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sent simply a selection of ancient forms and genres which appear most relevant for students of the New Testament. There is always the danger that those whose primary interest is early Christian literature will seize only the more easily portable valuables found in random raids on ancient texts. The contributors to this volume disagree with that superficial approach. All ancient texts are part of a cultural system, and must be understood in context and with integrity if they are to be properly evaluated. That is why the context for comparison emphasized in the following pages is not simply the individual word or phrase or the isolated theme or motif, but rather textual units of varying size and complexity which can be described as literary forms or genres.

Each of the following chapters focuses on the respective contributor's English translation of a text or texts which has either not been translated before or else is not readily available. These translations are accompanied by notes or explanations intended to make some of the more important or obscure features of the text readily comprehensible. The translated texts themselves are introduced by a survey of the recent history of research as well as by a discussion of the major generic features of the particular form or genre represented. After dealing with these four tasks, the contributors then tackle with the problem of relating these texts to the understanding and interpretation of various aspects of the New Testament. The concluding section of each chapter contains an annotated bibliography designed to guide the reader into a deeper and more detailed consideration of each literary form or genre treated. Not all of the essays rigidly conform to the structure just outlined. In Professor V. K. Robbins' treatment of "The Chreia," the brief and varied nature of the literary form in question has required a different though basically compatible approach.

D. E. Aune

CHAPTER 1 THE CHREIA

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I. Introduction

Almost every person knows and occasionally recites a maxims like "Better late than never," "Nothing ventured nothing gained," or "A penny saved is a penny earned." Fewer people attribute a saying or action to a specific person as they recite it. When there are summaries of particular people's activities on radio or TV, in newspapers or magazines, in speeches on special occasions, or in sermons, we may encounter the recital of a saying or action attributed to a specific person. For example, we might read or hear: John F. Kennedy, on the day of his inauguration, said: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country"; or: Martin Luther King, on the day before his death, said: "I've been to the mountaintop; I've looked over; and I've seen the promised land."¹ Another could be: Adolf Hitler, when the black athlete Jesse Owens won four gold medals in a single day at the Olympic games, walked out of the stadium.² Or still another could be: George Washington, when his father asked him, "Do you know who cut down my cherry tree?", replied, "I did it, father. I cannot tell a lie. I cut down your cherry tree."³

During the time when Christians were writing, re-writing, and copying the documents we find in the NT and early Christian literature, rhetoricians and teachers used the term *chreia* to refer to a saying or act attributed to a specific person (the Greek word *chreia* rhymes with "play

¹These are based on the speeches as printed in: Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) 248; and *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings on Martin Luther King, Jr.* (ed. James M. Washington; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986) 286.

²This is based on: Jesse Owens, *I Have Changed* (New York: Wm. Morrow & Company, 1972) 18-19.

³This is based on: Augusta Stevenson, *George Washington, Boy Leader* (Indianapolis/New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1959).

a," and the plural chreiai rhymes with "may I").⁴ Aelius Theon of Alexandria, a rhetorician who produced a textbook for teachers during the time in which the NT gospels were being written (ca. 50–100 CE), wrote the following example of a chreia: "Diogenes the philosopher, on being asked by someone how he could become famous, responded: 'By worrying as little as possible about fame'" (Hock-O'Neil 85 [Chreia 22]). We get our most specific information about the chreia from textbooks called *Progymnasmata* (Preliminary Exercises) that were written by various rhetoricians during the first through the fifth centuries CE.

II. Defining the Chreia

According to the textbooks written by rhetoricians, a chreia can be defined as "a saying or act that is well-aimed or apt, expressed concisely, attributed to a person, and regarded as useful for living."⁵ This means that a chreia is a particular type of reminiscence. We might think of a reminiscence as an anecdote which is "a narrative, usually brief, of an interesting, often amusing, incident or event."⁶ People in late antiquity, however, distinguished a chreia from a narrative about an event.⁷ They considered the content of a chreia to be a well-aimed or apt statement or

⁴The singular in Latin is *chria* (rhymes with "be a"), and the plural is *chriae* (rhymes with "bee eye").

