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Eastern Illinois University

Chreia and Lives of Saints: A study of hagiography as an evolved
rhetorical genre in Late Antiquity

A Thesis Submitted to The Faculty of the College of Arts and
Humanities

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

By

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Charleston, Illinois

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Abstract:

Hagiography has often confused historians over what practical application this genre of Christian literature has when read as primary sources. In this project I will show that hagiography can read as an evolution of an earlier pagan style rooted in the *paideia* of ancient scholars. *Chreia* exercises were performed by students of *paideia* in order to instruct them on how to write about figures worth emulating such as Diogenes or Alexander the Great. Christian authors did not participate in a hermetically sealed education system but took part in the same schooling as their pagan peers. Hagiographies are structurally and functionally very similar to *chreia* exercises and should be read in the same way. Moreover, Christian authors injected their own morals and ethics into hagiography making a conscious effort to change from the pagan past into a Christian future. In so doing Christian authors were participating in a wider trend of overall Christianization in the late Roman Empire.

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I would never have been able to finish this project without the constant reinforcement and support from my professors here at EIU. In the years between when I graduated with my Bachelors in 2013 and when I returned in 2019, I never thought I would have a chance at attaining a MA degree. I had a rather serious on-boarding process where I had to remember how to be a student again. This would have been impossible without the professors. In particular I would like to thank Drs. Patterson, Elder, Key, Young, Lee as well as Prof. Mann. I do apologize for my overly dense and/or vague language. I would also like to thank my therapist Dr. Dan O'Grady for listening to my constant complaining about work and the mundanity of life. My parents for taking care of me as all good parents must of their children, this is a debt I will never be able to repay. Lastly, I must acknowledge Dostoyevsky for putting me on this path of religious inquiry. It is to *The Brothers Karamazov* that I blame entirely for my obsession in seeking to understand Christian history.

Table of Contents:

Introduction: 6 – 19

Chapter 1: Rhetoric and Paideia 20 – 38

Chapter 2: The Christianization of the Roman Empire 39 – 55

Chapter 3: Hagiography and Chreia 56 – 72

Conclusion: 73

Bibliography: 75-78

Abbreviations:Ammianus Marcellinus:

Amm.

Athanasius of Alexandria:

Anth. Life of Saint Anthony

Augustine of Hippo:

Conf. The Confessions

De civ D City of God

Eusebius:

Hist. eccl. History of the Church

Vit. Const. Life of Constantine

Gregory of Nyssa:

Greg. Thaum. On the Life and Wonders of our Father among the Saints, Gregory the

Wonderworker

Libanius:

Prog. Libanius' Progymnasmata

Marcus Aurelius:

Med. The Meditations

Sulpicius Severus:

Mart. Life of Saint Martin

Introduction

St. Anthony of Egypt was not a man of half-measures. It was this character trait that compelled him to travel far out into the deserts of Egypt in the mid to late third and early fourth centuries to better commune with God and avoid any temptations of the secular world. This extreme conviction was believed to be the source of Anthony's ability to dispel demons and witchery. Despite his best wishes, Anthony had cause to visit Alexandria in 311 during the waning days of the Great Persecution. What he saw in Alexandria must have compelled him to action as Anthony positioned himself directly outside the governor's estate demanding to be martyred for the Christian faith. Anthony's wish would have to wait as "the Lord was keeping him for (Christianity's) profit and that of others, that he should become a teacher" (Athanasius, *Anth.* 46). He would never create a school or monastery himself, but some students would attempt to receive instruction from the reclusive Anthony. There is a lot else to be said about Anthony, but for now it is important to highlight that he is praised in his hagiography for being separate from the wider world. The wider world in this context meaning the Roman Empire.¹

St. Martin of Tours, however, is markedly different from Anthony. Not only was Martin a bishop, but he was extremely dedicated to the destruction of paganism wherever he found it. Martin was so earnest in his destructive rampages that he once mistook a funeral procession as a pagan ritual and even received angelic assistance in "(putting) to flight the (pagan) multitude" while assaulting a pagan shrine (Sulpicius Severus, *Mart.* 14). In succinct fashion, these two examples can be used to show how radically different the position of Christianity was within the Roman

¹ Sections 12 and 13 detail Anthony's retreat into the desert away from civilization. Indeed, while trekking into the desert Anthony notices a trail of gold coins almost left for him. Anthony is resolute, however, and "passed (the coins) by as though he were going over fire; so he did not even turn, but hurried on at a run to lose sight of the place. More and more confirmed in his purpose, he hurried to the mountain..."

Empire at the beginning of the fourth century and by the end of the same century. Anthony is actively seeking martyrdom at the hands of pagan persecutors. Martin is so active in his destruction of paganism that he is often overcome with religious zeal which blinds him to reality.

The accounts of both these men come from a literary genre called Saints' Lives or hagiography which detail the exploits of the subject under investigation. *The Life of St. Anthony* was written by Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria in the mid to late fourth century. *The Life of St. Martin* was written by Christian author Sulpicius Severus of Aquitania in the mid fifth century. Part biography and part encomium, hagiography has often confused historians. Primary sources of all kinds are valued for their ability to view the world from the viewpoint of the culture that created it, hagiography is routinely filled with stories so outlandish that it defies all plausibility. For example, St. Martin in his religious zeal was even reported to have preached to the literal devil himself (Sulp. Sev. *Mart.* 22). St. Anthony was able to quell the beastly nature of crocodiles through prayer (Athanasius *Anth.* 15). On the surface, there appears to be little historical value in literal interpretations of hagiography aside from broad themes. Martin battling with paganism openly reveals that Christians were more overt in their proselytizing in the late fourth century, yes, but receiving angelic assistance is a bridge too far in terms of believability. Hagiography is often read between the lines or within the margins for this reason. Some historians, such as David Frankfurter, argue that there is great value within hagiography if one reads deeper and disregards the polemical nature of these texts. Frankfurter uses the *Life of Shenoute*, a Coptic saint, to highlight Egyptian resistances to Christianization and attempts to

reconstruct the religious practices of late antique Egyptians. In this Frankfurter is largely successful, but still acknowledges that many historians see little value in hagiography.²

Should hagiography be consigned to a mostly irrelevant position then? I do not believe so and echo Claudia Rapp who asserts that hagiography should be read as a Christian retexturing of older rhetorical styles of writing which formed the curriculum for students of *paideia*.³ *Paideia* is the Greek for education and is often used to identify the education ancient students would receive in the Roman Empire. *Paideia* emphasized oratory, schematic writing styles, and a severe fondness for rigidity in almost all aspects of life. An emphasis on the classics of Greek and Roman literature and philosophy was also a fundamental aspect of the education regime. Rapp specifically mentions that hagiography can read as an evolution of the rhetorical exercise called *chreia*. A direct translation of *chreia* is far too reductive as the word can be translated to “saying,” but that misses the point. As a form of rhetorical writing, *chreia* was used by ancient authors to highlight a tidbit of wisdom they felt was essential to convey. It is important to note that ancient authors never intended for *chreia* to be taken as literal fact. They were used to offer a more perfect representation of the subject and to boil down an essential truth that the audience was supposed to receive. Ammianus Marcellinus’ history of the fourth century is not extant, but his representation of the pagan emperor Julian is complete. In one instance of Marcellinus’ history, Julian defuses a tense situation with a simple use of rhetoric. The important takeaway for

² David Frankfurter, “Hagiography and the Reconstruction of Local Religion in late Antique Egypt: Memories, Inventions, and Landscapes,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 86, no. ¼ (2006), 13-37. Frankfurter begins his article noting that “The (utility of saints’ lives) comes up repeatedly in the study of later Antiquity, but the answers have long devolved into two diametrically opposite camps. On the one hand, there are those historians who draw on hagiography as virtual documentation of ancient attitudes and events...on the other hand, there are historians who...find themselves incapable of using the texts in any productive way for social history.”

³ Claudia Rapp, “The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism: Purpose and Genre Between Tradition and Innovation,” in *Unclassical Traditions: Alternatives to the Classic past in Late Antiquity Vol. 1*, ed. Christopher Kelly, Richard Flower, Michael Stuart Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society: 2010), 119-30.

the reader is that Julian was able to solve an entire crisis with a single sentence turning his opponent's words against him (Amm.18.1.4).⁴ If one looks at the previous examples of *Martin* and *Anthony* again the stories seem to take another dimension. When St. Martin preaches to the devil that Christ would even forgive the sins of the Great Trickster, it is less important to the intended elite audience of late antiquity that it really happened and more important that Martin was preaching to, in this case, the embodiment of malice. No matter how wicked or terrifying the audience, proselytizing was the correct choice. Moreover, reading hagiography in this way can highlight a cultural turn within the Roman Empire in late antiquity towards Christianity. The structure of Christian writings can be read as similar to older pagan examples, but the content was changing and not just in obvious ways. Indeed, even the content, structure, and language employed by Christian authors would change over the centuries.

