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Constantine to Constantius II**

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IMPERIAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION AND THEOLOGY – CONSTANTINE TO CONSTANTIUS II

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Abstract

This article discusses the phenomenon of imperial involvement in Christian theological debate during the reign of Constantius II. It asks what the imperial interest would have been in getting involved in Christian theological debate and what would have equipped, or qualified, an emperor to do so with at least some expectation of success. Against the wider background of these specific questions the article also discusses more generally the nature of early Christian approaches to higher education, the permutations and the status of Christian theology within the traditional (Graeco-Roman) educational framework and the changes that took place in the area of higher education towards the end of antiquity.

INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the impression sometimes given by the colloquial modern-day use of the phrase, or by introductory volumes,¹ there was no institutionalised discipline in early Christianity which could have been labelled ‘Christian Theology’.² Such a discipline only originated in the mid-twelfth century with the nascence of the medieval university.³ The modern understanding of the term is still influenced by

¹ See for example the following choices of title: Evans 2004: *The First Christian Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Church*; or Marksches 2009: *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen*. This is not to say that authors are not aware of the problem. For example, Marksches 2009: 43 n. 1 points out that the use of the term to denote a rational account of the Christian faith was a very late development, later than the title of his book suggests. For a wider educational-historical perspective see now also the relevant chapters in Gemeinhardt 2019.

² Early Christian use tended to follow classical use. ‘Theology’ (θεολογία, *theologia*) had long been thought of as equivalent to mythology. ‘Theologians’ (θεόλογοι, *theologi*) were understood to be (ancient) authors of mythological narratives (e. g. Homer, Hesiod, or Orpheus), or present-day (= late antique) re-enactors of such narratives. Their activity, θεολογεῖν, was not thought of as part of a rational discourse, but as some kind of higher, hyper-rational, communication (or, from a Christian perspective, as pseudo-divine, or demonic, deception). On the other hand, already Plato had advocated θεολογία as a disciplined reasoning about the gods, using rational criteria (*Resp.* II 379a). Both aspects were combined in Neoplatonism and adopted by Christian ‘theologians’. For example, in the early fourth century Ps.-Justin (probably Marcellus of Ancyra), *cohort. ad Graec.* 3,1 is still speaking of ἡ θεολογία τῶν ποιητῶν (referring to Homer and Hesiod), while Didymus the Blind, *comm. in Ps* 71.1, refers to Saint Paul as ὁ θεόλογος. Because of the (mythologically!) charged meaning of the word (and because they probably judged their own activities to be rather more mundane) Christian leaders (bishops) in particular were reluctant to refer to themselves as theologians; see Marksches 2009: 15-31, especially 16.

³ It is generally agreed that ‘universities’ in the sense in which they originated in the 12th/13th century in the medieval West did not exist in Late Antiquity, although the expression has been used

that medieval ‘scientific revolution’⁴ and care should be taken not to project it back to Late Antiquity.

In Late Antiquity, those who took part in what developed, from about the third century onwards, into quite a momentous ‘theological’ discourse, which modern scholarship has come to label ‘Patristic’,⁵ tended to do so on the grounds and by making use of an already existing educational system, the teaching and learning of grammar, rhetoric, and, in connection with the latter, philosophy.⁶ There can be no doubt that that new discourse dramatically transformed the social universe in which members of the court, the administrative elites and leaders of the Christian church moved; although institutionally – and this must also always be taken into account – it emerged from and grew alongside an already existing infrastructure of privately, civically and – especially from the 4th century onwards – increasingly – imperially funded⁷ institutions of higher education that were accessible only to a small fraction

in the titles of standard accounts; e. g. in Walden 1912, who also covers Late Antiquity, and Cameron 1996/7: 653-73, who speaks of ‘university cities’ in Late Antiquity, though not of universities in the sense of corporations. Liebeschuetz 1991 avoids the term ‘university’ and prefers instead ‘Schule’ or ‘Hochschule’ (for ‘higher education institution’) throughout. He is followed by Markschie 2009, Gemeinhardt 2007, and similar recent accounts.

⁴ For the use of this phrase in this context see e. g. Beckwith 2012, though Beckwith’s further contentions that this revolution did not emerge organically from earlier periods but from a sudden import of new higher-learning institutions and methods from Central Asian Buddhist monasteries via the Islamic *madrassa*, have been firmly dismissed; see e. g. Novikoff 2014; for a more organic and plausible account see Pedersen 1997.

⁵ In what follows the focus will be mainly on Latin and some Greek examples from the time between, roughly, the 330s and the early 360s, theologians who were active in the doctrinal controversies in which Constantius II was also involved. Although in practice the entire early Christian discourse (from the late first to the 8th century) is usually treated as ‘Patristic’, according to a narrower understanding ‘Patristic theology’ is the teaching of the Church fathers, i. e. the orthodox Christian bishops of the early Church, which would have first come to its own in the aftermath of the Council of Nicaea (325), the period here under review.

⁶ Rhetoric is here understood as the general form of higher education that qualified someone for participation in public discourse (and for holding public offices). More ‘specialist’ instruction would have been provided in schools of ‘philosophy’ (and other specialised subjects such as law, architecture, geodesy etc.); but already rhetoric itself included some form of general introduction to philosophy, law and other specialisms; for Christian endeavours to ‘style’ higher Christian learning as the teaching and practising of philosophy see Löhner 2010: 161-62 for the link between the study of rhetoric and further studies. Markschie 2009: 66-68 exaggerates the impact of the diversity of different *canones* of ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, as presented by Hadot 1984: 263-93. They probably differed less from each other than modern school curricula, which still allow for a fairly homogeneous system of higher education across the western world. Kaster 1988: 44-45, seems to express a similar view when he observes that from the teaching of grammar upwards instruction was probably standardized, albeit not by statute but by convention, and looked fairly similar across the empire.

⁷ For the reasons and circumstances of the increased withdrawal of economic, financial and human resources from cities and their concentration in the hands of emperors and a minority of very wealthy ‘senators’ during the fourth century (beginning with Constantine the Great) see (for example) Brown 2012: 14-15 (introduction of an imperial ‘gold standard’) and 22-23 (skimming off civic elites for new senates and imperial services). As problematic as this development may have been in many respects, for the higher education sector it meant an almost unprecedented boost; for the evidence see Liebeschuetz 1991: 871-77. This was not accidental. Emperors funded higher education for its prestige and usefulness in producing effective and (as they hoped) loyal members of an elite. Because education was ‘pagan’, but Christianity was promoted at the same time, members of this elite sometimes developed what Gemeinhardt 2007: 490-92, has called an

of the male population, non-Christians as well as Christians.⁸ This article intends to explore the links – especially during the reign of Constantius II and more generally in the fourth century until ca. 360⁹ – between imperial support of institutions of higher education, chiefly schools of grammar and rhetoric,¹⁰ the personal interest of Constantius II in and his pursuit of such an education¹¹ and his interest and involvement in Christian theology in the context of the discourse that was mentioned above, in particular as it was conducted in the doctrinal debates of his time.