⁵Cf. Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O'Neil (eds.), *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, Vol. 1: *The Progymnasmata* (Texts and Translations 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 26. Interpreters have had considerable discussion over the meaning of the phrases which here are translated "well-aimed or apt." The earliest source, Aelius Theon (ca. 50–100 CE), has *met' eustochias* ("with a well-aimed or apt quality") between "a concise statement or action" and "attributed to some specified character." This position for the prepositional phrase raises debate whether it modifies the preceding and means "statement or action with a well-aimed quality" or modifies the succeeding and means "with aptness attributed to some specified character." In my view, the following authors were emphasizing the "well-aimed" quality of the statement or action in a context in which they presupposed the aptness of the attribution: Hermogenes (*echon delōsin*); Nicolaus (*eustochos kai suntomos*); Priscian (*celerum habens demonstrationem*). Aphthonius, on the other hand, emphasizes the "aptness" of the attribution (*eustochōs epi ti prosōpon anapherousa*). The discussions in the Hock-O'Neil volume emphasize the aptness of the attribution, which is an essential quality of the chreia. The aptness must be emphasized in our culture, which regularly emphasizes ideas without interest in people who inaugurated or focussed those ideas. The aptness, however, must not be emphasized at the expense of the well-aimed quality. If a concise statement or action simply is aptly attributed, it may be an "informative" reminiscence without being a chreia. An apt and well-aimed reminiscence, on the other hand, is a chreia, like: Plato said that the Muses dwell in the souls of the gifted (Chreia 52 in Hock-O'Neil) or Diogenes, on seeing a youth misbehaving, beat the paedagogus (Chreia 26 in Hock-O'Neil). These are chreiai, because they have aptness and pointedness which discloses the persons to whom they are attributed and focuses one's thought on particular aspects of life.

⁶*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (2d ed.; Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1956)

34.

⁷The rhetoricians in late antiquity would consider these to be either narratives or fables.

action attributed to a particular person. The emphasis on the particular person gave the chreia a special place in the transmission of Hellenic-Roman heritage. According to one estimate, we have available in writing perhaps a thousand chreiai from antiquity.⁸ Many people knew and recited chreiai,⁹ and, as a result, they transmitted a rich heritage of Hellenic-Roman culture. If this chapter included a large number of chreiai like the four constructed for the opening paragraph, it would transmit significant segments of American culture.¹⁰

The special interest in the chreia appears to lie in its special qualities, and we may begin to appreciate these qualities if we see how elusive the nature of the chreia has been for interpreters during the twentieth century. In 1901, G. von Wartensleben concentrated on the chreia in Greek philosophical writing¹¹ but also devoted sections to Machon's chreiai (3d cent. BCE)¹² and the rhetorical schools.¹³ Wartensleben listed three characteristics for the chreia:

- (1) Unconditioned brevity and vigorousness of the statement or act.
- (2) Attribution of the act or statement to a definite person.
- (3) Judgement that the act or statement is something useful.

Items (2) and (3) are well-stated. But there are two challenges in item (1). Firstly, when interpreters emphasize the "unconditioned brevity" of the chreia, they regularly overlook chreiai which exist in expanded form, chreiai which have comments or objections appended, and chreiai which are part of an argumentative refutation or confirmation. We will see below that, although people regularly cite chreiai in an abbreviated form, chreiai are formulated in various lengths and forms to function well in a variety of settings in discourse. Secondly, interpreters have not investigated the range of dynamics in the "vigorousness of the statement or the act." Part of the difficulty, it appears, has been the lack of awareness that the vigorousness must be explored from two angles. On the one hand, the vigorousness emerges from the "aim" of the statement or act. The saying or act points at something, but that to which it points may be highly elusive. It may aim simply at humor or wordplay, or it may aim at some attribute of behavior or some philosophical or religious principle. This range of targets makes the chreia a slippery, intriguing, and compel-

⁸Henry A. Fischel, "Studies in Cynicism and the Ancient Near East: The Transformation of a Chria." In J. Neusner (ed.), *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R. Goodenough*. (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 374; cited in Hock-O'Neil 3.

⁹Hock-O'Neil 7.

¹⁰It is not accidental that my wife, Deanna Robbins, who is a kindergarten teacher, was able in about an hour to get books which would enable me to write the chreiai in the opening paragraph in accord with authoritative tradition in American society.

¹¹G. von Wartensleben, *Begriff der griechischen Chreia und Beiträge ihrer Form* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1901), 27–125.

¹²*Ibid.*, 125–38.

¹³*Ibid.*, 138–42.

ling form. The chreia is so interesting, because it continually escapes attempts to capture it through analysis. On the other hand, the vigorousness of the statement or act emerges from its "apt" attribution to the person who is the subject of the chreia. It would be hard to over-emphasize the attribution of the chreia to a particular person, because this is *the* aspect which distinguishes it from other forms. An unattributed saying or an interesting event may be "well-aimed"; in other words, its import may be humorous, virtuous, religious, or philosophical. But the attribution of a saying or act to a particular person displays aspects of life, thought, and action in a mode which integrates attitudes, values, and concepts with personal, social, and cultural realities. The people featured in chreiai become authoritative media of positive and negative truths about life. These "authorities" transmit social, cultural, religious, and philosophical heritage into later historical epochs.

