and religious crisis. Christians from various Gothic populations in Constantinople would be classified as a "grey zone" in the discursive sense. The barbarian identity of the Goths is transformed into one of Christian masculinity, especially thanks to the prevalence of Gothic monks. The inclusion of normalised Goths only serves to exclude ethnic others, such as heterodox Goths, Jews, and "Greeks," more intensively.

Chrysostom's homily to the Goths contains numerous sexual and ethnic connotations. The central virtue needed for the normalisation of barbarian identity is self-mastery, that is *sōphrosynē*. Chrysostom sacrifices traditional external (and ethnic) markers of masculinity in favour of the new internal marker of masculinity, which is self-mastery. At the very start of the homily, Chrysostom contrasts the physical, almost leonine appearance of the barbarians, with the traditional manly image of the Greek philosopher.<sup>20</sup> While the beard of the philosopher functions as a traditional symbol of masculinity, Chrysostom explains, the barbarians in his audience (the Scythians, Thracians, Sarmatians, and so on) do not present this traditional manly demeanour – rather, “their demeanours resemble closely those of lions rather than men.”<sup>21</sup> “But our values are not of such a nature,” Chrysostom continues, “they do not lie in matters of appearance [*en schēmati*], but those matters of our philosophy reside in self-mastery [*sōphrosynē*].”<sup>22</sup>

In this sense, Chrysostom restructures the external habitual politics of masculinity in order to more closely align internal psychic aspects of masculinity. Chrysostom is not interested in having barbarians assume the Greek philosopher's beard; they must assume the Christian philosopher's soul. We find here the Christianisation of the barbarian *psychē*. The virtue of *sōphrosynē* in Chrysostom is crucial, and encompasses a very broad semantic scope, denoting a character of moderation and abstinence, sound mental and spiritual health, and self-discipline.<sup>23</sup> It is particularly related to one's sexuality in Chrysostom's thought. In this sense, *sōphrosynē* also denotes a sense of modesty, discipline, and sexual purity. In this discourse, sexual purity is parallel with religious purity. This parallelism is affirmed in Chrysostom's next statement, namely that to be concerned with external beauty is akin to prostitution – rather, like a noble and honourable young maiden covers her nakedness to vouchsafe her dignity, so too does the church shun physical beauty and a masculine habitus in favour of internal beauty that is desirable in the eyes of God.<sup>24</sup> Paradoxically, the chaste Christian maiden, the virgin, now is the ultimate symbol of Christian masculinity because of her *sōphrosynē*. Rather than sporting the philosopher's beard on the outside, the barbarian must don the modesty of the virgin on the inside. *Sōphrosynē* means inclusion, *porneia* is exclusion, and having *sōphrosynē* affords barbarians the greatest measure of Christian masculinity and social dignity.

But the assumption is further that those who do not subscribe to the moral standards of *sōphrosynē* are akin to prostitutes. So although, on the surface of the argument, Chrysostom seems to negate ethnic difference, he actually needs to emphasise ethnic difference (like the beard, the inability to speak eloquently, and the leonine appearance) in order to construct his vision of Christian sexual exceptionalism. But just as a certain type of homosexual identity must be “accepted” in the process of modern heteronormalisation, ethnic difference must remain in order for sexual exceptionalism to retain its power, since the affirmation of ethnic difference (through its negation) undergirds the exceptionality of Christian sexual morality. Those outside of this moral framework automatically become

like prostitutes. And this is exactly what we have in Chrysostom. While the masculinity of Nicene barbarians is affirmed, Chrysostom does not hesitate to label Jews and Judaizing Christians as prostitutes (*pornai*) and effeminates (*malakoi*), or in modern parlance, as “whores” and “fags.”<sup>25</sup> But even here some Jews are included. By historically transforming the Jewishness of Christ and Paul, for instance, who both represent a normalised and masculinised “Christian Jewishness,” Chrysostom finds it easier to vilify and exclude, in the most extreme terms, Jews of his own day as well as Judaizing Christians.<sup>26</sup> Ethnicity (barbarian, Greek, Jew), sexuality (chaste, whorish), and religious identity all intersect and feed into the milieu of conflict.