In the following pages, I will offer a definition of hagiography that historians can use when engaging with the material. A lot of historiography involving hagiography questions the value of these primary sources. I believe that hagiography can be viewed as rhetorical devices employed by Christian authors to emphasize their ideal versions of figures they were writing about. Hagiography can also be seen as a reflection of the wider trend of Christians coopting previous pagan cultural or structural practices to further Christianize the empire. Hagiography is an evolution of a former style, so a fair amount of reading against the grain must be employed as well. My methodology will be mostly intellectual with a heavy emphasis of text-based sources

⁴ "(The) trial was thrown open to the public, and Julian showed unusual strictness in his examination. Numerius denied the charge (of embezzlement), and his defense could not be shaken at any point. The lack of proof so infuriated Delphidius, who was attacking him violently in a fiery speech for the prosecution, that he exclaimed: 'Will anyone ever be found guilty, your highness, if denial is enough to secure acquittal?' Julian on the spur of the moment countered him with this shrewd rejoinder: 'Will anyone ever be acquitted if accusation is enough to secure conviction?'"

owing to the fact that hagiography is a literary genre of Christian writings that evolved from older pagan rhetorical exercises.

Historiography

Many laymen still hold a conception of late antiquity as a general period of decline into a primeval dark age. While the western half of the empire ceased to exist after 476 with the death of the last western emperor Romulus Augustulus, the eastern half of the empire would weather on for almost another thousand years. The dynamic Islamic power of the Rashidun is another clear example that the period of late antiquity and the early medieval ages was anything but dark. Late antiquity was an era of radical change in the wider Mediterranean world with the rise of the new world religions of Christianity and Islam, the creation of new kingdoms across what was the western Roman Empire, as well as the rapid expansion of Islam and Arab culture across Arabia, Persia, North Africa, and Iberia. The historiography of late antiquity is extremely active asking questions about conceptions of self and community investigating what role bishops and other “notables” had in the waning days of imperial power. Other questions are directed at the conflict between paganism and Christianity within the empire. Still other historians are focused on the minutia of faith hoping to explain why pagan traditions seemed to remain across the empire despite the apparent “triumph” of Christianity. A deeper analysis of the historiography will help to elucidate these points and better position my research into the whole.

It is impossible to speak of late antique historiography without making mention of Peter Brown. Brown has been working in the field since the late 1960s and is often credited with creating the term late antiquity. Brown’s major research contributions include “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity,” and *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a*

Christian Empire. His research was conducted in Syria where he explored the role of bishops and holy men within late antiquity. The overtly fascinating stylites, men who would sit atop tall pillars for extended periods, also formed a core aspect of Brown's research. Older social historians tended to view holy men as a democratizing force within the empire who championed a diluted form of religion that appealed to the basest elements of society. Brown disagreed with this assertion and instead argued that holy men were patrons of villages who were able to leverage their piety to represent communities when the Roman imperial system was either non-existent or of intermittent presence and authority.⁵ He has since expanded on these ideas writing in *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity* that holy men and bishops were able to use religion in order to motivate large bodies of people within urban areas. If the Roman state or other apparatuses of charity were lacking bishops were able to step in and claim or seize the role of charitable patron to the impoverished masses. This charity served two purposes in that it did fulfill Christian charity of providing for the less fortunate and either directly or indirectly compelled a sense of loyalty and obedience.⁶ For the purposes of this paper, it is important to remember that the subjects of hagiography were more often than not bishops themselves. Brown's research offers me a basis of examples and modes of conduct that bishops operated within which will offer metaphorical landmarks when investigating hagiography. Each bishop defined his own role, but there are certain similarities that can be established. Charity, piety, assertiveness, a knowledge of Scripture and the Greco-Roman classics were all essential for any bishop to fulfill his proselytizing mission and to navigate the world he inhabited.

⁵ Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of Holy Man in Late Antiquity" *The Journal of Roman Studies* Vol. 61 (1971), 85-8. These pages detail Brown's findings into the role of patronage in late antique Syria.

⁶ Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press: 1992), 71-117. Chapter three is titled "Poverty and Power" and focuses on the sometimes fierce desire of bishops to distribute alms.

Brown's work has been broadened by Claudia Rapp who agrees with his main arguments but takes a more focused look at bishops and holy men outside of a strictly economic role. Rapp's most important contribution is her assertion that bishops and holy men can be judged in three separate categories: spiritual, ascetic, and pragmatic authority. It is important to note that there was never a time in late antiquity when any of the three categories ceased to be valid, but that "What changed was the relative weight of these components" throughout late antiquity.⁷ The stylites wielded a tremendous amount of spiritual and ascetic authority, but lacked much of the pragmatic authority that made men such as Bishop Ambrose or Bishop Cyril so prominent for example. Rapp has also in recent years focused on hagiography and it is her argument that hagiography should be read as an evolution of *chreia* that I am taking as my point of departure within the historiography.⁸

The Christianization of the Roman Empire has generated a tremendous amount of research. Ancient sources paint the process of Christianization in triumphal terms where it is through Divine Providence that the faith of so many people changed. This is, of course, far too simplistic. Recent historiography has been attempting to form a coherent stance on the process of Christianization. In an effort to move away from a triumphal narrative of early Christianity, many historians have begun looking deeper into the relationship between Christians and pagans in the hopes that a narrative devoid of teleology may be created. David Frankfurter is an expert of late antique Egypt and has been able to highlight the syncretic nature of Egyptian folk practices and Christianity. Frankfurter's 2006 article titled "Hagiography and the Reconstruction

⁷ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley University of California Press: 2005), 16.

⁸ Claudia Rapp, "The Origins of Hagiography and the Literature of Early Monasticism: Purpose and Genre between Tradition and Innovation" in *Unclassical Traditions: Alternatives to the Classical past in Late Antiquity Vol. 1* ed. Christopher Kelly, Richard Flower, Michael Stuart Williams (Cambridge Philological Society: 2010), 119-30.

of Local Religion in late Antique Egypt” offers one mode of interpretation when dealing with Saints’ Lives. In this article, he uses the *Life of Shenoute*, a Coptic monk active in the late fourth century, to demonstrate to the reader that reading against the grain can be vital when dealing with hagiography. The text of *Shenoute* makes it clear that pagan rituals stood no chance when confronted by a pious Christian, but Frankfurter demonstrates that disregarding polemical language can generate a more coherent picture of pagan practices in spite of the source’s clear bias.⁹

Frankfurter’s most recent work *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* is a further investigation of the practices of rural Egyptians. Unlike what may be apparent in various primary sources, in Egypt there was never a clear and distinct break between the pagan past and Christian future. Instead, locals were able to meld the two into a more coherent whole that appealed to their sense of religious identity. As opposed to a grand strategy of Christianization, it is wiser to understand that the process “...arose and developed as a local phenomenon.”¹⁰ Moreover, this syncretism was never wholly completed, argues Frankfurter, as notions of religious identity are constantly changing. While ancient sources such as Eusebius’ *The History of the Church* make it sound that the “victory of Constantine” ushered in a totally distinct and separate era of Christian supremacy from a pagan past, it is important to remember Frankfurter’s findings (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.1.1) There was no clear break, no distinct transition, but a miasma of syncretism. In the same way should hagiography be viewed, not as a wholly

⁹ Frankfurter, “Hagiography and the Reconstruction,” 16-9. On these pages Frankfurter is able to demonstrate that reading against the grain can be used to create a more accommodating view of rural Egyptian practices.

¹⁰ David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton University Press: 2018), 5.

new literary genre or break from the pagan past, but a syncretism between pagan and Christian literary styles.

The act of becoming Christian is an inherently personal choice, but it is always wise to remember that material conditions do play an important part in one's choices. In as brutal an era as late antiquity, if the only religious building one could visit to find succor was a church and not a pagan temple it is easy to see that some may have converted for peace of mind. As the fourth century turned into the fifth, there were fewer and fewer pagan temples whereas churches were frequently lavished with imperial largesse. The role of Christian emperors and the Roman imperial state cannot be denied in the conversion of the Roman Empire. Noel Lenski's *Constantine and the Cities* investigates how Constantine as emperor initially adopted a more tolerant religious stance in order to ensure stability until ultimately openly embracing Christianity and even providing a model for later Divine Majesty.¹¹ In order to highlight this change, Lenski looks at the choices Constantine made when dealing with urban areas. When a pagan temple and all the wealth that was housed there was confiscated, that wealth would invariably find its way into the hands of the clergy. That which was stolen during the Persecution would also be returned. While it may indeed be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter heaven, the rich man would certainly be in a better position to distribute charity. The social, cultural, and political power of churches and bishops after receiving official sanction grew momentously and Lenski demonstrates this fact admirably. For this paper, the important takeaway from Lenski's research is that following the reign of

¹¹ Noel Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities: Imperial Authority and Civic Politics* (University of Pennsylvania Press: 2016), 28. This page has a succinct view of the four distinct eras. "306-310 fit himself within the existing structures of the Tetrarchy, 310-321 focused his role as a conqueror of tyrants, 321-300 added the notion that in attacking tyrants he was championing the Christian faith, 330-337 explored the outlines of divine rulership as the first Christian emperor."

Constantine, Christianity would be on a forward trajectory of supremacy in the empire. It was Constantine's largesse and active involvement in church politics that was the initial propellant behind this trend. Ecumenical councils such as Nicaea in 325, Carthage in 411, Chalcedon in 451, etc. were handled under the auspices of the Roman state and in the manner of Roman legal hearings. It was this more secure position of authority and power, I believe, that gave men such as Martin or Shenoute the leeway they needed to engage in an active destruction of paganism.