III. Classifying Chreiai

While the rhetoricians definition of the chreia differentiates it from proverbs and reminiscences of interesting or amusing incidents, their system of classification helps us to understand the basic parts of the chreia. Rhetoricians classified chreiai according to the presence or absence of speech and action in the beginning part and the final part. First of all, rhetoricians distinguished between "sayings" chreiai and "action" chreiai. Three of our examples in the opening paragraph are sayings chreiai, while the one about Hitler is an action chreia. The rhetorician Theon, referred to above, identified two species of sayings chreiai, the statement and the response species, and his discussion helps us to understand the potential presence or absence of speech or action in the two parts of the chreia. Instances of the statement species may differ from one another by the presence or absence of a specified situation for the saying of the person. In Theon's words, a chreia may have "an unprompted statement," that is, it may attribute the saying to a particular person without describing a specific situation. Theon gives the following example:

Isocrates the sophist used to say that gifted students are children of the gods. (Hock-O'Neil 84 [Chreia 40])

In this chreia, the saying occurs in a situation characterized only by the lifetime of Isocrates the sophist. A later manuscript contains a chreia which gives a general description of the situation:

Pythagoras the philosopher, once he had disembarked and was teaching writings, used to counsel his students to abstain from red meat. (Hock-O'Neil 335 [Chreia 55])

In this instance, the saying is attributed to Pythagoras during a certain period of his lifetime, namely after he had left and was teaching writing. Still, there is no *specific* situation. A similar reference to a period of time occurs in this chreia in the New Testament:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

Theon would, it appears, have classified this as an unprompted statement, since the description of the situation does not include a specific time to which Jesus responded when he saw it.

In contrast, Theon writes, some statements arise out of specific circumstances. Characteristically, the statement emerges as the result of "seeing" something. Theon gives the following example:

Diogenes the Cynic philosopher, on seeing a rich man who was uneducated said: "This fellow is silver-plated filth." (Hock-O'Neil 85 [Chreia 23])

This kind of statement species also is found in the New Testament:

And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he [Jesus] saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men." (Mk 1:16-17)

In this instance, Jesus saw people engaged in a specific activity, and his statement arises out of this situation.

A sayings chreia may belong to the "response" species rather than the "statement" species, according to Theon. This means that some kind of speech occurs or is referred to in the situation prior to the saying. Theon distinguishes four kinds of response species, and these distinctions help us to see a range of possibilities in the speech in a chreia. The first kind of response species contains a question in the situation which may be answered simply by yes or no. Theon's example is:

Pittacus of Mitylene, on being asked if anyone escapes the notice of the gods in committing some sinful act, said: "No, not even in contemplating it." (Hock-O'Neil 85 [Chreia 49])

Theon says that Pittacus simply could have said "no" without adding the comment about contemplating the act. Our search thus far in the NT has not produced an example of this kind of response species. The next kind, however, is widespread. It contains an inquiry in the situation which

requires the speaker to provide some kind of information, beyond yes or no. Theon's example is:

Theano the Pythagorean philosopher, on being asked by someone how long after intercourse with a man does a woman go in purity to the Thesmophorion, said, "With your own, immediately; with another's, never." (Hock-O'Neil 87 [Chreia 64])

Some examples from the New Testament are as follows:

And the multitudes asked him [John the Baptist], "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." (Lk 3:10-11)

Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him [John the Baptist], "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." (Lk 3:12-13)

Soldiers also asked him [John the Baptist], "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages." (Lk 3:14)

Another kind of "response" species includes an explanation, advice, or some such thing in addition to the answer to the question. Theon gives the following example:

Socrates, on being asked whether the Persian king seemed happy to him, said, "I can't say, for I can't know where he stands on education." (Hock-O'Neil 87 [Chreia 57])

An example in the NT is as follows:

He [Jesus] went on his way through towns and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. And some one said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." (Lk 13:22-24)

In both of these examples, the saying includes an explanation for the very first words he said in response. Still another kind of "response" chreia contains simply a remark in the situation rather than a simple question or inquiry to which the response is made. Theon gives the following example:

Once when Diogenes was having lunch in the marketplace and invited him to lunch, Plato said, "Diogenes, how charming your unpretentiousness would be, if it were not so pretentious." (Hock-O'Neil 87 [Chreia 50])

In this instance, the chreia says that Diogenes "invited" Plato rather than "asked" him something. It is important to see that even if Diogenes would have invited him by saying, "Will you have lunch with me?", this would not be an instance of a simple question or inquiry, since the question does not seek information about some topic. Thus, Theon is looking into the substance of the interaction rather than simply at formal characteristics. An example of a response to a remark in the NT is:

Now when Jesus saw great crowds around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." (Mt 8:18-20)

Sayings chreiai, then, may or may not contain specific information about a situation in which the saying occurs, though they always place the saying in the setting of a particular person's life. These chreiai may contain a topical question which can be answered by yes or no, by information, or by a saying including an explanation or some additional comment; or a remark may be the occasion for the response.

Theon calls the final kind of sayings chreia a "double" chreia. This kind contains two sayings, each of which could make a separate chreia. His example is:

Alexander the Macedonian king stood over Diogenes as he slept and said (Iliad 2.24),

"To sleep all night ill-suits a counsellor." And Diogenes responded (Iliad 2.25),

"On whom the folk rely, whose cares are many." (Hock-O'Neil 87 [Chreia 24])

An example in the NT is:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Mt 3:13-15)

The "double" nature of this chreia is well-preserved in the version found in the Gospel of the Ebionites 4:

And then it saith,

(1) John fell down before him [Jesus] and said: "I beseech thee, Lord, baptize thou me."