Socially, then, we have a similar instance of inclusion. Although the celibate monastic lifestyle was considered by Chrysostom, and most other Christian authors of late antiquity, as the pinnacle of Christian masculinity, Chrysostom does allow for another, inferior masculinity – namely the married yet continent man.<sup>27</sup> So, although the monk is absolutely sexually exceptional, the man who lives a moderate ascetic lifestyle within marriage may share in this exceptionalism. The asceticisation of marriage then serves to normalise the married man, and also makes him sexually exceptional. But who is, essentially, excluded in this politics of inclusion? Firstly, those men who act without *sōphrosynē* within marriage, who still frequent prostitutes, violate their slaves, visit the theatre, and indulge excessively in sexual vice. Secondly, this strategy is especially utilised in the exclusion and fierce pathologisation of the *subintroductae* in Chrysostom’s thought.<sup>28</sup> By including the continent married man, the concupiscent married man and the co-habiting monks are excluded, and their masculinities are devalorised.

Inclusion is therefore a very important feature in the operations of sexual exceptionalism and religious conflict. As in Puar’s excursus on U.S. homonationalism, the masculinisation of those formerly deemed to be unmanly and deviant becomes an accolade for late antique orthodox Christianity. Christine Shepardson has highlighted a similar type of rhetoric oscillating between the promotion of orthodoxy and anti-Jewish sentiment in Ephrem’s thought.<sup>29</sup> The power of the inclusive group is intensified and its ethics of inclusion valorised; furthermore, the physical number of adherents is multiplied. The group is also easily labelled as tolerant and “open” to all. All of these effects then serve to create a religious radicalism, of which the participants are convinced that they are the “good guys,” they are the true patriots, the true Romans. They are also sexually and morally pure, and the defiling of other religious identities through the discourse of sexual immorality simply makes it easier to exclude, oppose, and exterminate them. The “true” and “pure” Christians all share in the solidarity of the new manly army of Christ, which allows all people to enter, according to Gal. 3:28, including young and old, Jew and Gentile, man and women, Greek and barbarian – as long as they have been normalised according to the precepts of Christian orthodoxy.<sup>30</sup> Thus, when speaking about the notion of “inclusion” in the early Christian context, we must be very aware of its dynamics of power and the potential for inclusion to act as an intensified technology of exclusion.

### How to make a monster: teratogenisation and religious conflict

With the inclusion and normalisation of previously deviant subjectivities come the extreme pathologisation and teratogenisation of those perversities that are not included. Teratogenisation, or making the other a monster, is perhaps the most perceptible characteristic in the rhetoric of religious conflict. Maijastina Kahlos also notes the common rhetorical trope of making monsters (who are also like animals or demon-possessed) out of one's opponents, especially heretics, in late ancient Christian discourse.<sup>31</sup> The discourse of monstrosity in Chrysostom is related to the previous discussion of *sōphrosynē* – pathic excess, the inability to control one's desires, lies at the heart of the monstrosity of Chrysostom's opponents, as we will see.<sup>32</sup> Descriptions of opponents as monsters also serve to highlight the irrationality of the opponent, as Chrysostom states:

But the man who has cast aside the rule of reason, and who has broken off from the way of life according to God, gives himself up to every passion. No longer does he become merely a wild beast, but some multiform and fickle monster, who can plead no excuse because of his nature. For all his wickedness proceeds from his will and his intellect.<sup>33</sup>

There are four discourses of teratogenisation in Chrysostom's rhetoric against his religious opponents, and each of these discourses, in turn, is also an assault on their masculinity. These discourses are those of corporeal mutilation, psychic illness and medicalisation, demonisation, and infantilisation. Chrysostom meticulously constructs the sexual perversity of his opponents in contrast to the sexual exceptionalism of his own group. Understanding this discursive teratogenisation also assists us in unravelling the concept of the "abnormal"<sup>34</sup> and medical persecution of heresy and Jewishness in late ancient Christian discourse.

Firstly, Chrysostom describes the bodies of his opponents as mutilated. In Chrysostom's commentary on Galatians, while discussing the problem of castration and eunuchism, he highlights the corporeal mutilation shared by real eunuchs, probably referring to the infamous *galli*,<sup>35</sup> castrated priests of the cult of the Magna Mater, as well as Jews who have been circumcised, and Manichaeans who mutilate the body (probably an extreme form of invective against the Manichaeans' negative view of the flesh,<sup>36</sup> and especially sexual intercourse – there is no evidence, to my knowledge, for Manichaean castration in the fourth century).<sup>37</sup> Physical castration, circumcision, and Manichaean discipline are all viewed as corporeal mutilation, and thus blasphemy against God's creation. It is specifically the male genitals that are mutilated in this case, making them inferior males and creating an uncomfortable gender ambiguity for Chrysostom.<sup>38</sup> The Manichaeans, as Chrysostom describes them at least, stand in contrast to real men who have castrated vice from their souls. Psychic and spiritual castration, accompanied by corporeal intactness (and freedom, unlike most eunuchs, who were enslaved), are