It is evident that religion held a level of prominence within late antiquity that is alien to the modern world. This knowledge has often led to a narrative of the two great religions of paganism and Christianity as being wholly opposite in doctrine and equal in prominence. Paganism, however, is not a specific doctrine and the numerous theological disagreements between bishops during ecumenical councils prove that Christianity was not a monolithic bloc either. New interpretations of paganism that stress a vibrancy and resilience of faith have become quite common in late antique historiography.¹² Christian theological doctrine has similarly come under scrutiny in hopes of explaining how the religion which stressed turning the other cheek took on a decidedly more militant tone that celebrated the active persecution and destruction of perceived heathens and apostates. Guy Stroumsa's 1999 text titled *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* investigates this transition of doctrine and explains how Christian theologians were able to condone an aggressive posture. Stroumsa stresses that the religious revolution within Christianity can be explained as a process of dialectical growth where conservative and radical forms of exegesis combined into a synthesis to create an interpretation

¹² Alan Cameron, "Were Pagans Afraid to Speak Their Minds in a Christian World? The Correspondence of Symmachus," *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome* ed. Michele Renee Salzman Marianne Sághy, and Rita Lizzi Tesa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 64-111 ; Robert R. Chenault, "Beyond Pagans and Christians: Politics and Intra-Christian Conflict in the Controversy over the Altar of Victory," *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome* ed. Michele Renee Salzman Marianne Sághy, and Rita Lizzi Tesa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 46-63.

of Christianity that believed “love all” as an unalterable command that must be obeyed at any cost.¹³ In his work, he demonstrates that Christians following the Constantinian Revolution began to implement certain eristic policies that were formulated from misinterpretations of earlier patristic literature. Earlier Christian writings were inherently utopian because the religion operated underground, the writings were meant to offer a preview of better days to come. For Stroumsa, the great sin of theologians in the fourth century was reading utopian texts in a new political scene, but stuck with older interpretations that stressed a high conviction of faith. Strength of the message was a will to power.¹⁴ Think back again to Martin who displayed his strong faith through destructive acts. In this destruction was a clear display of Martin’s absolutist sense of faith. His willingness to take action proved that he was a pious man beyond any doubt and demonstrated that “loving all” was encouraged through force. Allowing pagans or heretics to continue was viewed as allowing sin to continue.

Any student of ancient history knows that reading primary sources at face value can result in bad information. Ancient literature is not distinct in having clear mechanics at play, however. If one understands the mechanics of ancient literature, it becomes easier to see what the intent of the authors was. These authors were products of a system of education, *paideia*, that emphasized sticking to the established rule set. To diverge from the rule set risked

¹³ Guy Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 8-26. Stroumsa’s first chapter details previous interpretations of how Christian theology changed. One of the more important passages notes that “One should also note that the duty of perfection central to Jesus’ teaching...entails the highest ethical and spiritual standards, and hence the harsh disappointment upon the inevitable failure in meeting these stands. In other words, it is the combination of the idea of love – and the duty of love – and the universalist nature of Christianity that Freud finds to be so threatening, almost totalitarian in its unattainable expectations.”

¹⁴ Stroumsa, *Barbarian philosophy*, 26. “The tragedy of ancient Christianity is not directly dependent upon the cognitive dissonance created by the delay sine die of the Second Coming. Rather, this tragedy reflects the Christian’ lack of sensitivity to the dissonance caused by the reading of utopian texts in a new political context and of their new power to activate them.”

embarrassment and revealing a level of baseness that any self-respecting student of *paideia* feared as much as their teacher's corporal punishments. The study of *paideia* is crucial to understanding what the author of any piece is really saying. It is fortunate that some teachers of rhetoric, or *rhetors*, have left behind examples of *progymnasmata*, or rhetorical exercises. One of the most important modern texts in exploring late antique *paideia* and the rhetorical exercises students would tediously perform is George A. Kennedy's *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors*. Owing to the lack of a singular education system that encompassed the entirety of the Roman Empire, late antique *paideia* would change from teacher to teacher, but Kennedy notes there are a number of similar *progymnasmata* between *rhetors*.¹⁵ More time will be spent on various *progymnasmata* later as well as how Christians reinterpreted these exercises, but for now it is enough to note that Christian writers were products of the same schools of rhetoric as their pagan peers. Christians certainly took away different interpretations of Homer or Virgil than their teachers intended, and some were even to turn them against their pagan teachers.¹⁶ Taking from the findings of Kennedy, I will be able to display how hagiography was an evolution of older rhetorical exercises and not a wholly brand-new literary phenomenon.

Chapter Layout

Chapter 1 will focus on *progymnasmata* as a tool of rhetorical education so a deeper reading of ancient sources can be conducted. By understanding the step-by-step mechanics of the sources, we are able to highlight the real intent of the sources. As an example, when Ammianus notes that the pagan Julian is busy protecting the frontiers of the empire, this is juxtaposed with

¹⁵ George A. Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric Under Christian Emperors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 54-60. Kennedy during these pages details different *rhetors* and their use of *progymnasmata*.

¹⁶ Raffaella Cribiore, "Why did Christians Compete with Pagans for Greek Paideia?" *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* ed. Karina Martin Hogan, Matthew Goff, and Emma Wasserman (Society of Biblical Literature, 2017), 359-374.

the Christian Constantius II who is concerned with appearances in Rome – the two are in this way represented as polar opposites of the other. This is not an attempt at subterfuge by ancient authors, however. When ancient authors present a more idealized form of their subject it is only so that the best will be persevered for future generations. Previous examinations of *paideia* have also highlighted the cultural and social cache a student was able to acquire by undergoing the education various *rheto*rs offered.¹⁷ Education was only for men and for those who could afford it and the severe requirements both mental and physical would lead many to abandon the pursuit. This was partially by design as “...education...has a root, but it has fruits, and while bitterness is associated with the former, the greatest pleasure is linked with the latter” (Lib. Prog. 3.3.5). To struggle and succeed was the desired outcome for students of *paideia*. Knowing this, it is easy to see how Christians would have been drawn to this doctrine.

Chapter 2 will focus on the Christianization of the Roman Empire as a historical trend. I will investigate various literary sources in order to establish the fourth century as the century where Christianity went from minority to majority within the Roman Empire. This chapter will also be used to show how Christian authors changed the rhetoric of Christianity. Christianization was not something that can be attached to the efforts of any one man or said to have been achieved on a certain date. For one, knowing the hearts of so many is an impossibility. Also, ancient censuses of religion do not exist so any numerical superiority of Christian adherents cannot be quantified. Instead, Christianization must be seen as a gradual trend beginning from the first century and accelerating with extreme rapidity in the fourth century. Only in 380 C.E. with the Edict of Thessalonica, which mandated Nicene Christianity throughout the empire, can

¹⁷ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 35-70. Brown’s second chapter is titled “Paideia and Power” and highlights how mastery of *paideia* was the tool by which the Roman upper classes were able to converse as equals.

it safely be said that Christianity had achieved a level of majority adherents. Owing to a deep-seated desire for stability from various emperors, it is highly improbable that a total shift away from paganism would have been encouraged if there was doubt to the success of such an action. The trend towards Christianity will be explored in this chapter highlighting the unique role bishops and holy men had within late antiquity as well as the rhetoric employed in ancient sources.

Chapter 3 will focus on hagiography as an evolution of the *chreia* exercises. Some historians have shown hagiography can be useful when read against the grain knowing that Christian authors were intentionally painting pagan practices as backwards and incorrect. I believe that hagiography, when read as an evolution of older pagan rhetorical exercises, can be used to highlight how the process of Christianization was a gradual trend that required a great deal of flexibility. Hagiography is not a genre created brand new from whole cloth, but an evolution derived from a shared educational background in *paideia* that both Christians and pagans participated in. In order to break or alter the rules, one must know the established ruleset. Christian authors were aware of the rules their writings were expected to conform to and put their own spin on the material to create something different. Hagiography is not the direct cause of Christianization, but it is reflective of a much wider trend in late antiquity.

Chapter 1: Rhetoric and Paideia

Introduction

How did these ancient authors learn to write and in what environment did they receive instruction? Ancient authors were the product of *paideia*. *Paideia* is the Greek word for education and is used to denote the specific type of education men would receive in antiquity. *Paideia* was not uniform and would change from teacher to teacher, but certain traits and trends are common enough to establish a core set of values and methods of instruction. The cornerstone of this education rested on knowing by heart the classics of Greek and Roman literature. Students were also expected to achieve mastery of oratory and rhetoric. Men were also required to be at all times in control of themselves. For example, outbursts of emotion were considered embarrassing in the extreme. The best students were also said to possess a natural gift of capability with the understanding that this was a blessing from the gods. A student who lacked a natural inclination to *paideia* could succeed, but his challenges would be far harder. Teachers would often brutalize their students both physically and emotionally with the dual intent of breeding character and weeding out the weak. *Paideia* was also only open to males of at least some wealth and status. An examination of several mosaics can help visualize how difficult this education was.