(2) But he [Jesus] prevented him and said: "Suffer it; for thus it is fitting that everything should be fulfilled." (Epiphanius Haer. 30.13.7-8)

In these instances, two individual people make a statement, and each statement could exist as a separate chreia.¹⁴

The first basic class of chreia, then, is the "sayings" chreia. These may or may not contain a specific situation, though they always contain attribution to a particular person. Also, they may contain a topical question or simply a remark in the first part to which the saying responds. In addition, it is possible to have a "double" chreia where two people make statements and either statement could make a separate chreia.

The second basic class of chreia is the "action" chreia. Theon's discussion of this class calls attention to the chreia's potential for action either in the situation or the response. An action chreia may be either active or passive. Theon's example of an active action chreia is:

Diogenes the Cynic philosopher, on seeing a boy who was a gourmand, struck the paedagogus with his staff. (Hock-O'Neil 89 [Chreia 25])

His example of a passive action chreia is:

Didymon the flute-player, on being convicted of adultery, was hanged by his namesake. (Hock-O'Neil 89 [Chreia 21])

There are not many chreiai which simply are action chreiai. Rather, they contain both speech and action. Thus, Theon immediately discusses the third class of chreia, the "mixed" chreia which contains both speech and action. Theon gives two examples:

Pythagoras the philosopher, on being asked how long human life is, went up to his bedroom and peeked in for a short time, showing thereby its brevity. (Hock-O'Neil 89 [Chreia 54])

A Laconian, when someone asked him where the Lacedaemonians consider the boundaries of their land to be, showed his spear. (Hock-O'Neil 89 [Chreia 45])

Theon's examples feature speech in the situation and action in the response. But later rhetoricians considered a mixed chreia to contain both speech and action in the response. Hermogenes' example (2d cent. CE) is:

Diogenes, on seeing a youth misbehaving, beat the paedagogus and said, "Why were you teaching such things?" (Hock-O'Neil 175 [Chreia 261])

¹⁴ Ign. Smyr. 1:1 has it in the form: [He was] baptized by John that "all righteousness might be fulfilled."

In this instance, Diogenes responded with an action of beating and with a statement. Many chreiai in the New Testament are mixed chreiai, sometimes containing action and speech in both the situation and the response. Some examples are as follows:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them, and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 18:1-3)

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers." (Lk 19:45-46)

While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother." (Mt 12:46-50)

The identification of active and passive actions, and of combinations of speech and actions, gives us deeper insight into the nature of chreiai. On the one hand, units in which things happen to Jesus may be passive action chreiai. An example is:

The Spirit immediately drove him [Jesus] out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days tempted by Satan, and he was with wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him. (Mk 1:12-13)

When an interpreter knows the potential for a chreia to be passive in nature, he or she can see how the action upon Jesus by the Spirit coordinates with the action upon Jesus by Satan and climaxes in the action upon Jesus by the angels. The unit is a passive action chreia which shows that Jesus possesses powerful resources for good against evil. In contrast, the passive chreia about Didymon above shows the evil nature of an adulterous flute player. Rhetoric which praises good and censures evil was called "epideictic" rhetoric by the ancients,¹⁵ and most passive chreiai are epideictic in nature.

A passive action chreia may be made into a sayings chreia in which

¹⁵ See D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson (eds.), *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), and Theodore G. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1902).

the person with the good or bad qualities actively comes to speech. For example, the gospel of Matthew contains the following version of the temptation scene discussed above:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'." (Mt 4:1-4)¹⁶

In this instance, the action by the Spirit and the devil upon Jesus occur in the first part, and Jesus' response turns the chreia into an "active" sayings chreia.

Before leaving the classification of the chreia, we need to see an additional item which is shown but not discussed by Theon. Then we will apply what we have seen to a double chreia in the NT before we follow Theon into another dimension of the chreia.

A special challenge for interpreters lies in chreiai which feature a group that speaks with a single voice. Among the chreiai discussed in the *Progymnasmata*, three are attributed to unnamed individuals who represent a particular group. They are:

A Laconian, when someone asked him where the Lacedaemonians consider the boundaries of their land to be, showed his spear. (Hock-O'Neil 328 [Chreia 45])

A Laconian, who had become a prisoner of war and was being sold, on being asked by someone what he could do, said, "Be free." (Hock-O'Neil 329 [Chreia 46])

A Sybarite, on seeing the Lacedaemonians living a life of toil, said he did not wonder that in their wars they do not hesitate to die, for death is better than such a life. (Hock-O'Neil 339 [Chreia 62])

Doxapater cites one chreia which features a group that speaks as a single voice:

When Philip wrote many threatening letters to the Lacedaemonians, they wrote back to him, "Lacedaemonians to Philip; Dionysius to Corinth; alphabet." (Hock-O'Neil 326 [Chreia 44])

These examples show that while all chreiai are attributed to a person, the person may be an unnamed representative of a group (a Laconian; a

¹⁶The reader will recognize that the Matthean version is then expanded with two more chreiai which make the interchange a three-step contest between Satan and Jesus.