As a result of such an investigation it would appear that Constantius' interest in and support of traditional higher education (the study of grammar, rhetoric, liberal arts and philosophy) not only strengthened traditional – pagan – institutions and continued to promote some high profile pagan personalities (such as Themistius and Libanius),¹² but also guided Constantius' attitude towards and involvement in

‘Orientierungsverunsicherung’, an uncertainty as to where to turn in this time of change, which at least contributed to the increasing antagonism between ‘Paganism’ and Christianity, if it was not one of its outright causes. See also Kaster 1988: 115-18.218.229 on Imperial salaries and the fact that Imperial interest and involvement must not be mistaken for Imperial control of the syllabus. The Imperial interest was wider than that (see also below note 10).

⁸ For a general overview see Liebeschuetz 1991. For education in wealthy households, both at lower and higher levels (philosophy) and frequently involving slaves or freedmen in the role of educators, see Christes 1979 and Harper 2011: 114-16. Dillon 2005 focuses on the example of Plotinus' school in Rome. On the interdependence of private, civic and imperial interests in the area of education see the *Latin Panegyric* of Eumenius from the end of the third century, in Nixon and Rodgers 1994: 145-177: Eumenius receives a substantial income from the emperor which he donates to the city for it to maintain the school of rhetoric which offers him employment. For a demographic overview regarding access to higher education see Harris 1989: 231-48, and the discussion (with further literature) in Marksches 2009: 46-47. Also still very instructive are the reflections and graphs in Kaster 1988: 40-41. For a number of new insights see Gemeinhardt 2019.

⁹ Taking account of the observation that the traditional education system in the Roman Empire had been in decline since the middle of the third century and that the ‘recovery’ of the fourth also owed much to the reformation of the education system; see Harris 1989: 312-22; for Christianity also Lane Fox 1994, although the focus there is more on power and authority than on education. Also, Lane Fox's distinction of active (writing) and passive (reading) literacy (128-9.144) does not correctly reflect the practice of the study of grammar and literary rhetoric including letter-writing. Also useful, though focusing mainly on *notarii* in Papal Rome at a later period, is Noble 1990: 82-108, especially at 84 and passim.

¹⁰ Kaster 1988: 225, goes so far as to speak of an actual Imperial ‘Hochschulpolitik’ or ‘Higher Education policy’; on the context of this policy see above note 7.

¹¹ For this aspect see especially Henck 2001: 172-87. ‘Personal’ is not understood here merely as opposed to ‘official’. Of course, Constantius' rhetorical skills were already generally positively appraised by contemporaries; e. g. Aur. Vict. *Caes.* 42.18; Socrates, *hist. eccl.* II 28; Zos. *hist. nov.* II 44-45; and even Julian. *Paneg.* 48, on ‘overcoming’ the usurper Vetranio by means of public speaking, ταῖς δημηγορίαις. Gibbon's comment on this event that Constantius succeeded even though ‘he was indifferently skilled in the arts of rhetoric’ is thus not quite justified; see Gibbon [1776] 1994, vol. 1: 676. But in the present article account is also taken of the fact that Constantius supported higher education as a matter of policy and due to the peculiar style of late-antique imperial government Constantius' official position (including as formulated by his officials, advisers and supporters) regarding his interest both in liberal arts education and in Christian theology inevitably takes on a certain personal note. In other words, these are ‘his’ positions rather than merely positions of his government.

¹² Barnes 1987a: 301-37 demonstrates that the number of Christians appointed to high office increased considerably under Constantius. He therefore tends to dismiss the growing strength of

Christian theology, quasi as an unavoidable accessory of dealing politically with the Christian bishops. In contrast to his father, Constantine, Constantius II was both a baptized Christian and a classically educated man, and on both counts he may have felt intellectually far more confident than his father to judge theological issues and to recognise some of the difficulties and subtleties involved in at least some of the doctrinal controversies of his time.¹³

However, by involving himself in controversial theological discourse and thus, inevitably, taking sides, he ran the risk of abandoning his elevated and impartial position. Opponents could depict him as the leader of a faction and even subject him to personal verbal attacks.¹⁴ Pagans developed similar attitudes with a view to their cause, but during Constantius II's lifetime it seems that there was only praise for his support of liberal education; no direct attacks seem to have been launched against him before his death and Julian's accession.¹⁵

Once more, in brief, Constantius' attitudes towards classical (pagan) education and Christian (theological) debate and controversy could have had, among others, the following consequences: 1. They could have added to already existing tensions between an increasingly confident Christian element among the educated parts of

pagan voices during the same time as 'bravado' (p. 330), but his own account provides evidence that the state of pagan education, which was dire in the early years of the fourth century, too, was much improved by the time Julian came to power. See also Barnes 1995: 135-47; Watts 2015.

¹³ This attitude may be found reflected, for example, in the reluctance to use philosophical concepts in credal statements rather than Biblical-based language and to compartmentalise and separate elements of pagan and Christian education, or in ill-fated attempts to mediate between credal factions by trying to 'negotiate' the use of such concepts on rational grounds. Richard Klein may be right in saying that the imperial option for the formula ὁμοίος κατὰ τὰς γραφάς may also reflect this attitude as well as Constantius' approval of attempts in the early 350s to negotiate about the use of ὁμοιοῦσιος over against the contentius ὁμοούσιος and the abandoning of these attempts in 357 in the face of renewed challenges (the rise of Aëtius and Eunomius); Klein 1977: 29-67 at 67. By comparison, the problems Constantine faced in the case of Arius were far less subtle, as was Constantine's approach; see Cameron and Hall 1999: 45-46.

¹⁴ His main supporters in the west were bishops Ursacius of Singidunum (Belgrade), Valens of Mursa in Pannonia and Germinius of Sirmium, who because of their prolonged presences at court are sometimes referred to as his 'court-bishops'. His main detractors were Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Lucifer of Calaris and Eusebius of Vercellae; for the interplay between Constantius and the bishops for and against him see Klein 1977; Hanson 1988. Ammianus's verdict (Amm. Marc. 21.16.18) seems coloured by these contemporary criticisms: Constantius, according to Ammianus (*ibid.*), 'obscured the plain and simple Christian religion by old-womanish hysteria' (*Christianam religionem absolutam et simplicem anili superstitione confundens*) and by 'subtle and obsessive doctrinal investigations' (*scrutanda*) thereby provoking a host of controversies (*excitavit discidia plurima*), which, as they spread, were made worse by his resorting to disputations (*concertatione verborum*). As throngs of bishops rushed from synod to so-called synod, using the public post (*iumentis publicis*), he cut the sinews of the courier service (*rei vehiculariae succideret nervos*).

¹⁵ After Julian's accession, of course, and in the decades that followed, the list of people who depicted 'Constantius reign as one in which the liberal arts stagnated or even regressed,' became very long; see Henck 2001: 182-83. But, as Henck shows, many of those who moaned in this manner, including Mamertinus, Julian, Libanius and Ammianus, had received their education under Constantius, and although it is true that Constantius admitted less educated men to higher office (often simply because of lack of good candidates), it is also true, as Henck puts it (p. 182), that 'Constantius' reign appears to have preserved the privileges of the educated amply'; on the link between education and advancement see now also Van Hoof 2013: 387-406.

society and a resurgent Paganism.¹⁶ 2. They could have aggravated an already intense and technically increasingly sophisticated set of controversial debates about Christian doctrine. Many participants in these debates benefitted from an improved education system and could bring their improved education to bear in the debates, but not all of them embraced the ideals of such an education, or for that matter its political end, namely to work, with the help of a skilled and loyal elite, towards a peaceful and prosperous state of imperial government throughout the empire.¹⁷

TRADITIONAL ('PAGAN') EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE EARLY FOURTH CENTURY

It may reflect the very limited impact of Christianity on Graeco-Roman culture in the first four centuries AD that there seem to have been few, if any, attempts to found and run Christian schools that could have claimed to offer an alternative to the received ('pagan') educational infrastructure.¹⁸ This is not the same as saying that there were no Christian teachers,¹⁹ or schools.²⁰ But both worked within the existing structures or as a niche phenomenon alongside non-Christian institutions. The educational (especially the literary and rhetorical) standards always remained

¹⁶ Firmicus Maternus' petition in *De err.* 29 to sharpen anti-pagan legislation could perhaps be seen in this context; see Lössl 2013: 71-87 at 74-75.