the trademarks of Chrysostom's superior, orthodox masculinity. Orthodox Christians should be like court eunuchs loyal to their king, who is Christ: "Eunuchs especially ought to stand by the king." Chrysostom then continues: "By eunuchs, I mean those who are of sound mind, having no wrinkle or blemish, high-minded, having the perspective of the soul, gentle and quick-sighted, energetic and accomplished, not sleepy or supine, full of the utmost freedom."<sup>39</sup> As with many late ancient Christian authors,<sup>40</sup> spiritual eunuchism, and not the type of castration that physically mutilates the body, becomes a marker of Christian identity and sexual exceptionalism.

These "real" men, the spiritual eunuchs, discipline their bodies, and teach it *sōphrosynē*, but they do not mutilate the body. The invective of castration and eunuchism is then also extended to the *subintroductae*, the males of who are specifically referred to by Chrysostom as eunuchs and, even worse, as slaves to women, or *gynaikodouloi*:

The men receive the women at the door, strutting as if they had been transformed into eunuchs, and when everyone is looking, they guide them with enormous pride. Nor do they slink away, but go so far as to glory in their performance. Even at that most awesome hour of the mysteries, they are much occupied with waiting on the virgins' pleasure, providing many of the spectators with occasion for offense.<sup>41</sup>

Although their bodies are not physically mutilated, their bodily habitus, which is supposed to be indicative of superior monastic masculinity, has now become marred by adopting a servile disposition, *douloprepeia*. They are described as eunuch slaves – an unmanly disposition indeed.

Secondly, along with the discourse of corporeal mutilation, we also have a very potent discourse of psychic pathologisation in Chrysostom. He describes his opponents as diseased in their very souls. Wendy Mayer has noted that Chrysostom operates in this case like a medical philosopher, and his preaching is seen as a type of therapy of the soul, a phenomenon quite common in Greek and Roman moral philosophy.<sup>42</sup> In his homiletic series *On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, the language of disease and mental illness abounds. All his opponents, including the Jews, Manichaeans, and, of course, the Anomeans are described as being psychically diseased. Of the Anomeans, Chrysostom writes:

These are my reasons for encouraging all of you to speak to the Anomoeans mildly and with moderation. Try with all your might to treat them as you would treat people who have suffered a mental illness and lost their wits. Surely this doctrine of theirs is the offspring of their madness and of a mind swollen with great conceit. Their festering wounds cannot bear a touch of the hand nor endure too rough a contact. So it is that wise physicians cleanse such ulcers with a soft sponge. Since these Anomoeans have a festering ulcer in their souls, let us take a soft sponge,



wet it with pure and soothing water, and bathe the ulcer with all the words I have spoken to you. In this way let us try to restrain their swollen conceit and cleanse away all their pride.<sup>43</sup>

Chrysostom describes his opponents in terms of mental illness, and orthodoxy as remedy.<sup>44</sup> In his commentary on Galatians, the Greeks, Arians, and Marcionites are included in this psychic pathology.<sup>45</sup> Key to this facet of teratogenesis is the notion of balance. All ancient physicians describe health, both physical and mental, as a state of balance; the humours and elements of the body need to be in correct proportion.<sup>46</sup> But orthodoxy and heresy are also conceptualised by using the same medical terminology<sup>47</sup> – “orthodoxy” is seen as a balanced knowledge of God, where one does not emphasise one aspect of the divine to the detriment of another; heresy is seen as a type of theological and epistemological excess, whether it is, according to Chrysostom, the Jews’ excessive adherence to the Law, the Manichaeans’ excessive stance against the physical body, or the Anomeans’ lack of balance between the divinity of the Son and the Father. This pattern is also present when Chrysostom describes his opponents as individuals who indulge excessively in the bodily passions, especially sexual lust, but also gluttony, greed, and envy.

