This book is the second of a projected three volumes containing introductions, texts, translations, and commentary dealing with the literary form known as the chreia. A chreia is a pithy saying introduced by a crisp description of the situation in which it was purportedly spoken by some well-known historical figure. Much of the current interest in this form can be traced directly to the important work of Hock and O’Neil almost two decades ago in the first volume of the trilogy (*The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric: The Progymnasmata* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986]). The intervening years have contributed to a depth and precision that is everywhere apparent in this second volume. This stellar example of the excellence that can be attained when two competent individuals work together will quickly become required reading for specialists interested in how the chreia was used in the educational curriculum from the Hellenistic through late medieval periods.

Chapter 1 (1–49) opens with a brief survey of Greco-Roman and Byzantine education that divides it into primary, secondary, and tertiary stages. It then explains the role of the chreia in primary education, which was typically that of a model for reading and writing. The remainder of the chapter provides a sequential treatment of twelve texts derived from papyri and ostraca that exemplify the actual use of the chreia in primary education.
Chapter 2 (51–77) begins with a summary of the use of the chreia in the secondary phase of education. Classroom exercises at this level included reformulating an initial version of the chreia according to all the Greek declensions so that students could learn grammar and morphology. The texts treated in the rest of the chapter include both actual student notes from classroom exercises and literary sources discussing the use of the chreia at this level of education.

Chapter 3 (79–359) concentrates on the use of the chreia in the tertiary phase of education. This phase began at about age fifteen and usually concentrated on rhetoric. By the early Byzantine period, popular chreiai were customarily used as model thesis statements that were explained and defended in compositional exercises that consisted of eight rigidly structured sections. The reasoning, contents, and sequence of these sections approximated the basic reasoning, contents, and sequence of arguments in standard types and elements of speeches known from the common rhetorical handbooks of antiquity. Most of the texts in this chapter are compositions elaborating various chreiai according to this rigid format, each of which demonstrates the persistence of this technique for training students in the skills needed to compose speeches.

The book includes a short preface, list of abbreviations, bibliography, and index of Greek words. The footnotes include a critical apparatus evaluating various witnesses and reconstructions of the texts, of which all but one (in Latin) are in Greek. The translations of the texts are usually defensible and have attempted to balance faithfulness to the original with clarity of English style. The introductions and commentary are also written in a clear style, and the entire work has been impeccably edited.

The book is a commentary on a collection of disparate texts produced over a long period of time, not a monograph exploring and advancing a unifying thesis. Nevertheless, one conclusion that does clearly emerge from a reading of this book is that in all three phases of a student’s education in the Greco-Roman and Byzantine curriculum the chreia played a crucial role. Even though most of the texts in this volume date to after the first century and the comments and introductions in the book are more explicitly related to Byzantine education than education in earlier periods, perceptive New Testament scholars will quickly recognize the significance of this conclusion for their own field. The widespread popularity of the chreia in ancient education complicates the confident attribution of the sayings in the famous chreiai in the Synoptic Gospels to Jesus rather than the transmitters of the Jesus traditions, many of whom would have been competent to construct their own chreiai. At the same time, the evidence presented in this volume for the importance of the chreia at all levels of the ancient educational curriculum places a fresh urgency on wrestling with the question of the education of Jesus himself.
Perhaps the most important point that is actually made and consistently developed in explicit statements in the introductions and commentary is one emphasized in the long third chapter. This is that the pattern of elaborating the chreia that was developed by Aphthonius of Antioch in the fourth century not only triumphed over all of its competitors but also maintained its superiority and popularity in the rhetorical curriculum for the next millennium. Hock and O’Neil point out the variety in the uses of the chreia in earlier models of rhetorical composition and the debt that Aphthonius himself owed to some of these earlier models (81—90, 122–23, 132—35). But the meticulous source criticism of Hock and O’Neil vividly demonstrates that later students of rhetoric followed his eight-part structure for elaborating the chreia (84–93, 98–99, 203–10, 234–42, 259–68, 283–86, 309–10, 321–23, 339–43, 349–53). The role of the Aphthonian tradition is clearly attested even in the very latest of the texts discussed in this volume, which dates from the fourteenth century (348–54). This clearly requires a new appreciation for both the stability of the educational curriculum that had emerged in late antiquity and the role of Aphthonius in developing at least one element of this curriculum. Hock and O’Neil are well aware that material from the periods after Aphthonius is outside the normal purview of classicists and New Testament scholars, so they have wisely accommodated themselves to specialists in these fields by offering more details when dealing with the historical context of authors and texts from these later dates (e.g., Gregory of Cyprus [308–24]).

Every page of this book exhibits a caution, precision, balance, and reliability that is exemplary of the best in modern historical scholarship. Thus any criticism is almost compelled to be reduced to squabbles over minor details or petty complaints about what the book omits rather than what it contains. For example, the use of paleography in the attribution of various texts to primary education in the first chapter would have been enhanced by a few photographs of manuscripts or drawings of letter forms (6, 13, 31, 36, 38, 41, 60). Readers who have not read the first volume of the trilogy or who have little familiarity with ancient rhetoric will occasionally experience some difficulty because of allusions to ancient rhetorical theorists or terms that are explained clearly and at length in volume 1 but are essentially presumed in the second volume. Even the word chreia itself is not defined until page 89 in this volume. Such issues will not, however, offer any hindrance to readers of the first volume. In most cases alert readers will find an internal coherence in the notes and comments in this volume that alleviates the need to consult any outside source.

The concise but reliable commentary and the collection of so many useful texts in one volume, many of which have been translated for the first time, render this book a quantum leap in the study of the chreia. The specialized nature of this topic, the book’s frequent use of untranslated Greek, and other technical details will reduce the potential...
audience to a limited pool of highly trained readers. But the book can be strongly recommended to advanced students and researchers interested in ancient and medieval education, the history of rhetoric, rhetorical criticism, and any field in which this ancient literary form may hold some interest.