Sybarite) or an entire group (Lacedaemonians) speaking in a single voice. Surely, from Doxapater's perspective, the last chreia is "attributed to Philip." We can see from our earlier discussion that this is a "passive" chreia in which "Lacedaemonians" respond to remarks Philip has made to them in his letters. These observations can help us to interpret chreiai in all Mediterranean literature which contain these brief forms. Let us apply what we have seen thus far to an especially challenging chreia in the NT.

A double chreia featuring two groups, each which speaks in a single voice, occurs in Mt 9:32-34:

As they were going away, behold, a demonized, dumb man was brought to him [Jesus]. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons."

This is a passive chreia attributed to Jesus. Thus, any action by Jesus is in the situation rather than the response. While Jesus and his disciples are going away, people bring a demonized, dumb man to Jesus. Then "When the demon was cast out, the dumb man spoke." The description is put in passive voice concerning the demon and active voice concerning the dumb man. Then the crowds say, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." This is a statement by the crowds "upon" Jesus. Therefore, Jesus has a "passive" role, receiving praise for his action in the situation. Secondly, however, the Pharisees censure Jesus' action: "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." Jesus remains in a passive role, and the chreia ends with two groups, each speaking with a single voice. As they speak, they juxtapose praise with censure, and thus juxtaposition is natural in a "double" chreia. In the active example concerning Alexander and Diogenes cited above, Alexander censured Diogenes and Diogenes praised himself. In an active double chreia cited by the Vatican Grammarian, however, the second speaker meets censure with reciprocal censure:

Antisthenes, the Cynic philosopher, when he was washing greens and noticed Aristippus, the Cyrenaic philosopher, walking with Dionysius, the Sicilian tyrant, said, "Aristippus, if you were content with these greens, you would not be dogging the footsteps of a king." To him Aristippus replied, "Well, if you could converse profitably with a king, you would not be content with them." (Hock-O'Neil 306 [Chreia 9])

In chreiai, therefore, people who are passive in an action version may be active in a sayings version, a person may remain passive as two people or

groups engage in praise or censure of him or her, or two people may engage in praise or censure of one another or themselves.

The classification of chreiai on the basis of speech and action helps us to move beyond limited understandings of the chreia in the past. The well-known biblical scholar Martin Dibelius mentioned the chreia in the first edition of his study of the stories and sayings in the synoptic gospels but rejected its relation to units in the gospels. He considered the chreia to function only in and through the biographies of philosophers, Greek stories which emerge from the passion for invention, the interest in individuals, and the use of artistic or aesthetic dimensions.¹⁷ When Dibelius included a section on the chreia in his second edition (1933),¹⁸ he considered the entire concentration in the chreia to be on the saying (in accord with K. Horna's understanding of the chreia and Bultmann's understanding of the apophthegma).¹⁹ He systematically rejected the similarities between the chreia and units in the gospels, specifying differences in the nature of the tradition, the content, the character of the subject, the goal of the stories, and the concentration on speech itself.²⁰ This form of analysis is typical of comparative analysis of early Christianity during the first half of the twentieth century that emphasized differences at the expense of similarities.²¹ But other scholars began to open the way for a comprehensive use of both the similarities and the differences. Instead of over-emphasizing the concentration on the saying in the chreia, K. von Fritz (1935) observed that the chreia need not always be in a statement but, as he said it, also could exist in an apophthegm or narrative of an action.²² Also, he observed that the saying in the chreia need not be a general maxim (an error made by Dibelius)²³ but can relate to a concrete situation. In fact, as we have seen above, a saying can be simply yes or no. Also, the NT scholar R. O. P. Taylor (1946) saw a wide range of similarities between the chreia and the synoptic units, writing:

the definition [of the chreia] exactly fits the detachable little stories, of which so much of Mark consists.²⁴

¹⁷ Martin Dibelius, *Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, 1st ed. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1919) 18.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2nd German ed., 150–64; ET: 152–64.

¹⁹ K. von Fritz, "Gnome," *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. Pauly-Wissowa, Supplementband 6 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlerscher, 1896), cols. 87–88.

²⁰ Dibelius, ET: 156–59.

²¹ Among other reasons, this was driven by a "neo-Orthodox" theology, see Lynn Poland, "The New Criticism, Neoorthodoxy, and the New Testament," *Journal of Religion* 65 (1985) 459–77.

²² Fritz, RE, col. 88–9.

²³ Dibelius, ET: 152.

²⁴ R.O.P. Taylor, 76.

By 1946, therefore, NT scholars had the opportunity to use insights from discussion of the chreia in the *Progymnasmata* to guide their analysis and interpretation of units in the gospels.