The same language of disease is used in Chrysostom’s vilification of the *subintroductae*. They are all diseased; servile in their bodily habitus, and, most importantly, diseased in their souls.<sup>48</sup> The ideal male body, for Chrysostom, is a body of balance and psychic health, and sound doctrine. By describing his opponents as both physically and psychically diseased, Chrysostom also attacks their masculinity. A diseased body is a passive body, as Helen King rightly notes: “the sick role is feminised, while the doctor embodies what are considered to be the masculine virtues.”<sup>49</sup> As a preacher of sound doctrine, Chrysostom assumes a healing role, but this healing role is also an active governing role – in the discourse of medicalisation and psychic health, there is also an overlap with the discourse of slavery, or doulology, as I term it.<sup>50</sup> As a doctor of the soul, Chrysostom occupies the role of *despotēs* over those slaves of passion and heresy who are unable to govern themselves, who lack those important masculine virtues of *sōphrosynē* and *enkrateia*; in this way, Chrysostom also fashions his own masculinity from the pulpit, so to speak. Real men rule over their bodies and passions, just as they rule over their wives, children, and slaves. As master of the soul, Chrysostom makes it his responsibility to rule over slaves of the passions in order to heal and normalise them. These diseased opponents are weak and sickly, unable to join the army of Christ.

Thirdly, we also have the discourse of demonisation. This is the logical consequence of the previous discussion – the diseased and unbalanced soul has the propensity to attract demons, and fall prey to them.<sup>51</sup> As Gregory Smith has shown, demons have a similar substance to the soul,<sup>52</sup> and the pathologically diseased soul becomes a target for demons.<sup>53</sup> Chrysostom’s demonology is highly polemological and agonistic – he describes the spiritual life as a battle (they are “soldiers

of Christ”) and *agōn*, or contest, against evil.<sup>54</sup> But his opponents are unable to succeed in this battle due to their inferior spiritual masculinity. People indulging in pathic excess “are more wretched than maniacs, introducing a self-imposed demon to the soul.”<sup>55</sup> As in the case of disease, Jews and heretics, in Chrysostom’s thought, once again occupy a passive role in relation to demons. They are not ones who can battle the demonic, but fall prey to them.

Fourthly, we also have the discourse of infantilisation and puerility. Foucault marks the discourse of puerility as key to understanding social operations of teratogenisation and abnormalisation.<sup>56</sup> The monster, in this case, occupies a body in which it does not belong, and is not capable of rational thought. In an extreme case of invective against the Jews, Chrysostom describes them as grown men still suckling on the breast of their nurse, as old men who still slavishly obey a pedagogue. Moses is frequently described by Chrysostom as a nurse, and the Mosaic Law as a pedagogue (referring to Gal. 3:24–26).

For just as though the Jews had been little children, he placed Moses over them as a schoolmaster, and like little children he managed these things for them through shadowy representations, as we teach letters. For the law had a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things [Heb. 10:1]. As we both buy cakes for children and give them pieces of money, requiring of them one thing only, that for the present they would go to school; so also God at that time gave them both wealth and luxury, purchasing from them by this His great indulgence one only thing, that they would listen to Moses. Therefore He delivered them over to a schoolmaster, that they might not despise Himself as a tender, loving Father. See then that they feared him only; for they said not, Where is God? But, Where is Moses? And his very presence was fearful. . . . So that one would not be wrong in calling Moses both a teacher, and a nursing-father, and a conductor [Exod. 16:3; Num. 11:4–5]; the man’s wisdom was great. Nevertheless, it is not the same thing to guide men who are already philosophers, and to rule unreasoning children. And, if you are inclined to hear yet another particular; as the nurse says to the child, When you ease yourself, take up your garments, and for as long as you sit, so also did Moses [Deut. 23:13]. For all the passions are tyrannous in children (for as yet they have not that which is to bridle them), vainglory, desire, irrationality, anger, envy; just as in children, so they prevailed; they spat upon, they beat, Moses. And as a child takes up a stone, and we all exclaim, O do not throw it; so did they also take up stones against their father; and he fled from them.<sup>57</sup>

Nurses and pedagogues were in most cases slaves or freed persons, usually individuals of lower status<sup>58</sup> – by highlighting the puerility of his opponents, Chrysostom again views them as people who have not yet donned the masculine toga

of Christ and Christian teaching.<sup>59</sup> They are like children ruled by the enslaved. We also see above that infantilisation implies a lack of *sōphrosynē*, that most important virtue that makes one sexually exceptional. The passions in children are still unbridled, and like children, Chrysostom sketches the Jews as uncontrolled and irrational. The infantilisation of Chrysostom's opponents, especially the Jews, is a logical consequence of the progressive pedagogy in his theology, as David Rylaarsdam has shown.<sup>60</sup> In this case, the Jews occupy a lower and more puerile position within the development of divine pedagogy, while orthodoxy is constructed as the advent of masculinity.