Paideia in Late Antiquity

The article “*Paideia’s* Children: Childhood Education on a Group of Late Antique Mosaics” focuses on a series of fifth century mosaics that depict the education and upbringing of a man called Kimbros.¹⁸ The mosaics depict the life of Kimbros from childhood during his

¹⁸ Constantin A. Marinescu, Sarah E. Cox, and Rudolf Wachter, “*Paideia’s* Children: Childhood Education on a Group of Late Antique Mosaics,” *Hesperia Supplements* 41 (2007), 101-114.

primary education until his time as an older and respected student.¹⁹ A few of the mosaics are fragmentary, but enough can be gathered to construct a narrative from the remaining evidence that emphasizes the process of education as having central importance in the life of Kimbros where the struggles and physical punishments that were concomitant with *paideia* were all a part of the process of education. A mosaic depicting Kimbros' childhood offers a portrait of Pheilios who was the family tutor or *paidagogos*, and it is evident that there was no hesitation in applying the rod to discipline children in late antiquity. Kimbros is still a child but is being flogged by Pheilios for some error that is not made clear in the mosaic. Later in life, Kimbros is shown to be under the instruction of Alexandros, a *grammatikos*, who acted as a teacher of more advanced grammatical concepts and offered a model which students were expected to conform to. The mosaic makes it clear that Alexandros was loved by his students as part of the daily greeting was a kiss on the cheek and the muse of friendship is seen near the teacher. Alexandros must have been a capable teacher as the muse of *paideia* is seen speaking through the teacher as he instructs his students. The last images of the mosaic series depict Kimbros in a state that is hard to discern as the young man appears to be ailing and supported by a few of his friends. Several interpretations are offered in the article. One is that Kimbros has been whipped for failing an intellectual duel with an opponent. Another interpretation states that Kimbros is instead victorious and is merely acting wounded or weak for the benefit of his rhetoric.²⁰ I believe that the image can read as an ecstatic Kimbros who is so overcome with joy that he has fallen over in shock. While restraint was emphasized for men of *paideia*, it must be remembered that at this stage Kimbros is still a young man not entirely in control of his emotions. The previous images make it clear the education was not an easy feat and winning a particularly difficult duel carried

¹⁹ Marinescu, *Paideia's Children*, 103-6. The mosaics in their entirety can be viewed on these pages.

²⁰ Marinescu, *Paideia's Children*, 113-4. The interpretations of the authors can be read on these pages.

with it a great deal of stress and expectation, so a sense of jubilation is likely. His outstretched hand is reaching upwards towards the heavens offering thanks to the gods for blessing him with intellect. The final image offers a happy ending where Kimbros is seen as a respectable young man by his peers and Alexandros. Despite all the trials and tribulations Kimbros has suffered in pursuit of *paideia*, the final image makes it clear that there is joy in pursuing education and mutual respect from teacher to student and vice versa. The whole narrative of the mosaic series stresses the difficulty in pursuing *paideia*, but the achievement of it was something that every successful student valued in the extreme.

A natural question to arise when researching *paideia* is why? Why were students so adamant in pursuing an education regime that was taxing both physically and mentally? Difficult exercises can create a sense of self-esteem, yes, but the costs often associated with *paideia* make the payoff seem less than worth the cost. *Paideia* was pursued because it was a way for the Roman aristocracy to engage as equals with a shared education and culture. A man without *paideia* was seen as inferior. Moreover, a man who was unable to properly perform *paideia* was believed to lack something, it was expected that wealthy Romans should possess *paideia*.²¹ *Paideia* could not be pursued by the poor or moderately wealthy. The cost of travelling to Athens, Constantinople, Alexandria, or Antioch where the best teachers resided, let alone the cost of room and board, put the dream of *paideia* outside the realm of many. Peter Brown labels the strategy of some students as “island-hopping” for the tendency to “hop” between important

²¹ Lieve Van Hoof, “Performing ‘Paideia:’ Greek Culture as an Instrument for Social Promotion in the Fourth Century A.D.” *The Classical Quarterly* 63, No. 1 (May 2013), 387-406. This article examines various instances where the performance of *paideia* is clearly on display. A noteworthy section covers Themistius’ panegyric for Constantius II where the panegyric appears at first positive, but a deeper reading reveals that Themistius is criticizing Constantius II for not performing *paideia* well enough as emperor. Brutal and thuggish actions have no place for a man of learning, Themistius argues.

schools and teachers.²² Achieving *paideia* was believed to be impossible outside of urban areas as there are no known hermit teachers of grammar or rhetoric. Schools of grammar and rhetoric were exclusive clubs for rich boys and young men where the passions of youth were filed and hammered away until a more sophisticated man could be fashioned from the base materials nature had provided. We must also always remember the sheer geographical size of the Roman Empire by the time of the Principate and Dominate eras. From Britain in the north, to Upper Egypt in the south, the western Sahara to the Caucasus Mountain range in the east the Roman Empire was massive and encompassed a myriad of peoples. Roman citizenship was the supreme identity, but ancient Romans were able to hold multiple identities, so imagining the Roman aristocracy as a mono-cultural group is not possible.²³ *Paideia* was a bridge that wealthy Romans could use to converse with each other as equals across the empire. Having a shared education rooted in Greco-Roman classics and the shared experiences of demanding teachers and exercises allowed students of *paideia* to bridge the gap localized cultures would create between aristocrats.

Let us continue with bridge as metaphor and ask what the building materials were for a successful performance of *paideia*. Paradoxically, one of the more striking elements for *paideia* was a sense of impassivity. When confronted with difficulties or an unfair judgement or the mutability of fortune, the natural reaction was to appear indifferent. Relinquishing control of one's reaction to any situation was akin to a dam breaking during a flood. Mastery of speech was an essential quality and stuttering or voice cracks were believed to reveal a lax education which

²² Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 35-41. These pages detail the cost and difficulty of *paideia* including Brown's use of "island-hopping."

²³ Bert Selzer, "Eadem spectamus astra. Astral Immortality as Common Ground between Pagan and Christian Monotheism," in *Monotheism Between pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* edited by Stephen Mitchell and Peter Van Nuffelen (Leuven-Walpole: Peeters, 2010), 57-75. This chapter examines various funerary inscriptions and concludes that some pagans were able to utilize both Christian and pagan conceptions of life after death to display an example of ancients holding multiple identities.

was seen as highly embarrassing. Plain-speaking, emotional rhetoric, and outbursts of passion were unacceptable to men of *paideia*.²⁴ Stoicism not just as philosophy but as a way of life was encouraged, and it was essential to embody a spirit of restraint where one “(realizes) at long last that you have within you something stronger and more numinous than these agents of emotion which make you a mere puppet on their strings” (M. Aur. *Med.* 12.19). Men of *paideia* were required at all times to be in control of themselves. True elegance and grace were believed to be reflected in a man who was able to perform *paideia* in an almost effortless manner. That the difficult path a student undertook when pursuing *paideia* is left unsaid was intentional. Everyone knew it was difficult and being able to make it appear easy was the supreme ability.

Another building block for a successful performance of *paideia* was in the content of speech itself. Ancient sources are rife with examples where a well-structured and well-said speech can change the outcome of a potentially disastrous situation. For the ancient Greeks and Romans, the power of a good speech was believed to hold a touch of “sorcery. Words were supposed to exercise power over people.”²⁵ An example of this phenomenon can be seen in Ammianus Marcellinus’ history of the later Roman Empire. Before committing to open revolt against Constantius II, who is busy campaigning in the east, Julian spoke to his assembled soldiers in the hopes of reaffirming their loyalty before embarking on civil war. Julian speaks in a confident tone and lists the shared accomplishments he and his army had achieved while appealing to the bonds of loyalty that had been forged between leader and soldier. When appealing for support, Julian makes sure to mention the situation is favorable to victory and “beseeches” the soldiers that no harm should come to private persons. Julian had no desire to

²⁴ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 49-50. “The careful control of breathing and the avoidance of inappropriate stances and discordant gestures were designed to transform an educated person into a tranquil figure whose voice and pose radiated harmonious authority...Loss of control of the voice was instantly noted.”

²⁵ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 44.

destroy the goodwill his army had engendered by defending the borders of the empire through acts of rapine and slaughter. Ammianus notes that “This speech by the emperor was received as if it were an oracle. The assembled troops were strongly moved and eager for a change. With one accord they raised terrifying shouts and clashed their shields...calling Julian a great and sublime leader” (Amm. 21.5.9). Through seemingly simple rhetoric, Julian sways the hearts of the soldiers into supporting his bid in becoming sole emperor. This demonstrates the power that was believed to reside in effective rhetoric, and it was only students of *paideia* that could wield such oratorical skill.

This seems like an apparent truth. Good rhetoric should lead to the changing of opinion. This is an oversimplification, however. For Ammianus’ audience, the intended takeaway is that Julian’s rhetorical skill *naturally* resulted in a change of opinion. If the rhetoric is good enough, if the speech is prepared and delivered in a perfect way it was believed that a change of opinion *had* to happen. Stubbornness to the point of willful ignorance was not a quality men of *paideia* were meant to embody. Grace when confronted with a perfect argument or irrefutable evidence was far more desirable. This showed that a man was able to respect his superior in philosophy or skill and no or minimal shame would be attributed to him. In a panegyric directed at Constantius II, the philosopher and rhetorician Themistius describes at length the good qualities of the emperor while also subtly hinting at areas Constantius II could improve in. Themistius ends his panegyric calling for criticism if he is discovered to have been “cheating even in the smallest degree.”²⁶ Though Themistius may have been aggrandizing his own panegyric’s legitimacy with

²⁶ Van Hoof, “Performing ‘Paideia,’” 392. “If you discover it (i.e the speech) to be cheating even in the smallest degree, insult and reject it and cast it from philosophy for doing things which are neither righteous nor in accordance with her laws. But, if in all that it praises, it tells the truth, then do not be angry with it, nor think it a flatterer instead of a praisegiver. For nothing is more inimical to truth than flattery, but praise is virtue’s witness...You understand then what my discourse has established: only philosophers are witnesses to virtue.”

such language, this also reflects the notion of a good student as being someone who is willing to accept philosophical truth and is able to mitigate their own ego in pursuit of the truth. Good rhetoric, a good speech, were both believed to reflect philosophical truth so it was deemed only natural to concede a point when confronted with a better argument.