IV. Describing the Manner of Presentation in Chreiai

Not only Theon's definition and system of classification can be helpful to NT interpreters, but also his description of "the manner of presentation" in chreiai. When Theon describes the manner of presentation, he helps us to observe rhetorical features which gave chreiai their place of prominence within forms of communication in antiquity.

Chreiai may be presented, first of all, Theon writes, "in the manner of a maxim." He gives the following example:

Bion the sophist used to say that love of money is the mother-city of every evil. (Hock-O'Neil 89 [Chreia 10])

The NT contains the following example:

After the two days he departed to Galilee, for Jesus himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country. (John 4:43–4)

Chreiai may also be "in the manner of an explanation." Theon gives the following:

Isocrates the rhetor used to advise his students to honor their teachers above their parents, because the latter are the cause only of living, while teachers are the cause of living nobly. (Hock-O'Neil 91 [Chreia 41])

The NT contains the following:

John answered, "Master, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him; for he that is not against you is for you." (Lk 9:49–50)

Also, chreiai may be presented "with wit." Theon's example is:

Olympias, on hearing that her son Alexander was proclaiming himself the offspring of Zeus, said, "Won't this fellow stop slandering me to Hera?" (Hock-O'Neil 91 [Chreia 48])

The NT contains the following:

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven

times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Mt 18:21-2)

Another of the disciples said to him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead." (Mt 8:21-2)

They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him, "Caesar's men demand taxes from us." He said to them, "Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine." (GThom 100)

Other chreiai are presented "in the manner of a syllogism." Theon presents:

Diogenes the philosopher, on seeing a youth dressed foppishly, said: "If you are doing this for husbands, you are accused; if for wives, you are unjust." (Hock-O'Neil 91 [Chreia 27])

Codex Bezae of the Gospel of Luke contains the following example:

Jesus, on seeing someone working on the Sabbath said to him: "Man, if you know what you are doing, you are blessed, but if you do not, you are cursed and a transgressor of the law." (Luke 6:5D)

Some chreiai occur "in the manner of an enthymeme," a form which requires the reader or hearer to make a deduction which has been implied but not stated. Theon gives the following example:

Socrates the philosopher, when a certain student named Apollodorus said to him, "The Athenians have unjustly condemned you to death," said with a laugh, "But did you want them to do it justly?" (Hock-O'Neil 91 [Chreia 58])

In this instance, the reader or hearer must deduce that it is better to be condemned unjustly than justly. Chreiai also may be presented "with an example." Theon gives the following:

Alexander the Macedonian King, on being urged by his friends to amass money, said: "But it didn't help even Croesus." (Hock-O'Neil 91 [Chreia 3])

The NT contains the following:

On a sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath?" And Jesus answered,

"Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him? And he said to them, 'The Son of man is lord of the sabbath.'" (Lk 6:1-5)

Chreiai also may be presented, Theon writes, "in the manner of a wish":

Damon the gymnastic teacher whose feet were deformed, when his shoes had been stolen, said: "May they fit the thief." (Hock-O'Neil 91 [Chreia 16])

They also may be presented "in a symbolic manner." Theon gives the following:

Alexander the Macedonian King, on being asked by someone where he had his treasures, pointed to his friends and said: "In these." (Hock-O'Neil 91-3 [Chreia 4])

The NT contains the following:

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him for the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he said to them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it." (Lk 8:19-21)

Also, according to Theon, chreiai occur "in a figurative manner":

Plato the philosopher used to say that the offshoots of virtue grow by sweat and toil. (Hock-O'Neil 93 [Chreia 51])

Also, they may occur "with a double entendre":

Isocrates the rhetor, when a boy was being enrolled with him and when the one who was enrolling him asked what the boy needed, said, "A new tablet and a new stylus" [or: "A tablet and a mind, and a stylus and a mind"]. (Hock-O'Neil 93 [Chreia 42])

Sometimes chreiai are presented "with a change of subject":

Pyrrhus, the king of Epirus, when some people were debating over wine whether Antigennidas or Satyrus was the better flute-player, said, "In my opinion, Polysperchon is the better general." (Hock-O'Neil 93 [Chreia 53])

Chreiai also may contain a combination of manners of presentation. Theon presents the following, which he considers to be both symbolic and witty:

Diogenes the Cynic philosopher, on seeing a youth who was the son of an adulterer throwing stones, said: "Stop, boy! You may unwittingly hit your father." (Hock-O'Neil 93 [Chreia 28])

Theon's discussion and examples of the manner of presentation take us yet one step further into the nature of chreiai. Chreiai are rhetorical forms. Thus, they contain identifiable rhetorical features. When the NT scholar Rudolf Bultmann wrote his *History of the Synoptic Tradition* (1921), he observed the presence of rhetorical features like counter-questions containing a metaphor,²⁵ detailed parable,²⁶ a demonstration or symbolic act,²⁷ or a scriptural quotation²⁸ in controversy dialogues. But he did not use Theon's discussion or any other rhetorician's discussion to aid our understanding of the function of such items in brief units attributed to John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples in the NT gospels.