### Conclusion: minimising the grey zone

I have argued in this chapter that within instances of religious conflict, one means of radicalising members of a religious group was by means of sexual exceptionalism. By convincing members of a religious group that they are superior and exceptional to their opponents in terms of sexual morality, the polarisation of identity takes place more easily, and the so called grey zone of religious identity becomes less apparent. In the context of antiquity, the discourse of masculinity is crucial in the formation of sexual exceptionalism, particularly in Chrysostom. But this is a psychic masculinity, one that proceeds from the position of a healthy soul characterised, above all, by *sōphrosynē*. In Chrysostom's promulgation of Christian sexual exceptionalism, two rhetorical strategies are particularly prevalent, namely inclusion and teratogenisation.

In his rhetoric of religious conflict, Chrysostom simultaneously constructs his own masculinity, and that of his radical adherents (despite their ethnicity, class, gender, or age), and deconstructs the masculinity of his opponents, providing these opponents with a similar character to that of Puar's monster-terrorist-fag. Non-orthodox Christians, particularly heretics and Jews, but also internal groups like the *subintroductae* bear the brunt of Chrysostom's polemic. In some way or another, they are all monsters. For Chrysostom, the religious monsters of his own time are in fact killing themselves by their excessively evil behaviour, their lack of *sōphrosynē*. *Sōphrosynē* does not only signify psychic health, but it is also a symbol of moral and religious purity. Those from other religious groups are considered weak, effeminate, physically mutilated, diseased, demonised, puerile, but also dangerous – simply belonging to or associating with such groups carries a risk for an individual. Being part of “orthodox” Christianity means being masculine, sexually acceptable, and healthy.

### Notes

- 1 This chapter is based on a paper presented at the 17th International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, August 10–14, 2015. I especially thank Wendy Mayer and Maijastina Kahlos for their feedback on the paper. An earlier version of this study was published as: Chris L. de Wet, “Of Monsters and Men: Religious Conflict, Radicalism,

- and Sexual Exceptionalism in the Works of John Chrysostom,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 6.2 (2016): 1–17.
- 2 Joseph A. Marchal, “The Exceptional Proves Who Rules: Imperial Sexual Exceptionalism in and around Paul’s Letters,” *Journal of Early Christian History* 5.1 (2015): 87.
  - 3 Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Next Wave: New Directions in Women’s Studies (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
  - 4 For more on the role of purity in religious conflict, see Günther Schlee, *How Enemies Are Made: Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflict* (New York: Berghahn, 2011).
  - 5 Isabella Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
  - 6 Sandwell, *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity*, 32–5. On habitus, see Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), esp. 166–8.
  - 7 See also van den Heever’s chapter in this volume for more on the dynamics of the “grey zone.”
  - 8 Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2001), 110–11.
  - 9 Heiner Bielefeldt, Nazila Ghanea, and Michael Wiener, *Freedom of Religion or Belief: An International Law Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 37–8.
  - 10 Serena K. Sharma, “‘Just Peace’ or Peace Postponed: *Jus post bellum* and the Aftermath of Iraq,” in *Religion, Conflict and Military Intervention*, ed. Rosemary Durward and Lee Marsden (London: Routledge, 2016), 175–8.
  - 11 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.
  - 12 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 3.
  - 13 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 32–6.
  - 14 Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 48–9.
  - 15 Marchal, “The Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 91.
  - 16 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 39.
  - 17 Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 38–40.
  - 18 Marchal, “The Exceptional Proves Who Rules,” 104–5.
  - 19 See Chris L. de Wet, “John Chrysostom and the Mission to the Goths: Rhetorical and Ethical Perspectives,” in *Sensitivity Towards Outsiders: Exploring the Dynamic Relationship Between Mission and Ethics in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, ed. Jakobus Kok et al., Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 364 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 543–65. For a more extensive, yet slightly different perspective on Chrysostom’s mission to the Goths, see the study of Jonathan P. Stanfill, “Embracing the Barbarian: John Chrysostom’s Pastoral Care of the Goths” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 2015).
  - 20 *Hom. Goth.* 1 (PG 63.501.8–11).
  - 21 *Hom. Goth.* 1 (PG 63.501.11–12).
  - 22 *Hom. Goth.* 1 (PG 63.501.12–14).
  - 23 Chris L. de Wet, *Preaching Bondage: John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 235–6.
  - 24 *Hom. Goth.* 1 (PG 63.501.14–29).
  - 25 See, generally, *Adv. Jud.* 1; see also Susanna Drake, *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts*, Divinations (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 78–98.
  - 26 Joshua Garroway, “The Law-Observant Lord: John Chrysostom’s Engagement with the Jewishness of Christ,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18.4 (2010): 591–615; Andrew S. Jacobs, “A Jew’s Jew: Paul and the Early Christian Problem of Jewish Origins,” *Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 258–86.