Christians and *Paideia*

Bishop Athanasius relates that Saint Anthony “could not endure to learn letters, not caring to associate with other boys” (Athanasius, *Anth.* 1). Anthony received his education from scripture and from the observations he made about the world around him. For immersing himself in scripture instead of *paideia*, Anthony was “beloved by all...some welcomed him as a son, others as a brother (Athanasius, *Anth.* 4). The reason for this outpouring of love, Athanasius believes, is that Anthony was viewed as living like the saints of old. He was poor, mobile, and distinctly outside the Roman world. This is because Christians took great pride being perceived by pagans as a barbarian philosophy. That is, a philosophy which had no ties to Roman paganism and instead derived entirely from God.²⁷ This desire for ideological purity would be superseded by the early fifth century as Christians began to identify more and more with the Roman Empire. Saint Augustine wrote and published *City of God* following the 410 sack of Rome specifically because of this change in identification. Augustine begins his magnum opus stating that “I have taken upon myself the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of that City” (Augustine, *De civ D.* 1. Preface). Augustine’s implication being that only through pious effort can the Roman Empire serve as the basis for the City of

²⁷ Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, 57. “In the Roman Empire, the Christians themselves were considered by pagan intellectuals as uncouth followers of a barbarian faith, unable to establish their beliefs in a rational argumentation to express in polished language, reflecting a proper education. Christian thinkers soon adopted this perception as their own...”

God. This transition from persecuted minority outside of the Roman world to becoming one of the main identifiers for Roman identity will be discussed in the following chapter.

For now, it is vital to know that this transition was partially fostered by Christians entering schools headed by pagan *rhetors* in order to achieve *paideia*. Augustine had much to say about his education lamenting the Greek lessons while praising lessons on Latin. He even criticized Virgil's *Aeneid* as being diversionary from the Way (August. *Conf.* 1.13).²⁸ He even notes the severe physical punishments that would be meted out to students, stating that this largely but not entirely soured his quest for education until ultimately finding true love in God (August. *Conf.* 1.14).²⁹ Despite his grievances, Augustine and many other Christians achieved their education under the tutelage of pagan instructors. Continuing to view *paideia* as a bridge, it is easy to imagine that following Constantine and his overt favoring of Christianity that many Christians would grumble at pagan education, but would understand the utility in having a shared culture with the pagan bureaucrats or administrators they would soon come into contact with. Christians did not enter schools of *paideia* with their defenses down, however. The Great Persecution would still be fresh in the minds of many and it was the choice of a number of Christians to view classical literature as sirens like those out of *The Odyssey*. Unlike early Christians of the first through third centuries, Christians of the fourth and fifth centuries were willing to entertain that there was value in pagan philosophy or learning.³⁰

²⁸ "Even to this day I have been unable to make up my mind why I hated the Greek that was dinned into me in early boyhood. Latin studies, on the contrary, I loved, not the elementary kind under my first teachers, but the lessons taught by masters of literature...by means of (literacy) I was gradually being given a power which became mine and still remains with me..."

²⁹ "...the difficulty of thoroughly mastering a foreign language seemed to sprinkle bitterness over those fabulous narratives for all their Greek sweetness, because I knew none of the words, and the threat of savage, terrifying punishments was used to make me learn them...Hear my prayer, Lord...I long for you to grow sweeter to me than all those allurements I was pursuing."

³⁰ Criboire, "Why did Christians Compete with Pagans," 371. "Pagans looked at ancient texts and myths as important traditions and as means to hone their skills in writing and speaking, but they also expected the ancient

Progymnasmata

The actual exercises students completed were known as *progymnasmata*. Due to the lack of a singular school, each instructor had their own list of *progymnasmata*.³¹ The order of the exercises was structured as each instructor believed was best for his students' overall education with more difficult exercises placed at the end. These exercises stressed rhetorical skill and fitting into a schema that had already been established by previous authors and instructors. The reasoning was that it was superior to emulate the already established best examples. Independent thought in the structure of an argument was discouraged as students engaging with *progymnasmata* would still be in their teens so the intent with these exercises was geared towards an education in form. Style would come into play with the content of a student's exercise. These exercises also reveal that historical knowledge was key for any student with citations of past events or examples as a way for students to enhance their arguments. These exercises were also mostly in Greek with Latin translations appearing only after the fall of the western half of the Roman Empire. While each instructor had their own opinions there is enough overlap that certain exercises were integral to a student's education.

Before delving into a description of the various *progymnasmata*, we must now speak of Libanius of Antioch whose list of *progymnasmata* is still the most comprehensive and will be used to show the various exercises. Libanius is the most famous of the ancient *rhetors*. Hailing from and spending most of his life in the metropolitan city of Antioch, his work is monumental

myths to help guide them in life. Christians rejected this view and did not presume that the pagan writers had to provide moral guidance...Instead of giving up on those texts, however, (Christians) appropriated them...(bishop Zacharias writing in the sixth century warns Christians) not (to) accept them wholesale: they were treacherous, like the Sirens in Homer who attracted sailors with their sweet voice and then caused their deaths."

³¹ Craig A. Gibson, "Learning Greek History in the Ancient Classroom: The Evidence of the Treatises on Progymnasmata" *Classical Philology* 99, No. 2 (April 2004), 103-29. The *rhetor* Theon's list can be found on pages 108-18. ; George A. Kennedy *Greek Rhetoric*, 54-72. These pages include various exercises and the interpretations of different *rhetors*.

both in volume and content. Libanius' prestige was recognized in late antiquity as well with him spending a few years in the eastern capital of Constantinople at the invitation of Constantius II in 349. His task was to head the teaching of rhetoric, but Libanius hated his time in the city owing to the endless politicking and intriguing that occurred. Once freed of his obligation to serve in the eastern capital, Libanius returned to Antioch where he would work and write until his death in 393. His works covered all topics of prose, but the majority of his writings are on the teaching of rhetoric. His *progymnasmata* offers a student of late antiquity a cornucopia of examples and potential examples to use when investigating late antique rhetoric.³² Due to the esoteric nature of Libanius' *progymnasmata*, it is necessary to spend a few moments talking about how he will be cited. I am using Craig Gibson's 2008 translation of the *progymnasmata* which is itself the first English translation. The citation format will be Lib. *Prog.* X.X.X. so author, the *progymnasmata*, the type of exercise followed by the specific exercise and ending with Gibson's own breakdown of the exercises for more specificity. Libanius' list of *progymnasmata* include twelve exercises. They are listed as:

1. Fable (*mythos*)
2. Narration (*diêgêma, diêgêsis*)
3. Anecdote (*chreia*)
4. Maxim (*gnômê*)
5. Refutation and Confirmation (*anaskuê / kataskeuê*)
6. Common Topics (*topos*)

³² Craig A. Gibson, *Libanius's Progymnasmata: Model Exercises in Greek prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), xvii-xxv. Gibson's introduction also offers a brief biography of Libanius as well as the validity of the compiled sources.

7. Encomium and Invective (*enkômion / psogos*)
8. Comparison (*synkrisis*)
9. Speech in Character (*êthopoiia*)
10. Description (*ekphrasis*)
11. Thesis
12. Introduction of a Law

Fable is the first exercise and clearly the easiest of them presented in the text. The exercise has two components, an introductory paragraph and a final sentence which sums up the intent of the story. Most of these exercises would be very similar to Aesop's fables where the message was very hard to miss. One of Libanius' exercises mimics Aesop and details a race between a swift-footed horse and the slow but determined tortoise. Libanius sums up the fable by warning the reader to never become complacent for another who is more gifted or determined or cunning will always come along to replace the decadent. Eternal struggle was a lesson any student of *paideia* would know all too well. Again, fables were relatively simple exercises that were meant to impart universal lessons (Lib. Prog. 1.2.1).

Narration exercises were also simple with the content being made up of a brief summation of a person or event. One of Libanius' examples is on the arrogance of Agamemnon. After slaying a deer and boasting he was superior to Artemis as a hunter, the goddess became infuriated and sent horrible winds to plague the Mycenaean king who could no longer sail to Troy so long as the winds kept up. The price for lifting the curse was the blood of his daughter which Agamemnon was prepared to pay. Before striking his daughter, Artemis replaced the girl with a deer in order to mock the king. These exercises were not always meant to convey a message and

instead more about the mechanics employed. Students had to be able to include the who, what, where, when, why, and how of any given event (Lib. Prog. 2.5).

Anecdote or *chreia*, owing to its central importance to this paper, will be given its own section further down so a comprehensive overview can be conducted.