¹⁷ For these ideals of Constantius' emperorship see Julian. *Paneg.* 48/49: Καὶ γὰρ ἐπιεικῶς καὶ δικαίως φημι καὶ πολλὸ πλεόν ἐμφρόνως πεπράχθαι. Although Julian's praise of Constantius needs to be deconstructed, it reflects very much his own ideals of good 'emperorship' and it seems reasonable to assume that Constantius lived up to these ideals in more or less the same way as Julian himself; compare Tougher 2012: 19-34.

¹⁸ Examples of Christians teaching and learning to read and to write using Christian rather than pagan material are rare, late and ambiguous; see Marksches 2009: 50-1 on the late legend of the third century martyr Babylas of Nicomedia (*BHG* 2053), who is supposed to have been martyred because he taught his pupils Christian hymns and Psalms instead of τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ παιδεύματα. Christian symbols alongside writing exercises on Egyptian papyrus, wood-panels and ostraka (e. g. P. Gr. Vind. 29274; Würzburg K 1020, K 1027 actually confirm that Christian teachers were expected to teach pagan content and Christian symbols were used alongside pagan texts, perhaps with apotropaic intentions, but most likely not with the intention entirely to replace them; for the cited examples see Henner 1999: 51-54.

¹⁹ Outright rejection of pagan education was rare. Tertullian's critical remark in *De idolis* 10.1 that Christians who worked as *ludimagistri et ceteri professores* were associating themselves with idolatry seems to have gone unheeded, as numerous funerary inscriptions and literary references attest Christian teachers in many regions of the Roman empire from the second century onwards; for examples of Christian teachers at all levels (elementary, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy) see Marksches 2009: 56-59. In addition to a number of elementary teachers and grammarians from the second/third century attested by inscriptions (ILCV 717-726) there are prominent figures such as the North African grammarians and rhetoricians Marius Victorinus (ca. 280/90 – ca. 365) and Flavius (mentioned by Jerome, *vir. ill.* 80.1), Anatolius, an Aristotelian philosopher who became bishop in Laodicea between 270 and 280, his contemporary Malchion, who was a presbyter and teacher of rhetoric in Antioch, Amphilocheus of Iconium (ca. 340/5 – ca. 398/404), Apolinarius of Laodicea (ca. 315-392), Marcellus of Ancyra (ca. 280-374), the Anomoeans Aëtius (ca. 313-367) and Eunomius (fl. 350s-370s), Arnobius of Sicca (fl. ca. 303-305), Lactantius (ca. 250-325), Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315-368), the sophist Asterius (ca. 270 – after 341) and many others.

²⁰ More specifically on the question of Christian schools, see below in this article.

those of the classical curriculum.²¹ Even when at some point in the fourth century Christian authors began to produce classicizing Christian texts,²² an undertaking which even a modern classical scholar not so long ago referred to as ‘a bizarre and tasteless experiment’,²³ these new texts too were measured by the standards of the ancient pagan texts, whose forms had merely been ‘christianised’.²⁴ In order to understand and appreciate this classicizing Christian literature one still had to be educated in the pagan Greek and Latin classics and to be familiar with the so-called ‘school authors’.²⁵ Indeed most works by educated Patristic writers were thoroughly indebted to these authors and full of citations and allusions to their works.

Christians thus measured the quality of their higher education by the same standards as their non-Christian contemporaries. They relied for their education on existing pagan institutions and the cultural tradition which they represented.²⁶ Whatever new forms and contents Christianity had to offer was building on that tradition, even if in the long run it would also transform it. Moreover, these new forms and contents had been translated into Greek and Latin from other cultural and religious traditions. They were derivative and their quality often did not compare

²¹ As Robert Kaster has pointed out, educated Christians had more in common (at least in this regard) with educated pagans than with non-educated Christians; they had an interest in displaying their pagan learning in order to claim their stake in that literary culture; Kaster 1988: 23-30; see already Ellspermann 1949: 14-22.

²² See Markschiefs 2009: 70-72, on the reports of Socrates, *hist. eccl.* 16.1-5 and Sozomen, *hist. eccl.* 18.3-4 of Apolinarius of Laodicea’s attempts to write works of Biblical content in the style of classical authors (Homer, Menander, Euripides and Pindar). As Markschiefs points out, attempts like these were not only a reaction to Julian’s rescript on teachers (Julian. *ep.* 36 dated 362), which banned Christians from teaching the classics because they rejected their (the classics’) religion, but a wider attempt to ‘christianize’ classical culture. Iuvenius’s rendering of the Gospels in dactylic hexameters, for example, dates well before Julian’s law, probably from ca. 330; on how Christian poets justified this combination of Classical and Christian form and content see Gärtner 2004: 424-46; see also Green 2008.

²³ Clarke 1971: 120. The fact that a classical scholar of the mid- to late twentieth century could still have reacted in this way may to some extent illustrate the large degree to which late-antique literary-rhetorical education relied on its ancient foundations. There was never a serious attempt for a Christian culture to replace it and any suggestions that this might have been possible, would have seemed preposterous to all those who were educated. ‘Christianisation’ of classical material, Yes, but Christian literature entirely replacing classical literature, definitely No. Besides, in their vast majority, Christians, lay and clergy, used their received Scriptures in their church contexts with little regard for classical education. They accepted the emerging dichotomy of classical and Christian culture. To that extent Kaster’s observation (1988: 23-30), discussed above n. 21, that educated Christians may have been more alienated from their non-educated fellow Christians than from their educated non-Christian counterparts may only hold partially true.

²⁴ For a recent explanation and discussion of the concept of ‘Christianisation’, including the suggestion to use it in the plural to account for variations of the phenomenon in different periods and geographical regions, see Leppin 2012: 247-78; and now also Leppin 2018.

²⁵ For some of the Greek ‘school authors’ see above note 22; the Latin ones included Cicero, Virgil, Terence and Sallust; for examples of their continued, deliberate and targeted use see Lössl 2004: 179-202; see also Gärtner 2004; and Doignon 1971 on Hilary’s indebtedness to Cicero and Quintilian; see for this also below, note 38.

²⁶ See also Liebeschuetz’ categorical statement, 1991: 880: ‘Von Anfang an begnügten sich die Christen damit, die bestehenden Erziehungseinrichtungen zu nutzen.’

favourably with that of the classical writings.²⁷ The charge of bad or sub-standard education could therefore be levelled specifically against those who were only educated in them.²⁸ An impression could be created as if Christian education equalled bad or insufficient education, while pagan education was considered, by definition, good education.