- 27 This is the general discourse in Chrysostom's homilies against the *subintroductae*; see also Peter R.L. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 305–22; Elizabeth A. Clark, "Sexual Politics in the Writings of John Chrysostom," *Anglican Theological Review* 59.1 (1977): 3–20.
- 28 Elizabeth A. Clark, "John Chrysostom and the *Subintroductae*," *Church History* 46.2 (1977): 171–85; Aideen M. Hartney, "Manly Women and Womanly Men: The *Subintroductae* and John Chrysostom," in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-First Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1997*, ed. Liz James (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1999), 41–48; Blake Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 100–42.
- 29 Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria*, Patristic Monograph Series 20 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008).
- 30 See especially Chrysostom's discussion of the "inclusive" nature of Christ's army in *Hom. Macc.* 1 (PG 50.617–24).
- 31 Maijastina Kahlos, "Rhetorical Strategies in Jerome's Polemical Works," in *Polemik im Neuen Testament: Texte, Themen, Gattungen und Kontexte*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaienchi, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 170 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 621–49.
- 32 *Hom. Matt.* 70.3 (PG 58.659.21–34).
- 33 *Hom. Jo.* 2.5 (PG 59.37.6–38.4); translation: Thomas Aquinas Goggin, trans., *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 1–47*, FOC 33 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 26.
- 34 Michel Foucault's work remains fundamental in this regard, and in his work on the topic he also pays attention to the intersections between monstrosity, sexual perversity, and the construction of social, cultural, and religious difference; see Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, ed. Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomonim, trans. Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 2003).
- 35 See esp. Jacob Latham, "'Fabulous Clap-Trap': Roman Masculinity, the Cult of Magna Mater, and Literary Constructions of the *galli* at Rome from the Late Republic to Late Antiquity," *Journal of Religion* 92.1 (2012): 84–122; on eunuchs in Chrysostom's thought: De Wet, *Preaching Bondage*, 256–70.
- 36 Maria G. Mara, "Aspetti della polemica antimanichea di Giovanni Crisostomo," in *Atti dell'undicesimo simposio Paolino: Paolo tra Tarso e Antiochia. Archeologia/storia/religion*, ed. Luigi Padovese (Rome: Pontificia Università Antonianum, 2008), 195–9.
- 37 *Comm. Gal.* 1.4 (F4.11–13); see also Chris L. de Wet, "Paul, Identity-Formation and the Problem of Alterity in John Chrysostom's Homilies *In epistulam ad Galatas commentarius*," *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 19 (2014): 18–41. Note: for Chrysostom's homilies on the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews, I use the text of Frederick Field, *Ioannis Chrysostomi interpretatio omnium epistularum Paulinarum*, 7 vols. (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1854–62), indicated by a "Field" followed by the volume and page number.
- 38 The gender ambiguity of eunuchs and those who resemble eunuchs was a cause of anxiety for many late ancient authors, as noted by Mathew Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*, The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 206–44.
- 39 *Hom. Heb.* 17.5 (Field 7:212).
- 40 Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 245–82.
- 41 *Subintr.* 10.38–45; in Jean Dumortier, ed., *Saint Jean Chrysostome: Les cohabitations suspectes; Comment observer la virginité* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1955), 80–1;