Maxim exercises are decidedly more complex with a number of clear steps a student had to include in order to successfully perform the exercise. Maxims were meant to convey a universal truth through a subject's actions, livelihood or beliefs. For example, through the writings of Demosthenes one sees that without some amount of wealth it is impossible to pursue anything of value in life (Lib. Prog. 4.3). After stating this maxim, Libanius then goes on to state that a man shows his total love of his city through generous donations so that walls may be built, sacrifices offered, and culture produced. Indeed, it was for lack of wealth that Libanius believes Athens was subjugated by Philip II (Lib. Prog. 4.3.8). Where possible, students were encouraged and required to include examples and citations from the heroes of the past. That Demosthenes was a master orator only reinforces the central importance of oratory in the education of ancient students.

Confirmation and **Refutation** are less structurally complex than maxim exercises and can be seen as two separate styles of the same type of exercise. These exercises were only used when something was in doubt of having occurred and could even revolve around mythological arguments. One of Libanius' exercises on refutation centers on the debate about the validity concerning the actions of Chryses of Troy, a character in Homer's epics. After suffering abuse at the hands of the invading Greeks, Chryses retreats to a shrine of Apollo and demands that the god punish the Greeks for abusing his daughter. Libanius refutes that this event occurred claiming that no man, especially an old man like Chryses, would ever seek succor from his

enemies. Libanius goes on stating that there is no chance of Chryses, who was a priest and had formerly supported the Greeks, demanding retribution on former allies from a god that loves justice and hates wrongdoers. Confirmation exercises are similar in their simple structural style but focus on events that are considered false or exaggerated and instead argues that these events were real. The intent of these two exercises is for the student to begin learning proper rhetoric with a deemphasis on structure and greater intent paid to the ability of the exercise to convince (Lib. Prog. 5.1.1).

Common Topics were exercises that tasked the student with attacking an accepted reprobate or praising an established benefactor or role model. These exercises are similar to the encomium and invective exercises, but since the student had the benefit of his subject already have being colored as good or bad the exercise is far simpler. One of the examples Libanius provides details the grisly crimes of a serial killer who was able to blend back into public life following each of his cruel acts. The subject has been accepted by all as being entirely guilty within the context of the exercise so Libanius unleashes all manner of insult and condemnation. These exercises can be simple in content but are structurally more complex with multiple sections that are used to amplify the rhetoric (Lib. Prog. 6.1).

Libanius puts the exercises for **Encomium** and **Invective** in the same category as two sides of the same coin. Encomia are written to praise a person, place or even practices such as farming. Invectives are written in order to denounce the same type of things. These exercises show that a knowledge of history and mythology was required for students of *paideia* as various encomia are written about the heroes of Homer's epics and rely on the writer knowing the characters and themes of the epics. The same knowledge requirement of history and mythology stands as Libanius writes invectives for the heroes of Homer, as well as the horrible conditions of

poverty or anger. Of interest, is that one of the exercises focuses on the problems of wealth where having too much of it is just as bad as having none of it. This hammers home the stoic underpinning of *paideia* where excesses of anything was deemed dangerous (Lib. Prog. 7.5). The exercises themselves are structurally similar lacking the clear order of operations Libanius applies to Common Topics or Maxim, but allows the student to more thoroughly articulate an opinion.

Next are the exercises in **Comparison**. These exercises look at two subjects and evaluates them both praising one as superior over the other. These can focus on people, lifestyles or abstract concepts. One of the *progymnasmata* argues that country life is superior to city life for it is the older of the two, the countryside has a minimum of crime, and there is little to be found in the way of lustful temptation outside city walls. Libanius continues stating that there is no sweeter sound than the stomping of grapes and the singing of the workers as they do so while out in the country. Minimal attention is paid to the negatives of country life and, when mentioned, the downsides (such as wild beasts) are presented as a good thing (rural people are brave for hunting wild beasts) in contrast to the wretched character and behavior of city people (Lib. Prog. 8.5). Structurally simple, these exercises also highlight that rhetoric was not always cold and lifeless but could at times illicit emotional reactions from the audience.

One of the more creative exercises were known as **Speech in Character**. These tasked the student with, as best as they could, creating a short in-character speech for figures such as Achilles or Ajax. Some *progymnasmata* also focus on imaginary events and persons such as a prostitute who has recently gained self-control. These are brief exercises and serve as creative exercises in understanding the subject of a given piece. Again, knowledge of Homer is essential for the students as it would only be thorough knowledge of the source material that would allow

a student to plausibly convey what Achilles would have said following a defeat of the Greek armies outside Troy (Lib. Prog. 9.4). A more humorous example is a speech written by, as Libanius calls him, a coward who absolutely loathes the new paintings hanging in his house that depict scenes of battle and warfare (Lib. Prog. 9.19). These exercises are mostly brief and serve to expand the student's mind asking them to project themselves into another's life and speak as they would speak.

Description exercises required the student to thoroughly explain something. This could be an infantry battle, a painting, a particular scene or even a state of being. The most relatable of Libanius' *progymnasmata* on Description details how it is to be grossly intoxicated. Following a very difficult walk home from a tavern, the subject of the exercise reaches home and "conversed with his domestic slaves as his own sons, and with his sons, in turn, as his domestic slaves" (Lib. Prog. 10.6). He later goes on to argue with his wife over nothing in particular until ultimately blacking out and remembering nothing. Another exercise tediously details a particular statue of Hera going so far as to describe the position of each limb (Lib. Prog. 10.16). The purpose of these exercises is to stretch the student's ability to describe to the almost breaking point in order to generate in the audience a very specific feeling or reaction.

Thesis exercises were rooted in asking questions applicable to the whole of mankind. One such exercise asks the question whether or not a man should have a spouse. Libanius begins by citing that marriage occurs between the gods so it is only natural for humans to marry. Moreover, a good wife will strengthen the man as he now can now travel leaving the affairs of the house to his wife and will receive her company on his return. Libanius also writes that the "most useful fruit of marriage is the children" who will care for their parents as they age until they eventually pass (Lib. Prog. 11.1). These exercises ask fundamental questions about right

living and the answers Libanius provides solidifies the patriarchal nature that was intended for students of *paideia* to take away. The structure of Thesis *progymnasmata* are complex relying on a number of established tropes such as references to mythology and past persons.³³

Taken all together, these exercises reveal that students were encouraged to massage their text or speech until a favorable argument could be manufactured. Also, where possible, counterpoints or potential arguments would be tackled head on in order to minimize any damage they could do to a student's argument. By doing this, it is possible to appear unbiased while at the same time maintaining control over the argument and/or narrative. This is not to imply that ancient authors were liars one and all where simple sophist insistence on being the victor in an argument was the only desired outcome. Instead, ancient sources must be read against the grain so that the desired outcome of the author is not taken as objective fact. Authors could also subvert the established rules where the lack of a detail is just as noticeable as if it were directly presented in the text. When Ammianus presents Constantius II parading around the city of Rome struggling to maintain a stoic demeanor, a deeper reading will show that Ammianus believed Constantius was less capable than his peer. Julian is more concerned with fulfilling the duties of an emperor which for Ammianus was securing the borders of the Empire against Germanic incursions (Amm. 16.10.2). In this way, Ammianus highlights that Constantius is unskilled as he cares more about *appearing* as an emperor than *being* an emperor. Knowing the structure ancient authors were schooled in lays bare their mechanics and a deeper reading of the texts can be conducted.

³³ The final exercise in Libanius' text is titled Introduction of a Law. Only one example exists and Craig Gibson, the translator for the text, notes that there is contention over its validity. This observation can be found on page 527. I have decided to exclude it from further analysis due to this fact as well as the lack of utility we can gain from examining this brief passage.

Chreia

Chreia in the context of *progymnasmata* can best be translated as anecdote. In these exercises, the subject under investigation will have a tidbit of wisdom that the audience is meant to take away. There are four such examples of the *chreia* exercises in Libanius. These exercises highlight the central importance classical literature and philosophy played in the development of *paideia*. References to Alexander the Great, Diogenes and Theophrastus who were both philosophers and Isocrates the *rhetor* all appear in Libanius' exercises. All four exercises follow a similar structure where first **brief praise** is given to the subject. This is followed by a **paraphrasing** of the tidbit of wisdom followed by an explanation of the author's **cause** for the praise. **Contrast** is next where the author provides a counter-argument which is then quickly dismantled. The exercises end with an **example** (typically rooted in historical fact) and a **brief epilogue** which acts as another summation of the event.

One of the four exercises detail an event whereupon witnessing some youthful indiscretion by a student of philosophy, Diogenes hits the boy's teacher for being so lax in his instruction and in failing to provide a role model to his student (Lib. Prog. 3.2).³⁴ Libanius goes on to explain that the **cause** for his praise of Diogenes is that the philosopher "(used) his hands to bring someone to his senses" and that "he thought it proper to take action to educate those who were doing great harm, and not passing over in silence" (Lib. Prog. 3.2.4). Diogenes is expressing an ideal that Libanius believes in – it is the teacher who is at fault for the indiscretions of bad students. What else can one expect from children or those lacking philosophy, wonders Libanius, but bad choices and mistakes? People, through a lack of philosophy and virtue, pursue

³⁴ "For there was a pedagogue accompanying a boy, but the boy was not preserving the appropriate decorum, and Diogenes thought what was being done required correction. What, then, does he do? Leaving the young man to the side he accosts the one in charge of him, strikes many blows on his back, and adds to the blows the statement that he should not be that sort of teacher.

that which is easy or in fashion. “No one is so stupid,” says Diogenes when asked if people spend money in the hopes of squandering it (Lib. Prog. 3.2.5).³⁵ Libanius continues stating that this wisdom can be found in all walks of life for it is the director who is to blame for a bad choral performance or the farmer if an ox is not tamed. It is the duty of the superior to discipline and instruct his subordinate, be it man or beast. This wisdom is reinforced by Libanius who cites the laurels given by Sparta to Themistocles who masterminded the victory at Salamis (Lib. Prog. 3.2.20).³⁶ In the **brief epilogue** Libanius states that “Therefore, Diogenes correctly realized who deserved the blows, but those who are wise must praise him and imitate him by their actions” (Lib. Prog. 3.2.22).