V. Composing Chreiai

While the manner of presentation shows us rhetorical features in chreiai, the exercises with the chreia show us how chreiai were composed in different lengths and forms so they could function in a variety of settings of discourse. In order to understand this aspect of the chreia, it may help if we get a glimpse of the use of chreiai in the setting of education in antiquity. Theon tells teachers to find chreiai (and other forms like fables, maxims, and short narratives) in the standard literature of the time and to use them in the education of their students. The literature from which they were to glean these forms included the writings of the philosopher Plato, the historians Herodotus, Xenophon, and Thucydides, and the orator Demosthenes (Theon book II). Why would any one recommend the use of units like this? On the one hand, the ancients considered any time spent with sayings and actions attributed to persons to be well-spent. Theon says:

the exercise with the chreia produces . . . a virtuous character, since we do this exercise with the sayings of the sages. (Butts I, 40-42)

²⁵ Bultmann, ET:42.

²⁶ Ibid., ET:42-5.

²⁷ Ibid., ET:44-5.

²⁸ Ibid., ET:45.

On the other hand, the purpose was to nurture skills which would make it possible for people to speak correctly and persuasively. As Theon says:

That these exercises are certainly beneficial also to those who take up the rhetorical craft is in no way obscure. . . . Whenever someone can refute or confirm these speech forms, he is not far behind those who deliver speeches, since everything we do in forensic speeches is in this exercise as well. (Butts I, 25-33)

Activity with these forms was considered an initial stage of preparation for writing and presenting speeches. The student was asked to perform eight written exercises with the chreia to achieve these skills:

- 1) Recitation: Write the chreia with clarity on the basis of the teacher's presentation of it.
- 2) Inflection: Write the chreia in singular, plural, and dual numbers; and write it in nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, and vocative cases.
- 3) Comment: Append a statement to the chreia asserting its nature as true, noble, advantageous, or consonant with the opinion of others.
- 4) Objection: Append a statement to the chreia asserting its nature as false, base, injurious, or unacceptable by most.
- 5) Expansion: Compose a longer form of the chreia, enlarging upon the questions, responses, acts and experiences in it.
- 6) Condensation: Compose the chreia in an abbreviated form.
- 7) Refutation: Argue the unacceptability of the chreia on the grounds that it is obscure, pleonastic, elliptical, impossible, implausible, false, harmful, useless, or shameful.
- 8) Confirmation: Write a short essay, complete with introduction, "narration" of the chreia, arguments, even elaboration, digressions, and character delineation, if need be.²⁹

The reader may see that many kinds of skills would be attained if he or she performed all eight exercises on a significant number of chreiai. Also, the process would be demanding. Beyond this, however, we need to see that these exercises teach a person to develop argumentative features in and around chreiai. To learn how to be concise, Theon presents the following chreia:

Epameinondas, as he was dying childless, said to his friends: "I have left two daughters—the victory at Leuctra and the one at Mantinea." (Hock-O'Neil 101 [Chreia 37])

But then Theon presents an expanded form of this chreia, and the expanded version contains rhetorical features he discussed in "the man-

²⁹ Adapted from Hock-O'Neil 95-105.

ner of presentation" and rhetorical features we regularly see in speeches. If we present this version with headings that show us the manner of presentation and the parts of a speech, we get something like this:

- A. Praise of Epameinondas through Description
Epameinondas the Theban general was, of course, a good man in time of peace, and when war against the Lacedaemonians came to his country, he displayed many outstanding deeds of great courage. As a Boeotarch at Leuctra, he triumphed over the enemy, and while campaigning and fighting for his country, he died at Mantinea. While he was dying of his wounds and his friends were lamenting, among other things, that he was dying childless,
- B. Response
 - (1) Introduction with emotion
he smiled and said:
 - (2) Exhortation with direct address:
"Stop weeping, friends,
 - (3) Explanation
 - (a) Statement in a figurative manner: "for I have left you two immortal daughters,"
 - (b) Restatement in a non-figurative manner: "two victories of your country over the Lacedaemonians,"
 - (c) Conclusion in a figurative manner: "the one at Leuctra, who is the older, and the younger, who is just now being born at Mantinea."³⁰

An example of expansion in the NT can be seen in the account of Jesus and the children. A concise version occurs in Mt 19:13-15:

Then children were brought to him [Jesus] that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away."

This is a chreia in which the saying arises as a response to the disciples' rebuking of the people. The manner of presentation of the saying is, in Theon's terms, "with an explanation." In addition, this is a "mixed" chreia, since Jesus responds not only with a saying but also an act of laying his hands on the children. An expanded version exists in Mk 10:13-16. If we outline it as we did Theon's expanded version of the Epameinondas chreia, it looks like this:

³⁰Based on Hock-O'Neil 101-3.