At any rate, the Christian writings were of a different character and had to be treated differently. Their use therefore remained in the first instance limited to an ecclesiastical environment, even though their implied metaphysical, religious and ethical claims may have been universal and philosophical. However, in order for these claims effectively to be put across they had to be formulated in the language and concepts that represented the dominant culture of the day, that of the Greek and Roman classics. The works of the Apologists fulfilled these criteria to some extent. Products of highly educated (recent) converts to Christianity, they were deliberately packed with ‘pagan’ learning, not just for non-Christian readers but for educated Christians too.²⁹

In earlier times a stand-alone study of Biblical literature may have been deemed sufficient, or perhaps even desirable, for leadership functions within the church. However, a classical education had always enabled Christians, lay or clergy, not only to participate in public discourse, but also to take on public office, including teaching posts and increasingly also duties linked to the office of bishop.³⁰ Fourth century Christian bishops administered increasing amounts of money, organised building projects, managed staff, sorted out legal affairs and corresponded with state bureaucrats. Beyond that they also developed a universally comprehensible Christian doctrinal discourse at a higher philosophical level.³¹ Bishops such as

²⁷ Note Augustine’s negative reaction to his encounter with the Latin Bible in the 360s, *conf.* 3.5.9: *...visa est mihi indigna, quam Tullianae dignitati compararem*. Someone who intended to function as a rhetor in public required prestige, Ciceronian *dignitas*, which the Latin Bible (still) lacked.

²⁸ The complaints about Constantius’ alleged neglect of classical education came mainly from pagan authors and they date from Julian’s reign or later; see above note 15.

²⁹ As Christianisation progressed in the later fourth century, the appreciation for this blending of pagan and Christian education began to wane. Lactantius for example, who attests to this kind of writing, was criticized by later Christian writers such as Jerome (writing shortly after 400) for his lack of concern with Christian matters; e. g. *ep.* 58.10: *utinam tam nostra adfirmare potuisset quam facile aliena destruxit*; for Lactantius see also Bowen and Garnsey 2003: 1-6 at 4. By comparison, Athanasius, who was not classically educated but had acquired his rhetorical and literary skills from reading earlier Christian literature, was later praised (by Gregory of Nazianzus, *or.* 21) for not having wasted his education on trivia but for having focused on the Bible and the Fathers; see Stead 1976: 121-37; Gemeinhardt 2011: 79-82 at 81. But Jerome’s and Gregory’s verdicts must be seen in context: Both were classically educated at the highest level and both still held on to the standards of their education. As Stead’s article makes clear, Athanasius got his rhetorical skills from somewhere, if not from pagan authors, then from classicising Christian writers. In either case, they met classical standards.

³⁰ See, for example, Sotinel 2010: VII; and, specifically on *notarii* and *exceptores* (as clerical staff of bishops), Teitler 1985; for the see of Rome also Noble 1990 (and above note 9).

³¹ This level could be very high, as is shown by the work of Marius Victorinus. Though not a bishop, this acclaimed Roman rhetor turned Christian boldly intervened in the doctrinal debates of the 350s by writing theological treatises and biblical commentaries resorting to the methods of the grammarian and philosopher. Fifty years later Jerome would severely criticise him for that (as he

Potamius of Lisbon, Fortunatianus of Aquileia or Hilary of Poitiers could use their skills to run worldly affairs, conduct politics (both in writing and in oral debates) and write biblical commentaries and doctrinal treatises. They all originated from the same core education.³² This education may not have been as highly elitist or refined as some courtiers might have liked it to be,³³ but it would have fulfilled standards comparable to those expected of other imperial officials, which would have enabled these bishops to interact at the highest political level.³⁴

It is possible to see this ‘worldliness’ of Christian bishops, their competence both in secular and ecclesiastical affairs, which resulted from a ‘dual’, classical-pagan *and* biblical-Christian education, in analogy to the medieval division between the liberal arts and theology. However, there was in Late Antiquity no precursor to that division. The late-antique situation was different. The liberal arts element, if one can call it that, focused on grammar and literary rhetoric, not on philosophy, and above all, there were no Christian liberal arts institutions. Instead, there was still a genuine and stark division between Christian (biblical) and pagan (classical) education. There really were no Christian educational institutions that rivalled the pagan institutions. Rather, the churches themselves, their catechumenate,³⁵ their liturgy and their preaching and teaching, *were* those institutions. They were there for ‘insiders’ only and had no wider public function, at least not in a direct sense.

There were under Constantius II influential Christian theologians and church leaders such as Athanasius whose formal classical education seems to have been limited but who nevertheless acquired effective standards of rhetoric.³⁶ Others, such

had criticised Lactantius; see above note 29); for recent discussions of Victorinus’s contributions see St. Cooper (‘Philosophical Exegesis in Marius Victorinus’s Commentaries on Paul’) and A. Cain (‘Jerome’s Pauline Commentaries between East and West: Tradition and Innovation in the Commentary on Galatians’), in Lössl and Watt 2011: 67-110; see also Baltes 2002; Lössl 2020.

³² When in the late 350s Potamius of Lisbon, author of several significant theological works, changed from an Orthodox to a Homoean position, he seems to have acquired agricultural estates (*fundi*) in the process; Faust. et Marcel. *lib. prec.* 9.32 (CSEL 35/1, 14-15); Conti 1998: 14; for the likely significance of such a transaction with regard to Potamius’ social and educational status see Brown 2012: 185-207; for somewhat similar features in the career of Fortunatianus of Aquileia (i. e. authorship of theological works, high politics involving the bishop of Rome and engagement in building projects) see Humphries 1999: 48-49.140-41.154-56.169-70.193-95; now also Dorfbauer 2013: 395-423, especially 409-18; for Hilary of Poitiers see Brennecke 1984. Hilary’s background seems to have been similar to that of Potamius and Fortunatianus. He too wrote theological works, but he positioned himself against the emperor; on his biography see Weedman 2007: 3-15.

³³ For contemporary (‘pagan’) criticism of Constantius’s alleged recruitment of ‘uneducated’ men to senior roles see Henck 2001: 182-83, and above notes 15 and 28.

³⁴ All these bishops were on Constantius’s ‘radar’. Potamius ‘invoked Constantius’s help’ against the Iberian church and received support; Conti 1998: 14. Hilary turned against the emperor, perhaps in support of a western usurper, Silvanus (see Brennecke 1984: 201-43), and even attacked him in a sharp personal invective, the *Liber II ad Constantium*; see Rocher 1987 and above note 14.

³⁵ For an overview of this institution in connection with the ritual of baptism see Lössl 2010: 122 and 149-51. Characteristically, more sophisticated and elaborate forms of catechesis only developed later in the fourth century. Most extant catechetical writings (for example by Ambrose, Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom or Augustine) date from the early 380s.

