Gold without Dross: An Assessment of the Debt to John Chrysostom in John Calvin's Oratory

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Declaration
The research presented in this thesis is my original work and it has not been submitted for a higher degree in any other institution. In addition, I certify that all information, sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Some of the material in this thesis has already been published or accepted for publication: chapters 1, 2 and 4 include material created and submitted for publication in an earlier form, all in the course of candidacy (see Acknowledgement for details.)

Dated: 5 November 2013
Διὰ τὸν Χριστὸν...

ἐν οἷς εἰσίν πάντες οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως ἀποκρυφοί
Col 2:3;

and for Ngaire...

beata marita, beata vita.
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Abstract

Overview. The author argues that an assessment of the influence of John Chrysostom on the oratory of John Calvin is needed. After acknowledging methodological difficulties, he carries out a comparative study of aspects of their orations. He also reads Calvin's personal annotations to Calvin's own volumes of Chrysostom's 'complete works'. From this study the author concludes that there is credible evidence that Calvin's method in preaching was influenced by Chrysostom.

Detail. In the introduction it is observed that recent scholarship on Calvin's formation as a preacher has commonly misinterpreted the 1981 publication by Ganoczy and Müller of the marginalia to Calvin's personal volumes of Chrysostom. It is argued that in consequence of this misreading, Calvin's debt to Chrysostom has not been properly assessed, and the importance and difficulties of doing so are reviewed. With methodological problems acknowledged, the author makes a comparative study of various aspects of the two preachers' orations, to see if credible evidence of influence can be discerned.

In the first major part to the project, the author offers a comparison of the two preachers' debt to classical rhetoric (chapter 2), the structure and genre of their orations (chapter 3) and the key theological principles (chapter 4) that would have shaped these two 'pastor theologians' in their considered preaching method. The author offers a number of conclusions about each of these, and also suggests that Calvin would likely have seen Chrysostom as an appealing preaching mentor.

In the second major part, the author studies the two preachers' engagement of emotion for persuasion: their attitude to emotion (chapter 5), their ambitions for emotion (chapter 6) and the closer emotional detail (chapter 7) of their orations. The author concludes that there are profound resonances between their approaches, and in the more superficial aspects of their orations, striking similarities. He suggests that there is credible evidence of influence upon Calvin's preaching.

The study concludes with a new interpretation of the marginalia and the suggestion that it is credible that Calvin's method in preaching was influenced by Chrysostom and that Calvin continued to engage with Chrysostom's homilies over a lengthy period.
### Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>FF</td>
<td>Frederick Field (ed) <em>Tou en hagiois patros hēmōn Iōannou Archiepiskopou Kōnstantinoupoleōs tou Chrysostomou Hermēneia eis pasas tas tou hagiou Paulou epistolas</em>. by John Chrysostom, Saint; Frederick Field; Oxford: University Press, 1845-1861 Vols I-VII.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praefatio</td>
<td>‘Praefatio in Chrysostomi Homilias,’ CR 37, 831-838.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>'Sermones 11 et 12', Primier Volume, contenant 58 Sermones faict sur les 9. primers chapitres de la 1 Epistre de Sainct Paul Aux Corinthiens, Bibliotheque Publique et Universitaire de Geneve Ms fr. 26; Folios 84A-99B.</td>
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Acknowledgements

My personal adventure in the lively thought and warm pastoral ministry of John Calvin began in my four years of study at Moore Theological College, Sydney. During my three undergraduate years, and a postgraduate year, I was required by my wise teachers to read the whole of the Institutes of the Christian Religion. I confess to understanding only a small part of what I read. Nevertheless, the experience was a rich one. It left me with affection and respect for this passionate French theologian who has so profoundly impacted the Anglican and Presbyterian churches that have been my faith-homes in adult Christian life.

More recently, teaching systematic and pastoral theology at the Presbyterian Theological Centre, Sydney, I enjoyed similar lessons from Calvin alongside fellow teachers, and students. My understanding grew significantly in those wonderful years, and even since then, Calvin has earned a deepening affection and respect. But I admit in most of this, Calvin’s pastoral sermons remained largely unknown to me. In contrast to a rich appreciation of my thought world embedded in the Institutes, my Christian tradition has had a superficial engagement with Calvin’s preaching.

Similarly my Christian tradition has little appreciation for the preaching and thought of John Chrysostom. Though Calvin regarded Chrysostom highly, most Sydney Anglicans and Presbyterians do not know him at all. For the most part, tastings of Chrysostom are accidental. Even when that happens, because they have not acquired the taste for him, these Protestant diners are left underwhelmed and unsettled.

It should not surprise that my twin goals in the present project are to ‘do something about this’. I hope that these wonderful Greek and French pastors are both better known and appreciated as preachers. If I succeed in broadening this understanding among my peers I believe the world will be the richer for it.

If I achieve this I will owe a great debt to many people. At this point I can only mention a few. First I want to thank Drs Peter Jensen and John McClean (at the beginning and midway through my Calvin journey): two ‘pastoral’ theologians whose respect for and understanding of pastor Calvin have most fortified my own.
As the other bookend to their encouragements I sincerely thank Associate Professor Stuart Piggin and Dr Ken Parry of the Department of Ancient History, Macquarie University. As my patient guides you have thoughtfully pastored me throughout this project. To both of you I owe a great thank you for a wonderful season in my life.

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Earlier versions of three of the current chapters were published in the course of this project, namely chapters 1, 2 and 4 and so I wish to express my thanks to the publishers of Reformed Theological Review, Westminster Theological Journal and Studia Patristica for empowering my work in this way.¹

I have benefited enormously from a careful reading of my work by three leading scholars in the field: Dr R. Dean Anderson, Professor Anthony N.S. Lane and Dr Wendy Mayer. They have made numerous helpful suggestions and pointed out errors, for which I am very grateful.

I owe a debt to some wonderful linguists: Dr Robert White who pointed me to resources for translating Calvin’s sermons, and Pastor Ovidiu Oprea who checked on my rendering of a few passages of Romanian. But of course with all of these translations I take full responsibility for the final results.

One of the most unexpected phases in my project was working on manuscripts of unpublished Calvin sermons, and I thank Dr Elsie McKee of Princeton Theological Seminary for her invaluable assistance in making sense of the 16th century script. I also thank Dr Raymond Laird for generously supplying a copy of his wonderful thesis on γνώση in Chrysostom, and for our discussions of both projects. In similar vein, I revelled in my 6 weeks reading at Tyndale House in Cambridge and I thank Dr Peter Williams for his hospitality. In like manner, I thank the Society for the Study of Early Christianity, The Geneva Foundation, the Australian College of Theology and Richard Johnson College, for research funds that sent me to the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Turkey in the course of my studies.

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Leaving the most important to last, I acknowledge the debt of love from family: my parents Don and Margaret, and my own children Caleb, Hannah (who helped me with graphs and statistics), Abigail and Jacob. All of you inspire and enrich me in ways beyond reckoning. Most importantly of all I acknowledge the ministry of my wife and love of my life, Ngaire. I believe I am entitled to claim after 33 years of marriage that your friendship, longsuffering and respect have been the delightful human source, more than any other that I know of on this earth, of my own happy heart and happy life.