- translation: Elizabeth A. Clark, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends: Essays and Translations* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1979), 194.
- 42 Wendy Mayer, "Medicine in Transition: Christian Adaptation in the Later Fourth-Century East," in *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*, ed. Geoffrey Greatrex and Hugh Elton (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 11–26.
- 43 *Incompr.* 2.50–51; in Jean Daniélou, Anne Marie Malingrey, and Robert Flacelière, eds., *Jean Chrysostome: Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*, SC 28 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), 182; translation: Paul W. Harkins, trans., *St. John Chrysostom: On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*, FOC 72 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984), 92. See also *Scand.* prologue – 1.6; in Anne-Marie Malingrey, ed., *Jean Chrysostome: Sur la providence de Dieu*, SC 79 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961), 52–9.
- 44 See also Wendy Mayer, "Madness in the Works of John Chrysostom: A Snapshot from Late Antiquity," in *The Concept of Madness from Homer to Byzantium: History and Aspects*, ed. Hélène Perdicoyianni-Paleologou, Supplementi di Lexis (Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 2016), 349–73.
- 45 De Wet, "Problem of Alterity," 20–36.
- 46 Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 18–19.
- 47 For a study on the same phenomenon in Augustine, see Jean-Paul Rassinier, "L'Hérésie comme maladie dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin," *Mots* 26.1 (1991): 65–83.
- 48 *Subintr.* 2 (Dumortier, *Les cohabitations suspectes*, 51).
- 49 Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), 1.
- 50 For doulology, see De Wet, *Preaching Bondage*, 1–39.
- 51 Dayna S. Kalleres, *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 77–8.
- 52 Gregory A. Smith, "How Thin Is a Demon?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16.4 (2008): 479–512.
- 53 Mayer, "Medicine in Transition," 17–18.
- 54 Chris L. de Wet, "Claiming Corporeal Capital: John Chrysostom's Homilies on the Maccabean Martyrs," *Journal of Early Christian History* 2.1 (2012): 3–21.
- 55 *Laed.* 7.37–49; in Anne-Marie Malingrey, ed., *Jean Chrysostome: Lettre d'exil*, SC 103 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 98; my own translation.
- 56 Foucault, *Abnormal*, 31–54.
- 57 *Hom. Col.* 4.2 (Field 5:218–21); translation: *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 13:277 (slightly adapted).
- 58 See Michael J. Smith, "The Role of the Pedagogue in Galatians," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163.650 (2006): 197–214; Sandra R. Joshel, "Nurturing the Master's Child: Slavery and the Roman Child-Nurse," *Signs* 12 (1986): 3–22.
- 59 De Wet, *Preaching Bondage*, 155–6; more generally, see J. Albert Harrill, "Coming of Age and Putting on Christ: The *Toga Virilis* Ceremony, Its Paranaesis, and Paul's Interpretation of Baptism in Galatians," *Novum Testamentum* 44.3 (2002): 252–77.
- 60 David Rylaarsdam, *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of His Theology and Preaching*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 105–11.

## Bibliography

- Bielefeldt, Heiner, Nazila Ghanea, and Michael Wiener. *Freedom of Religion or Belief: An International Law Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

- Brown, Peter R.L. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Clark, Elizabeth A. *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends: Essays and Translations*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1979.
- . “John Chrysostom and the *Subintroductae*.” *Church History* 46.2 (1977): 171–85.
- . “Sexual Politics in the Writings of John Chrysostom.” *Anglican Theological Review* 59.1 (1977): 3–20.
- Daniélou, Jean, Anne Marie Malingrey, and Robert Flacelière, eds. *Jean Chrysostome: Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*. SC 28. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970.
- De Wet, Chris L. *Preaching Bondage: John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015.
- . “John Chrysostom and the Mission to the Goths: Rhetorical and Ethical Perspectives.” Pages 543–65 in *Sensitivity Towards Outsiders: Exploring the Dynamic Relationship Between Mission and Ethics in the New Testament and Early Christianity*. Edited by Jakobus Kok, Tobias Nicklas, Dieter T. Roth, and Christopher M. Hays. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 364. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014.
- . “Paul, Identity-Formation and the Problem of Alterity in John Chrysostom’s Homilies *In epistulam ad Galatas commentarius*.” *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 19 (2014): 18–41.
- . “Claiming Corporeal Capital: John Chrysostom’s Homilies on the Maccabean Martyrs.” *Journal of Early Christian History* 2.1 (2012): 3–21.
- Drake, Susanna. *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts*. Divinations. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Dumortier, Jean, ed. *Saint Jean Chrysostome: Les cohabitations suspectes; Comment observer la virginité*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1955.
- Ferngren, Gary B. *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.
- Field, Frederick, ed. *Ioannis Chrysostomi interpretatio omnium epistularum Paulinarum*. 7 vols. Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1854–62.
- Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*. Edited by Valerio Marchetti and Antonella Salomoni. Translated by Graham Burchell. London: Verso, 2003.
- Garway, Joshua. “The Law-Observant Lord: John Chrysostom’s Engagement with the Jewishness of Christ.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18.4 (2010): 591–615.
- Goggin, Thomas Aquinas, trans. *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 1–47*. FOC 33. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2000.
- Harkins, Paul W., trans. *St. John Chrysostom: On the Incomprehensible Nature of God*. FOC 72. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1984.
- Harrill, J. Albert. “Coming of Age and Putting on Christ: The *Toga Virilis* Ceremony, Its Paranaesis, and Paul’s Interpretation of Baptism in Galatians.” *Novum Testamentum* 44.3 (2002): 252–77.
- Hartney, Aileen M. “Manly Women and Womanly Men: The *Subintroductae* and John Chrysostom.” Pages 41–8 in *Desire and Denial in Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-First Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, March 1997*. Edited by Liz James. Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1999.
- Jacobs, Andrew S. “A Jew’s Jew: Paul and the Early Christian Problem of Jewish Origins.” *Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 258–86.