³⁶ The question of Athanasius’s education is muddled by the fact that the author of the *Vita Antonii* was classically educated. If it is agreed that Athanasius was not that author, the case that Athanasius was not classically educated is stronger. In the latter case his lack of education did not

as Marius Victorinus,³⁷ were highly educated and wrote theological works which were deeply influenced by the study of philosophy, grammar and rhetoric, but which seem to have had only limited immediate impact within Christianity. Others again, such as Hilary of Poitiers,³⁸ Marcellus of Ancyra,³⁹ or Apolinarius of Laodicea,⁴⁰ brought to bear their skills and experience in grammar and rhetoric in their theologies, just as Origen had done a century before.⁴¹

Yet there existed in early Christianity no philosophical propaedeutic that could have functioned as an ancillary science to improve the quality of logical argument and thus raise the level of theological reflection. Christian teachers, who worked within the classical (pagan) education system, taught grammar and rhetoric and may have tried to introduce Christian content into their teaching, but ultimately their curriculum was the same as that for pagan students. After all, many of those students wanted to join the imperial administration or other lucrative careers.⁴² But even those who became church men and focused on the study of the Bible, did apply methods of classical grammar and philology just as the pagan classical scholars and philosophical commentators did to their canonical texts.⁴³ Christians may have rejected the cultural and religious foundations of classical education, which was reflected in its literary canon, but they still became grammarians and rhetors;⁴⁴ and pagan grammarians and rhetors who converted to Christianity continued to use their pagan knowledge to engage with foundational questions regarding traditional education.⁴⁵

prevent him, however, from being politically highly effective and even from developing a very effective and eloquent style of writing; see Gemeinhardt 2011 and above note 29.

³⁷ See above note 31.

³⁸ Hilary's rhetorical style, influenced by Cicero and Quintilian, was already noted in Christian Antiquity, for example by Jerome, *ep.* 70.5: *Hilarius, meorum temporum confessor et episcopus, duodecim Quintiliani libros et stilo imitatus est et numero*; see also Kling 1909; Doignon 1971; Smulders 1995: 43.55. 64.71-79.82-87.142.

³⁹ That Marcellus had a background as a grammarian has been argued by Riedweg 1994: 129. 162. 175. Not unlike Hilary Marcellus came to fame as an author of sharp rhetorical invective. He wrote against a certain Asterius called the Sophist (the clue is in the name), and dedicated his work to the emperor, Constantine. Under the impression of this fact Seibt 1994: 241 called Marcellus an 'imperial theologian' ('Reichstheologe'). Parvis 2006: 9-11, is less confident about the level of his education ('adequate rather than top-drawer'), but concedes that unlike 'Athanasius and others' he was never accused by his enemies of lacking education.

⁴⁰ Apolinarius, whose polemical writing was possibly directed against Marcellus (among others) was a *lector* in the church of Laodicea, when in the early 330s he and his father, a *presbyter* in the same church, attended the classes of the sophist Epiphanius, probably Epiphanius of Petra, a pagan, who later taught in Athens; see Eunapius, *vit. soph.* (p. 79-80 Giangrande; p. 493-94 Wright); Socrates, *hist. eccl.* II 46.2-6; Sozomen, *hist. eccl.* VI 25.10-12; Marksches 2009: 52.60-61.

⁴¹ On him see Fürst 2011b: 13-32.

⁴² In the case of Marius Victorinus elements of Christian teaching have been found in his early, pagan, works (on Cicero's rhetoric); see Cooper 2011 (as above n. 31). On possible links between recruitment to the 'professions' and to the higher clergy during this period see now, for example (though limited to Italy), Sotinel 2010: VI; see above note 30. Hints at how worldly interests may have directed episcopal decision-making can be taken from individual careers; see for example above, note 32, on Potamius of Lisbon and Fortunatianus of Aquileia.

⁴³ See for this the classic studies by Schäublin 1974; Neuschäfer 1987; Young 1997.

⁴⁴ For examples see above note 19.

⁴⁵ Before the end of the fourth century this was by far the more common phenomenon.

THE (NEAR-) ABSENCE OF AN ESTABLISHED TRADITION OF
CHRISTIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

As already indicated, by the first half of the fourth century no Christian institutions of higher learning existed which could have provided the kind of qualifications which pagan schools of grammar, rhetoric and philosophy provided for those who wanted to take up any type of higher office in the Empire including that of bishop.⁴⁶ All that can be said is that there were Christian teachers of grammar and rhetoric, who catered for Christians and non-Christians alike and taught Biblical Studies by using grammatical and philosophical techniques. As far as established Christian schools of higher learning are concerned, however, the only case that can be cited with at least some certainty is the traditionally so-called ‘catechetical’ School of Alexandria,⁴⁷ reportedly founded at some point in the last two decades of the second century.⁴⁸ Other schools that are also sometimes mentioned as ‘Christian schools’, for example Caesarea,⁴⁹ merely serve to underline the uniqueness of Alexandria. Unlike Alexandria, which actually functioned as a school over a longer period of time (with a curriculum, a succession of heads and a body of students), Caesarea was more like a centre of research, attached to a substantial library and consisting of a body of scholars, many of whom were Christians, and who developed new types of scholarship, especially in Biblical and historical studies, but it was not a Christian school like Alexandria.⁵⁰

But what was ‘Christian’ even in the case of the ‘School of Alexandria’? What we know of the history of the school in the third century indicates that this may be a difficult and problematic question. Pantainos, the founder, seems to have been a Stoic philosopher who merely happened to be a Christian.⁵¹ Whether he had links with other Christian teachers who were active during his period, for example his

⁴⁶ For a similar conclusion see also Harris 1989: 319, who observes a general decline in educational standards during the later third and early fourth century and writes in the light of this finding: ‘The continuing lack of a specifically Christian educational programme in the fourth century may in fact have put the Christians at a disadvantage in this respect.’

⁴⁷ The expression ‘catechetical’ goes back to Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* VI 3.3, where the school is referred to as τῆς κατηχήσεως διδασκαλείον. But κατήγησις means generally ‘instruction’ and from a number of other expressions which Eusebius used for the school (e. g. ἡ τῶν πιστῶν διατριβή, ἡ κατ’ Ἀλεξανδρείαν κατήγησις, τὸ κατ’ Ἀλεξανδρείαν διδασκαλείον; *hist. eccl.* V 10.1/4; V 6; 29.4) it seems clear that he did not think of it as a school for catechumens, but more as a kind of philosophical school which would have also been accessible to non-Christians, but with Christian teachers (i. e. τῶν πιστῶν should be understood as a *genitivus subiectivus*); for a discussion of this question see Fürst 2007: 39-40; further accounts include Bardy 1937: 65-90; Le Boulluec 1987: 403-417; Scholten 1995: 16-37 (who pioneered the idea that the ‘catechetical school’ was really a philosophical school); Van den Hoek 1997: 59-87.

⁴⁸ Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* V 9 dates its foundation by Pantainos in the reign of Commodus (180-192AD); for a discussion of the date see Fürst 2007: 38.

⁴⁹ For Caesarea see the outlines offered by Liebeschuetz 1991: 899.

⁵⁰ For the innovative and progressive nature of the scholarship practised at Caesarea in the third and fourth centuries see Grafton and Williams 2006.

⁵¹ See Fürst 2007: 36-42.

fellow Alexandrian, Clement, is not certain.⁵² Origen, who is attested as head of the school in the first two to three decades of the third century,⁵³ was in the first instance a grammarian and continued to teach pagan literature (according to the classical canon) until the school was taken into ecclesiastical control by bishop Demetrius of Alexandria.⁵⁴ It seems clear that when Origen took over the school, he was expecting to teach ‘Christian philosophy’ in more or less the same manner as the teachers of the second century.⁵⁵ Pantainos, who has been compared in this respect to teachers such as Basilides, Valentinus, Heracleon, Hermogenes, Apelles and others, had done the same. It was later tradition, from Irenaeus onwards, that turned these second century teachers into heretics and their schools into ‘sects’ (αἱρέσεις; originally Greek αἵρεσις merely meant ‘school’).