In this exercise it is sometimes hard to follow who is speaking, either Libanius or Diogenes. Libanius even seems to make a reference to this confusion (Lib. Prog. 3.2.10).³⁷ This is partially by design where Libanius is using Diogenes to impart a lesson which he, Libanius, considers extremely vital. The lesson in this case being that it is the role of the instructor to discipline those under his care for it is worse to suffer a fault and be polite than to be rude or even physical and correct that fault. Direct action is always preferred, and corporal punishment is a good thing if a lesson is not making inroads into a student’s head. Remember back to young Kimbros who was being whipped by his teacher or Saint Augustine who lamented the physical

³⁵ “For let us consider why it is that parents hire those who are to supervise their sons. Is it out of a desire to spend money in vain, to squander their wealth? How can that be? No one is so stupid. But what is the goal toward which they are looking? They know that the young have a natural proclivity toward mistakes, that they always hold an opinion opposite to what is best, and that they shun those activities from which they might obtain happiness, while pursuing those through which they might become utterly miserable.

³⁶ “And the Spartans, in the honor they showed toward Themistocles, clearly established that everything that follows originates with the ones who furnish the causes; for after those noble and remarkable actions that they displayed against (Xerxes), Themistocles came to Sparta and they crowned him, regarding his intelligence as the origin of the naval battle at Salamis.”

³⁷ “What, then, am I saying? Or rather, what is Diogenes saying?”

punishment he would receive from his instructors. Libanius certainly does not advocate pointless brutality, but a certain amount was not just allowed it was encouraged as a philosophical good.

The other three *chreia* exercises are similar in structure and intent. The content is different, but each exercise is created to convey some universal truth that was meant to steer the student onto the right path of virtue. Christian authors of the fourth and fifth centuries were products of *paideia* as well. They knew what *chreia* exercises were and would inject their own beliefs and morals while also broadening the structural limits to encompass whole texts of wisdom rooted in the Christian tradition.

Chapter 2: The Christianization of the Roman Empire

Introduction

Beginning in the mid first century C.E. during Nero's persecutions and through the sporadic persecutions of the following centuries and past the Great Persecution of Diocletian from 303-13, Christianity went from a minority religion to the mandated religion of the empire by the end of the fourth century. How did this happen? Christian authors often attributed the "triumph" of Christianity to Divine Providence. The church historian Eusebius of Caesarea declared that it was only through the "grace of Almighty God" that the Great Persecution came to end, and it is only a short leap then to conclude that all things happen under God's purview for Eusebius (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 9.11.1-3). As a bishop, he will of course offer thanks to God, but his declaration does not explain the reasons for the end of the Persecution let alone why Christianity emerged more ideologically driven from the trials of persecution. This religious rhetoric can be stirring, but it can also be extremely vague for the purposes of historians.

It is impossible to attribute the Christianization of the Roman Empire to any one person. The Christianization of the Roman Empire instead needs to be seen as a gradual trend where no single date can be used to label the "total victory" of Christianity. "Total victory" is also a misnomer as there was no all-encompassing conversion event to Christian orthodoxy in the Roman Empire. It is instead better to describe the process of Christianization as a miasma of competing personalities, different interpretations of orthodoxy and orthopraxis, and active involvement and fraternization between the secular Roman world and the religious Christian world.

Constantine and an era of Change

Any study of the Christianization of the Roman Empire needs to examine the reign of Constantine the Great (r. 306-337). The Christian church had been established by the time of Constantine's ascension, but the church operated by and large outside of the Roman state apparatus.³⁸ Constantine forever changed this by incorporating the ecclesiastical system into the Roman state apparatus through informal and formal means. Informally, Christians would begin advising Constantine on important matters of state (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 32). Formally, Constantine would show overt favor to the Christian religion through largesse and involving bishops in secular Roman concerns.³⁹ While it cannot be said that the Empire would be wholly Christian by the time of Constantine's death in 337, it can be said that Constantine was the single greatest benefactor of Christianity and his legacy lasted long after his death. Despite what his later reputation would become, Constantine did not always depict himself as a pious Christian emperor. A brief excursion into Constantine's various public image campaigns will help to offer a more objective chronology of his reign and attitudes.

A fair amount of modern scholarship has become focused on whether or not Constantine should be seen as a usurper.⁴⁰ When he was proclaimed emperor by his troops outside York while on campaign, Constantine had not consulted with the other members of the Tetrarchy

³⁸ Daniëlle Sloopjes, "Bishops and Their Position of Power in the Late Third Century CE: The Cases of Gregory Thaumaturgus and Paul of Samosata" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4, No. 1 (Spring 2011), 100-15. This article details how Christianity operated outside the realm of Roman politics though by the time of Constantine Christianity had become a force to be reckoned with.

³⁹ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 487-8. These pages briefly detail the three trends that for Frend make up the Constantinian Revolution. The church being showered with material wealth, clergy being put in important positions of power, and various decrees by Constantine which favored Christian morality are these trends.

⁴⁰ Mark Humphries, "From Usurper to Emperor: The Politics of Legitimation in the Age of Constantine" *Journal of Late Antiquity* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2008), 82-100. ; Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 27-47.

about his appointment.⁴¹ It was the popular support of his father's soldiery that guaranteed his place in the Tetrarchic system. If Constantine held any reservations about his position in the Tetrarchy we do not know. In this way, it is easy to see that Constantine was a usurper in the early days of his emperorship. It was the martial might of the Roman legions that proved to be the most practical tool in determining who was to rule. This is not to say that might was the only way to make right. Constantine expended a considerable effort in solidifying his legitimacy as emperor not just through shows of force, but in subtle manipulations of presentation.

Noel Lenski traced an image of Constantine that developed where he first employed an image of himself staying in the bounds of the Tetrarchy until ultimately exploring the bounds of divine leadership that would come to dominate later Byzantine politics. Using numismatics, Lenski reconstructs the various depictions that Constantine utilized at various points in his reign. Early coinage represents him as another member of the Tetrarchy, one who was not desiring sole emperorship and thereby not thinking of deposing his peers. Lenski argues that Constantine is here hedging his bets knowing that his claim to emperorship is somewhat shaky. By appealing to his peers as an equal, Constantine was able to get time so he could solidify his legitimacy. Christian symbolism is not used in these early coins.⁴² The next phase from 310 to 321 depicts Constantine as the slayer of tyrants where his authority came from a desire to restore peace to the Roman Empire. Following the victory over Maxentius at Milvian Bridge in late 312, Constantine was compelled to present himself as a noble figure striving to restore public order instead of as another emperor reaching past his station. Whether or not Maxentius or Licinius could actually

⁴¹ Humphries, "From Usurper," 81-85. The first few pages of this article detail Constantine's immediate rise to power in 306.

⁴² Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 29-31.

be described as tyrannical did not matter to Constantine's desired narrative.⁴³ What mattered was that Constantine presented himself as a liberator and one who suppressed the suppressors. During these years, Constantine would even invoke Sol Invictus on his coinage revealing that Constantine was not a Christian diehard, but someone who was able to navigate the tumultuous sea of religious identity in late antiquity.⁴⁴ The third phase from 321 to 330 finds Constantine adopting a more overtly Christian image though still making efforts to present himself as a tolerant emperor. Lenski notes that the coins from this era depict Constantine looking upwards towards heaven and the Christian character of this pose is reinforced by Eusebius. The most important note, however, is that Constantine presented himself as *the* emperor, one without peers after the defeat of Licinius in 324. Constantine no longer had to fear being viewed as a usurper, but now took efforts to reinforce his rule as *the* rule of the Roman Empire.⁴⁵ The final stage Lenski reconstructs highlights how Constantine flirted with divine monarchy where he is no longer a military man, but a man focused on pious living and offering enlightened leadership. Constantine's nights were no longer spent planning military campaigns, but instead focused on "praying and reading, (composing) missives to his soldiers and subjects instructing them in how to glorify God."⁴⁶ Constantine would be baptized shortly before his death intent on spending what remained of his life in pious prayer. Constantine cannot be said to be purely pagan or Christian throughout the entirety of his reign. Instead, he must be seen as a figure who adapted to the situation around him. Whether or not he was a Christian back in 306 or 312 or 324 does not really matter as Constantine presented himself in numerous ways playing the game of politics in

⁴³ Attempts were certainly made as Eusebius takes some time explaining the faults of both. Book 1, Chapter 33 in *The Life of Constantine* details the adulterous nature of Maxentius. Book 10, Chapter 8 in his *History of the Church* lists the many faults of Licinius.

⁴⁴ Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 32-7.

⁴⁵ Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 37-42.

⁴⁶ Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 42-4.

order to guarantee he and his kin came out on top. Despite his attempts to appear unbiased, Constantine did favor the Christian religion at the expense of paganism. How did he do so?