- Joshel, Sandra R. "Nurturing the Master's Child: Slavery and the Roman Child-Nurse." *Signs* 12 (1986): 3–22.
- Kahlos, Maijastina. "Rhetorical Strategies in Jerome's Polemical Works." Pages 621–49 in *Polemik Im Neuen Testament: Texte, Themen, Gattungen und Kontexte*. Edited by Oda Wischmeyer and Lorenzo Scornaienchi. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 170. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.
- Kalleres, Dayna S. *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015.
- King, Helen. *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Kuefler, Mathew. *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*. The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Laqueur, Walter. *The Changing Face of Antisemitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Latham, Jacob. "'Fabulous Clap-Trap': Roman Masculinity, the Cult of Magna Mater, and Literary Constructions of the *galli* at Rome from the Late Republic to Late Antiquity." *Journal of Religion* 92.1 (2012): 84–122.
- Leyerle, Blake. *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001.
- Malingrey, Anne-Marie, ed. *Jean Chrysostome: Lettre d'exil*. SC 103. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964.
- . ed. *Jean Chrysostome: Sur la providence de Dieu*. SC 79. Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1961.
- Mara, Maria G. "Aspetti della polemica antimanichea di Giovanni Crisostomo." Pages 195–9 in *Atti dell'undicesimo simposio Paolino: Paolo tra Tarso e Antiochia. Archeologia/storia/religione*. Edited by Luigi Padovese. Rome: Pontificia Università Antonianum, 2008.
- Marchal, Joseph A. "The Exceptional Proves Who Rules: Imperial Sexual Exceptionalism in and Around Paul's Letters." *Journal of Early Christian History* 5.1 (2015): 87–115.
- Mayer, Wendy. "Medicine in Transition: Christian Adaptation in the Later Fourth-Century East." Pages 11–26 in *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity*. Edited by Geoffrey Greatrex and Hugh Elton. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.
- . "Madness in the Works of John Chrysostom: A Snapshot from Late Antiquity." Pages 349–73 in *The Concept of Madness from Homer to Byzantium: History and Aspects*. Edited by Hélène Perdicoyianni-Paleologou. Supplementi di Lexis. Amsterdam: A.M. Hakkert, 2016.
- The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 1886–1889. 14 vols. Repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Patrologia graeca*. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886.
- Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Rassinier, Jean-Paul. 'L'Hérésie comme maladie dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin.' *Mots* 26.1 (1991): 65–83.
- Rylaarsdam, David. *John Chrysostom on Divine Pedagogy: The Coherence of His Theology and Preaching*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.



- Sandwell, Isabella. *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews and Christians in Antioch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Schlee, Günther. *How Enemies Are Made: Towards a Theory of Ethnic and Religious Conflict*. New York: Berghahn, 2011.
- Sharma, Serena K. "'Just Peace' or Peace Postponed: *Jus post bellum* and the Aftermath of Iraq." Pages 167–82 in *Religion, Conflict and Military Intervention*. Edited by Rosemary Durward and Lee Marsden. London: Routledge, 2016.
- Shepardson, Christine. *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria*. Patristic Monograph Series 20. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008.
- Smith, Gregory A. "How Thin Is a Demon?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16.4 (2008): 479–512.
- Smith, Michael J. "The Role of the Pedagogue in Galatians." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163.650 (2006): 197–214.
- Stanfill, Jonathan P. "Embracing the Barbarian: John Chrysostom's Pastoral Care of the Goths." Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 2015.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* London: Verso, 2001.