The episcopal takeover of the school of Alexandria by Demetrius in the third century put an end to any academic independence the School of Alexandria may have had. Origen’s successor Heraclas became a presbyter and later bishop of Alexandria and as such took the school under his and the church’s control.⁵⁶

This development reveals a fundamental difference in interest between school heads and bishops, which can be seen as a decisive factor in the abortive attempt of making Christian philosophy a mainstream pursuit. For theological teachers in general, doctrinal diversity arising from the application of grammatical, rhetorical, literary and other analytical techniques to canonical and other texts and traditional teachings was a vital engine of theological discourse, whereas bishops saw in it a force that could (and in many cases did) cause division and split in their churches. Their tendency therefore was to suppress any such diversity, which in their view only led to opposition and dissent. This could be one of the reasons why, as higher education began gradually to be restored under the Tetrarchs after the crisis of the mid- to late third century, there was no strong Christian educational infrastructure that could have offered itself as an alternative to the old schools of grammar and rhetoric, even if anyone (including Christians) would have actively sought such an alternative.⁵⁷ Leading Christian intellectuals of the period clearly seem not to have done so. Christian grammarians, as we saw, were happy to continue their work in pagan schools. It took nearly another century, until the sixth century, to develop even the concept of a Christian education programme.⁵⁸

⁵² See Fürst 2007: 39.

⁵³ According to Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* VI 3.3 Origen became head of the school in 203, at the age of 18; for a discussion of the evidence see Fürst 2011a: 63.

⁵⁴ According to Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* VI 3.8 (VI 14.11; 19.19) Demetrius allowed only Origen to teach, who then stopped teaching (pagan) literature: ...αὐτῷ μόνῳ τῆς τοῦ κατηγεῖν διατριβῆς ὑπὸ Δημητρίου τοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας προεστῶτος ἐπιτετραμμένης, ἀσύμφωνον ἠγησάμενος τὴν τῶν γραμματικῶν λόγων διδασκαλίαν τῇ πρὸς τὰ θεῖα παιδεύματα ἀσκήσει...; for a wider discussion of the situation see Fürst 2011a: 71-74.

⁵⁵ For the social history of these schools see Lampe 2003: 206-430; Fürst 2007; for a survey of their main teachings, Marjanen and Luomanen 2005; for the context of their depiction as ‘heresies’ Glucker 1978; for the links between heresy and church, Cancik 2011: 312-34.

⁵⁶ Fürst 2011a: 74-76.

⁵⁷ An example of such a restoration event is presented by the *Latin Panegyric* of Eumenius, *Paneg. Lat.* IX; see Nixon and Rodgers 1994 (above note 8).

⁵⁸ See for example Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* or the epistolary corpus of Jerome. It is true, as was already pointed out by Downey 1957: 48-61 at 54-56, that already Lactantius put

IMPERIAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION AND THEOLOGY –
CONSTANTINE TO CONSTANTIUS II

Thus during the reign of Constantine the Great and his sons, education still meant in essence ‘pagan’, classical, or liberal arts education, and although Constantine’s own level of education seems to have been limited, and despite his own leanings towards Christianity, he took care of his sons’ education and thus contributed to a cultural tension at the heart of his government. This tension, it seems, increased already during the reign of Constantius II and then exploded under Julian in order subsequently to be gradually accommodated in the later fourth and throughout the fifth centuries.⁵⁹

Our knowledge of the education both of Constantine and his sons is scant.⁶⁰ Only of Constantius II we know a little more.⁶¹ Glanvill Downey, following the verdict of A. H. M. Jones, still described Constantine’s education as ‘scrappy’.⁶² His style, according to Jones, ‘betrays the muddled thinking of a semi-educated man’.⁶³ More recent accounts are far less dismissive.⁶⁴ Constantine may have received some education at Nicomedia and attended, for example, Lactantius’s classes.⁶⁵ Eusebius also mentions that he knew some Greek, enough to intervene at the Council of Nicaea.⁶⁶ But however much it may have been, it was built on solid foundations. Constantine’s underlying judgement, as above all his actions suggest, was sound

forward some rudimentary ideas regarding the normative character of Christian truth and its independence from traditional classical education, which according to Downey makes the Christian educational ideal look more ‘democratic’ than ‘aristocratic’. But the scant history of these ideas in the fourth century underlines the point made in this article that classical pagan education remained a dominant cultural force for the time being even and especially among Christians. As will be shown in the next section, it was *Christian* emperors’, Constantine’s and Constantius’, educational policy measures that created a ‘pull factor’ which compelled even Christian bishops to acquire a classical education to be able to fulfill the public duties expected of them; see for this also below note 84 on *Cod. Theod.* 14.1.1. The educational dimension of the early monastic movement in Egypt from the 330s on is outside the scope of this article; see e. g. Rubenson 2012; Larsen and Rubenson 2018.

⁵⁹ See Cameron 2011 (in general) and Watts 2015 (for the fourth century in particular).

⁶⁰ For an overview see the seminal treatment by Downey 1957; for more recent discussions see the footnotes below.

⁶¹ See Henck 2001; for a possible reference to another member of the Imperial family, perhaps Constantine II or Dalmatius, see Ausonius, *prof.* 5.16.14-15, who mentions the rhetor Aemilius Magnus Arborius as tutor of a young Caesar in Constantinople. Constantine II was made Caesar in March 317, Dalmatius in September 335.

⁶² Downey 1957: 50.

⁶³ Jones 1948: 58.

⁶⁴ See e. g. Van Dam 2011: 110, who points to the witness of Praxagoras (see below note 65) and the possibility that Constantine may have attended Lactantius’ classes.

⁶⁵ A pagan historian, Praxagoras, is reported to have written a laudatory history of Constantine’s rise, in which highlights the fact that the young Constantine was sent by his father to Nicomedia to receive his education; *FGrH* 219, preserved in Photius, *Bibl. cod.* 62.6: τὸν οὖν Κωνσταντῖνον ὁ πατὴρ πέμπει παρὰ Διοκλητιανὸν εἰς Νικομήδειαν παιδευθησόμενον.