- A. Description of the situation
And they were bringing children to him [Jesus] that he might touch them; and the disciples rebuked them.
- B. Response
 - (1) Introduction with emotion
But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said:
 - (2) Exhortation
"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them."
 - (3) Explanation
"For to such belongs the kingdom of God."
 - (4) Restatement in negative terms
"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."
 - (5) Action
 - (a) And he took them in his arms
 - (b) Result: and blessed them
 - (c) Manner: laying his hands upon them.

This expansion introduces argumentative features within the perceived boundaries of the story itself. As we will see next, however, this simply was the beginning of the process whereby chreiai played a role in developing the skills to give a persuasive speech.

VI. Developing an Argument Through Elaboration

In addition to the exercise of expansion, Theon discusses the addition of a comment asserting the truth of the chreia or an objection asserting its falsity. Also, he discusses exercises called refutation and confirmation. These exercises show us the process whereby a chreia could be used to begin an entire argumentative speech. As Theon wrote:

We also consider how we should properly arrange each of the arguments. And so we amplify and criticize, and do the other things which at this time it would take too long to discuss. (Butts I, 36-39)

Theon does not show an example of an arrangement of the arguments, but Hermogenes explains it and shows much of it. Hermogenes calls his example an "elaboration" ("working out") of a chreia rather than simply an expansion of it. His example shows us how a chreia can be used to formulate a speech. We will place Hermogenes' headings where we did with the expanded versions of chreiai above (the parentheses are Hermogenes' explanations when he does not actually give an example of how to write a particular part of the exercise):

- A. Praise of Isocrates
Isocrates was wise (and you amplify the subject moderately).
- B. The chreia
Isocrates said that the root of education is bitter, but its fruit is sweet (you are not to express it simply but rather by amplifying the presentation).
- C. Rationale ["explanation" in Theon]
For the most important affairs generally succeed because of toil, and once they have succeeded, they bring pleasure.
- D. Statement from the opposite
For ordinary affairs do not need toil, and they have an outcome that is entirely without pleasure, but serious affairs have the opposite outcome.
- E. Argument from analogy
For just as it is the lot of farmers to reap their fruits after working with the land, so also is it for those working with words.
- F. Argument from example
Demosthenes, after locking himself in a room and toiling long, later reaped his fruits: wreaths and public acclamations.
- G. Possibly an argument from citation of an authority
(For example) Hesiod said: "In front of virtue gods have ordained sweat."
(And another poet says): "At the price of toil do the gods sell every good to us."
- H. Conclusion
(At the end you are to add an exhortation to the effect that it is necessary to heed the one who has spoken or acted.) (Hock-O'Neil 177 with minor modification)

Research on this arrangement of arguments (Robbins-Mack) has shown that these headings already were being used for the basic sequence of a speech at the beginning of the first century BCE (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV.43.56–44.57). When we look in the NT gospels, we see a range of partial to virtually complete representatives of this kind of argumentation. For example, we see a partial occurrence of the arguments in the Markan version of the Stranger as Exorcist (Mk 9:38–40):

- A. Description of the situation
John said to him [Jesus], "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us."
- B. Exhortation
But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him."
- C. Rationale
"For no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me."

- D. Statement from the opposite
"For he that is not against us is for us."
- E. Authoritative conclusion with an example
For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward.

In turn, the Matthean version of Plucking Grain on the Sabbath (Mt 12:1–8) has an almost complete manifestation of the sequence of argumentation:

- A. Description of the situation
At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath."
- B. Argument from example
He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him; how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?"
- C. Argument from analogy
"Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless?"
- D. Argument from comparison
I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.
- E. Argument from the opposite based on citation of an authority
And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless.
- F. Rationale
For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." (Mt 12:1–8)

A recent analysis of the Matthean version of the Beelzebul controversy (Mt 12:22–37) shows that this is a chreia refutation which features a highly sophisticated sequence of argumentation.³¹ In fact, the analysis shows that even a more intricate form of rhetorical discussion concerning "rhetorical stasis" is helpful to understand the dynamics of the interchange.

VII. Conclusion

It should be obvious, then, that investigation of the chreia, as discussed and shown to us in the *Progymnasmata* and as shown through actual instances in ancient literature, can help us to understand another

³¹ Robbins-Mack, forthcoming.

dimension of the Christian message in Mediterranean society. The brief stories and sayings which Christians used both in speech and writing to communicate their commitment to God's activity through the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples were a powerful and natural form of communication in Mediterranean culture. Moreover, much of the debate about the literary or non-literary nature of the NT gospels becomes less important when we see how these forms were at home in both oral and written speech, and were a natural bridge between the two. Brief written forms were presented orally by teachers and orators, and students and others wrote them down (probably saying them aloud as they wrote).³² Then people worked these brief units up into speeches which they presented orally. The sermon, then, was not the only speech-form in earliest Christianity. Rather, stories and sayings themselves could be presented in argumentative ways, or they could be the starting point for an entire argumentative speech.

VIII. Annotated Bibliography

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³² Bonner, 254.