⁶⁶ Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* III 13: πρῶος τε ποιούμενος τὰς πρὸς ἕκαστον ὁμιλίας ἐλληνίζων τε τῇ φωνῇ, ὅτι μηδὲ ταύτης ἀμαθῶς εἶχεν, γλυκερός τις ἦν καὶ ἡδύς; cf. *Anon. Vales.* II 2; Downey, 1957: 51; see now also Van Dam 2007: 194-200.

and well founded. Downey cites a passage from *Cod. Theod.* 5.20.1 as an example of the staunch conservatism at the root of his thinking: ‘To insist upon the ancient customs is the discipline of future times. Therefore, when nothing interferes that is in the public interest, practices which have long been observed shall remain valid.’⁶⁷

For Eusebius, Constantine was above all a ruler, not a thinker. Without comment he cites the decrees that summoned the bishops of Italy and Gaul to synods in Rome and Arles (in 313 and 314).⁶⁸ As Hanns Christof Brennecke suggests, these decrees may well have come as a shock to these bishops.⁶⁹ Only months earlier the state had been at war with them. Now it demanded loyalty and obedience. For these summons were no friendly, let alone optional, invitations, but fierce instruments of imperial power. Just as the transport offered by the imperial post or the aid of the stenographers who were appointed to record the synodal sessions, they could result in advancement (for some) as well as in punishment (for others).⁷⁰

The personal, involved, style of most of Constantine’s extant official documents has been noted by contemporaries as well as by modern scholars.⁷¹ They reveal, as Eusebius also relates, a self-improving side of Constantine. He seems to have been keen to keep on learning, to communicate his insights and to express himself directly,⁷² even though the results may not always have been overwhelmingly impressive in terms of rhetorical style and philosophical sophistication,⁷³ or, for that matter, effectiveness. At one point Eusebius’s *Life of Constantine* contrasts the simplicity and clumsiness of Constantine’s attempts to ‘preach’ to members of his court with the lack of positive change achieved by these attempts. They risked bringing the entire regime into disrepute, or so Eusebius seems to suggest.⁷⁴

As impressive as Constantine’s own educational achievements were considering the circumstances, he clearly envisaged an education of better quality for his sons when he appointed on one hand ‘men of proven piety’ (εὐσεβεία δεδοκιμασμένους ἄνδρας) for their ‘sacred studies’ (θεῖοις μαθήμασι) and on the other hand ‘top-notch professors’, or ‘tutors’ (καθηγητὰς εἰς ἄκρον ἤκοντας) for their ‘secular learning’ (τῶν ἕξωθεν λόγων).⁷⁵ These latter phrases echo Libanius’s comment that

⁶⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 5.20.1 (date uncertain): *Venientium est temporum disciplina instare veteribus institutis. Ideoque cum nihil per causam publicam intervenit, quae diu servata sunt permanebunt.*

⁶⁸ Eusebius, *hist. eccl.* X 5.18-20.21-24.

⁶⁹ See Brennecke 2007: 25-48 at 25-26.

⁷⁰ For an example from the end of Constantine’s rule, his summons to the synod of Tyre in 335 (see Eusebius, *vit. Const.* IV 42), see Barnard 1983: 23.

⁷¹ Dörries 1954 has collected at least 51 extant documents issued in Constantine’s name, almost all concerned with ecclesiastical matters. Jones 1948: 58 (as already mentioned above note 63) saw them as expressions of ‘muddled thinking’.

⁷² See Eusebius, *vit. Const.* IV 29-33; Cameron and Hall 1999: 163-65.324-26 (commentary).

⁷³ The surviving *Oration to the Saints*, ascribed to Constantine, could be one of the orations referred to by Eusebius; see Edwards 2003: 1-62. In its content and style (profession of a straightforward monotheism and faith in Christ, condemnation of paganism and of persecuting emperors) it seems closer to the apologies of the second and third centuries than to the fourth century.

⁷⁴ Eusebius, *vit. Const.* IV 31: ...τοῦτο δὴ μομφὴν οὐ τὴν τυχοῦσαν τῇ καθόλου διοικήσει παρείχεν...

⁷⁵ Eusebius, *vit. Const.* IV 51: κληρὸν δ’ ἀγαθὸν καὶ ψυχῆς σωτήριον τοῖς αὐτοῖς προϊζόμενος τὰ θεοσεβείας αὐτοῖς ἐνίει σπέρματα, θεῖοις μὲν προσάγων μαθήμασι, διδασκάλους δ’ ἐφιστὰς εὐσεβεία δεδοκιμασμένους ἄνδρας, καὶ τῶν ἕξωθεν δὲ λόγων καθηγητὰς ἐτέρους εἰς ἄκρον ἤκοντας

Constantius, among others, ‘was moulded for the power of his argument and the forcefulness of his eloquence’.⁷⁶ At the same time, his cousin Julian adds, ‘his mind was adorned with literary studies’ as well.⁷⁷ All these witnesses attest to the high esteem in which the study of grammar and rhetoric was held among Christians as well as pagans and that such studies were considered as demanding and tough.⁷⁸ At some point even the hostile Athanasius addresses Constantius, flattering, as a ‘lover of learning’ (φιλόλογος).⁷⁹

Constantius’s confidence in his learning may be illustrated by his relationship with Themistius.⁸⁰ The two men first met in 347 in Ancyra, when Themistius delivered a panegyric to the emperor. Constantius offered him a teaching post at Constantinople, where Themistius eventually became a member of the senate and was put in charge of academic appointments. According to Libanius Constantius even invited him to join him at table, surely a favour he would not have granted him had he not derived some pleasure from it himself.⁸¹

In 349 Libanius himself was summoned to Constantinople⁸² and taught there for a time alongside a great number of other rhetoricians and philosophers of his generation. At one point Themistius compared the great library and scriptorium which Constantius had built as a centre of learning to a market where ‘the elect’ could purchase learning and eloquence.⁸³ Constantius in turn committed himself in programmatic statements and even in law to the promotion of liberal arts education. No man who had not achieved a certain standard in it (to the extent that he was able to speak correctly without giving offence) should be allowed to hold a higher rank.⁸⁴

This link between liberal arts education and professional careers gave the education system a boost and also acted as a pull factor for ‘careers’ in the Church. For bishops from whom the emperors expected support in upholding law and order in the empire it was not enough to be εὐσεβεία δοκιμασμένοι, they had to be εἰς ἄκρον ἦκοντες too.

παιδεύσεως τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐπίστη. On καθηγήτης as ‘tutor’ see Glucker 1978: 424-48. However, the point here is that the καθηγηταί are representing classical pagan, not Biblical Christian, education.

⁷⁶ Libanius, *or.* 59.33: τῆ δὲ πρὸς δεινότητα λόγων καὶ ῥητορικῆς ἰσχὺν ἐπλάττοντο.

⁷⁷ Julian, *or.* 1.10d: ...τὴν ψυχὴν δὲ τῆ τῶν λόγων ἐκόσμεις μελέτη.

⁷⁸ Δεινότης, power and vigour, was considered an important property in speech and specially trained; see, for example, Hermogenes, *On Types of Speech* (tr. Wooten 1987: 101-107).

⁷⁹ Athanasius, *apol. ad Const.* 18; for further references see Henck 2001: 172-74.

⁸⁰ See Vanderspoel 1995.

⁸¹ Libanius, *ep.* 52.1-2: ...ὡς αὐθις συγγένοιο τῷ βασιλεῖ ... παρὰ δὲ τῆς φήμης ταῦτά τε καὶ πλείω, τιμαὶ τε ὅτι σοι μείζους ἢ πρότερον γένοιτο τραπέζης τε κοινωρία πλείω δηλοῦσα τὴν οικειότητα ... καὶ ὡς ὁ διδοὺς παρήει τὴν τοῦ λαμβάνοντος ἡδονήν.

⁸² See Norman 1965: 167-8; Barnes, 1987b: 206-25 at 207-11. Himerius was in Constantinople from 343 to 352; for further names see Henck 2001: 177.

⁸³ Themist. *or.* 4.61b: καὶ ἤξουσιν ὑμῖν ἐπὶ ταύτην τὴν ἐμπορίαν οὐ κάπηλοι καὶ ναῦται καὶ φορτικὸς ὄχλος, ἀλλ’ οἱ ἔκκριτοι καὶ φιλομαθέστατοι καὶ ὅ τι ἄντος Ἑλλήνων, λόγοι καὶ παιδεία τὰ ἀγοράσματα.

⁸⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 14.1.1 (24 February 357): *nequaquam aliquis locum primi ordinis adipiscatur nisi is quem constiterit studiorum liberalium usu adque exercitatione pollere et ita esse litteris expolitum ut citra offensam vitii ex eodem verba procedant*; see also Constantius’s oration to Themistius, *or. Const.* 20b-c, cited in Henck 2001: 179.

And sure enough, the reign of Constantius did produce such bishops. Eusebius of Caesarea and Marcellus of Ancyra had already been active under Constantine.⁸⁵ They were now joined by Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Ancyra, Eusebius of Emesa, Theodorus of Herakleia, Triphylius of Ledra, Asterius, Potamius of Lisbon, Lucifer of Cagliari, Fortunatianus of Aquileia, Acacius of Caesarea, Serapion of Thmuis, Hilary of Poitiers, Gregory of Elvira and Phoebadius of Agen.⁸⁶

Constantius in turn involved himself heavily in Church affairs. In the twenty years between 340 and 360 we count no fewer than around twenty major synods or councils across the empire.⁸⁷ Constantius, although often absent, mostly on military campaigns, attended several of them in person and monitored others closely with the help of trusted advisers and officials.⁸⁸ It is true that most of his initiatives ultimately failed and when he died in 361 he had not achieved unity among the divided parties. However, it is not correct, as Ammianus suggests,⁸⁹ that his initiatives were driven by an old-womanish superstitious hysteria, or marred by excessive leniency and loss of control over a Christian episcopate rushing to and fro and clogging up the imperial lines of communication.

The fact is, as this article has hopefully shown, albeit only in some rough brush strokes, that the social and cultural universe in which the members of the court, the administrative elites and the leaders of the Christian churches moved, had deeply and dramatically changed since the time of the beginning of Constantine's rule.⁹⁰ One such area of dramatic change was the state of education of those involved in the Christian doctrinal controversies during Constantius' reign, including of the emperor himself. Having acquired an excellent literary-rhetorical education one of Constantius's ambitions was to make Constantinople into a thriving centre of such learning. This inevitably led to the rise of pagan intellectuals on one hand, some of whom would prove hostile towards Christianity, and to a pull-factor on the other, in the sense that many Christians were drawn into the world of secular learning as well.

The presence of increasingly rhetorically gifted and intellectually sophisticated theologians at the church councils repeatedly proved frustrating for attendants. The fact that it could not easily be suppressed attests to its increasing importance for the running of these councils. Thus a report about the Council of Sirmium in 351 decries that Photinus, the bishop of Sirmium, although already deposed twice (in

⁸⁵ See above notes 19, 29 and 39.

⁸⁶ For this list, excerpted from Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, see Henck 2001: 185. That Jerome needs to be used with caution, has recently been shown for Fortunatianus of Aquileia. As Dorfbauer 2013: 420-23 points out, in *ep.* 10 (dating from between 375 and 380) Jerome praises Fortunatianus' commentary on Matthew as splendid and eloquent, in the dedicatory letter to his homilies on Luke from 392 he refers to it as 'dull' (*hebes*) and in *De viris illustribus* as *sermone rustico*.

⁸⁷ For a comprehensive list see Brennecke et al. 2014: 636-37; Hanson 1988: 906-7.

⁸⁸ According to Hanson 1988: 284.294.325 and 351 he was present at Antioch in 341, Sirmium in 351, Arles in 353 and Sirmium in 357. During the meetings at Serdica in 343 he was at the frontier in Persia, while his brother Constans attended. The meetings at Rimini, Seleucia and Constantinople in 359 and 360 were led by officials and trusted advisers, leading among them Acacius of Caesarea.

⁸⁹ See above note 14 on Amm. Marc. 21.16.18.

⁹⁰ Compare also Drake 2006: 111-136 at 111: 'The impact of Constantine on Christianity can be summarized fairly quickly: during the thirty years of his reign, more change took place in the status, structure, and beliefs of the Christian Church than during any previous period of its history.'

Milan 345 and in Sirmium 347) was still continuing openly to promote his heretical teachings, even in the presence of the emperor, because he was able to ‘speak well’ (εὖ λέγειν) and to ‘persuade’ (πείθειν); and therefore, thus the report, he was able to seduce many and made them accept his opinion.⁹¹ Good speaking and persuasive arguing, as we know already, was something Constantius greatly appreciated, and something which belonged essentially to the context of the late-antique schools, including Christian schools.

However, as we have also seen, this ethos of allowing opposing opinions to prevail was not shared by the predominant leadership of the Church. Already Irenaeus, at the end of the second century, had decried the plurality of heretical teachings and wished for greater doctrinal unity. Origen had to experience that in Alexandria, too, a school offering a variety of opinions on doctrinal matters was not something the bishop would tolerate. Constantine had somehow understood and managed this. But arguably, the bishops of his generation were not yet as formidable and strong-headed as some of those in office under his sons would turn out to be. At the same time, Constantius’ governing style seems to have been far more refined, especially in his dealings with well educated intellectuals; and many of the Christian bishops were of this kind.

While it was not the aim of this article to absolve Constantius of all mistakes he may have made in getting involved in the doctrinal controversies of his time,⁹² it was the intention to explain certain characteristics of his governing style as well as certain circumstantial developments during his reign. Certain developments during his reign, to which he contributed significantly, not least his promotion of higher education and his involvement with the Church, also contributed to the development of Christian theology in Late Antiquity, what has sometimes been called the ‘golden age of Patristic theology’, and to the later distinction in the Christian West between theology and liberal arts, as it became entrenched in the disciplines of the medieval university and is still recognised today.

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⁹¹ Sozomen, *hist. eccl.* IV 6.1: Ἐν τούτῳ δὲ Φωτεινὸς τὴν ἐν Σιρμίῳ ἐκκλησίαν ἐπιτροπεύων, ἤδη πρότερον καινῆς αἵρέσεως εἰσηγητῆς γενόμενος, ἔτι τοῦ βασιλέως ἐνδημοῦντος ἐνθάδε ἀναφανδὸν τῷ οικείῳ συνίστατο δόγματι. φύσεως δὲ ἔχων εὖ λέγειν, καὶ πείθειν ἰκανὸς πολλοὺς εἰς τὴν ὁμοίαν ἑαυτῷ δόξαν ἐπηγάγετο. See Brennecke et al. 2014: 326-27.

⁹² Compare the critique of Klein 1977 by Hanson 1988: 318, that although Klein ‘has indeed made a good case for a re-assessment of Constantius, ... one gains the impression from his book that Constantius could do no wrong.’ Against Hanson it might be argued, however, that rather than apportion blame the historian should try to explain. In that respect Klein’s book has been rather successful without being apologetic.

who were listening and engaging in discussion and thereby added so much pleasure to the final work. I am under no illusion that many errors, faults and shortcomings remain. These are, however, entirely my own responsibility.

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