One of the more visible examples of Constantine's favoritism towards Christianity can be seen in his interactions with churches and bishops. The Edict of Milan in 313 was formulated between the two *augusti* Constantine and Licinius in order to formally end the Persecution and ensure greater stability within the Empire. The Edict declared that any and all property taken from Christians during the Great persecution should be restored without any "negligence or hesitation" (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.5.1-11). Another letter shows that Constantine offered direct donations to the bishop Caecilianus of Carthage (he of the Donatist controversy fame) in order to help with the "expenses" of the bishop. In this same letter, Constantine advises Caecilianus to speak with the Proconsul of Africa if he should ever need anything. And in a vague way, Constantine even offers the services of the Roman state to combat Caecilianus' rival Donatus should he prove too successful in winning converts. Here Constantine is offering his iron fist wrapped in opaque language to Caecilianus (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.6.).⁴⁷ In another letter, this one addressed to Anulinus the Proconsul of Africa, Constantine decrees that all clergymen under Anulinus' purview are to be exempted "from all public duties" (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 10.7). Constantine would also occasionally confiscate pagan temples and donate the bullion within these temples to Christians. These Christians would often be bishops and would use this wealth to enhance their ability to proselytize. This served the dual purpose of weakening pagan institutions and buttressing Christian institutions. The seizure of these pagan holy places also

⁴⁷ "And where I have learnt that certain persons of unstable character desire to lead astray the laity of the most holy Catholic Church by disreputable enticements, this is to inform you that I have given full instructions to Anulinus the Proconsul and also to Patricius the Perfects' *Vicarius* in person, that in all matters, and particularly in this, they are to make the appropriate arrangements and are on no account to overlook insane conduct, you must without hesitation apply to the aforementioned judges and refer the matter to them, so that, as I have instructed them in person, they may bring pressure to bear."

served as a dramatic tool which offered a clear visualization of the de-sanctification of pagan places which would be re-sanctified as Christian holy places. Lenski is quick to advise that Constantine's confiscation of temples should not be seen as "systemic," but "Constantine had thus started a process that had continued to work itself out over the course of the next century."⁴⁸ Despite the lack of systemization, Constantine did actively involve himself in the material wellbeing of churches and bishops which was often at the expense of pagan temples. This was a process that was, with one exception, continued by all the later Roman emperors.

Another avenue of approach for investigating Constantine's favoritism is his appointment of churchmen as his personal advisors. His largesse to bishops is one thing, but actively seeking and incorporating the advice of a, still in the early fourth century, minority religious group fundamentally changed what advice and guidance Constantine was receiving. Eusebius relates that before a battle between Constantine and Licinius, both emperors surrounded themselves with holy men. Constantine "took with him also the priests of God, feeling well assured that now, if ever, he stood in need of the efficacy of prayer." Licinius on the other hand "gathered round himself Egyptian diviners and soothsayers, with sorcerers and enchanters, and the priests and prophets of those whom he imagined to be gods" (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 2.4-5). Eusebius is a less than totally trustworthy source and we must remember that he is not the product of a hermetically sealed Christian education. However, he represents an early stage of Christian rhetoric, one which was still largely pagan in structure. Taking Libanius' **comparison** exercises into consideration, it is apparent that Eusebius is saying far more than is at first apparent. Licinius surrounds himself with, in Eusebius' view, liars and scoundrels, devil worshipers and

⁴⁸ Lenski, *Constantine and Cities*, 167-78. This chapter is titled "Redistributing Wealth" which details exactly that. The specific page for the citation above is 172.

worse so the natural conclusion when **comparing** the two is that Constantine surrounds himself with good and godly men. The pagan soothsayers have to offer sacrifice and bribe their deities while the Christian counselors only have to prayer and their faith will be rewarded with victory. No longer on the outside, Christians from the time of Constantine onwards were almost always welcome in the imperial halls of power. Bishops and other holy men had been creating their own networks before Constantine, but being a part of the imperial process at the highest level must be acknowledged. This close proximity to the emperors gave Christians a unique chance to express their faith as well. Later bishops and other clergy certainly had no issue in leveraging their spiritual authority when speaking truth to power.⁴⁹

Constantine would not only take churchmen into his confidence but would also take an active part in church doctrine hoping to put to rest serious Christological issues that had been tearing at the unity of the Church. The first major council at Nicaea in 325 would be held with Constantine in attendance and was handled much like a Roman court case. Through his personal attendance, Constantine was showing that by 325 Christian concerns were inherently Roman concerns. This also lines up with Lenski's chronology when Constantine would be heavily invested into purporting himself as a Christian emperor. The legacy of this council is crucial. The bishop Arius' teaching that Christ's nature was subordinate to God the Father was anathemized. Orthodoxy became that Christ was consubstantial with the Father (a theological invention by Constantine himself) which attempted to bridge the gap between certain bishops about the nature of Christ. This largely did not work as many were still unconvinced about Christ being

⁴⁹ Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005, 155-71. Chapter 5 is titled "Bishops in Action" which offers short descriptions of the life and works of Synesius of Cyrenaica and Theodore of Sykeon. ; Mar Marcos, "Religious Violence and Hagiography in Late Antiquity" *Numen* 62, no. 2/3 (2015), 169-96. This article details the lives of a few bishops including Gregory Thaumaturgus, Martin of Tours and Shenoute of Atripe all of whom who interacted with the Roman state and spoke as Christians first.

homoousios with God.⁵⁰ Christological controversies would continue with these issues being at the forefront of the Council of Chalcedon in 451.⁵¹ Nicaea is more important for the trend it established of the Roman state and the Ecclesiastical hierarchy working together in order to promote stability instead of forever setting theological issues. The Council of Carthage in 411 is a later example of Church issues being handled inside a Roman framework where the Catholics used the structure of the council as a legal hearing to their advantage against the Donatists.⁵² Early church writings when a villain was needed would routinely depict Roman soldiers breaking into a holy space. The image of soldiers breaking into a church was certainly not unwarranted considering the Great Persecution would still be in very recent memory having ended only twelve years before Nicaea. The intrusion of the secular into the religious was used by Christian authors as a trope the listeners could easily identify with.⁵³ This image would not totally fade away with Constantine (his rough handling of the Donatist controversy even exacerbated it)⁵⁴, but by the time of his sons and later emperors like Theodosius it was expected for Roman soldiery to protect Christians instead of persecuting them. Constantine set a precedent that the affairs of the church were the same as the state.

⁵⁰ Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 498-501. These pages detail a short history of the Council of Nicaea.

⁵¹ D. Gwynn, "The Council of Chalcedon and the Definition of Christian Tradition" *Chalcedon in Context: Church Council 400-700* ed. R. Price and M. Whitby (Liverpool University Press, 2011), 7-26. This short chapter offers a brief history of the Council of Chalcedon as well as exploring how the council itself was interpreted by the men who were present. Particular attention is paid to the Council of Constantinople in 381.

⁵² Maureen A. Tilley, "Dilatory Donatists or Procrastinating Catholics: The Trial at the Conference of Carthage" *Church History* 60, no. 1 (March 1991), 7-19.

⁵³ Michael Gaddis, *There is no Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 75-7. "But while bishops often took the initiative in employing the violence of the state, victims of such action chose to see it as persecution, emphasizing the emperor's role, in order to cast it as an unacceptable intrusion of worldly forces into church affairs."

⁵⁴ Lenski, *Constantine and the Cities*, 253. "The truly faithful...were those who, like the Savior, were made to suffer in and by this world...when the Donatist faithful witnessed Constantine's troops surround their basilica outside Carthage, 'not only were they not put to flight...instead they flocked all the more eagerly to the house of prayer out of a desire to suffer.'"

Later Emperors and “Christian Triumph”

Constantius II (r.337-361) expanded on what his father had begun. Where Constantine skirted around divine leadership and still made attempts to reconcile with pagans out of want for stability. Constantius II can be seen as a proto example for later Byzantine kingship. Constantius also more actively persecuted paganism.⁵⁵ The figure of Constantius is hard to discern owing to his many-faceted character. At times cunning and at times brutal, Constantius II has a more human memory unlike his deified father. This reputation may be due to his more human nature or that one of the major sources for his rule comes from the pagan Ammianus who routinely lambasts the emperor for his devious character (Amm. 21.16.8).⁵⁶ Constantius also lacks the propagandist his father had in Eusebius though Eusebius believed the apple did not fall from the tree in Constantius’ case (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 1.1). One of the more controversial aspects of his reign was his active pursuit in unifying the church with the state. Constantine made it his business to interact with and sanction the actions of clergymen and his relationship with the church can be seen as a partnership. Constantius, laying the groundwork for later Byzantine emperors, believed it was his role as emperor to rule over both secular and religious decisions. That he was an Arian who rejected Nicaea only exacerbated relations.⁵⁷ The trajectory of church and state relations between the eastern and western halves of the empire is not the subject of this

⁵⁵ Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 533. “(Speaking of Constantius) This strange, enigmatic figure was a mixture of gallantry and inertia, sound judgement and superstition, shrewdness and stupidity...He was a resourceful commander with a sound technical sense yet he lacked confidence and relied on visions to confirm his judgment.” ; *ibid.*, 537. ““In February 356 Constantius, however, published a comprehensive edict that forbade pagan sacrifice by ordering the closure of pagan temples, and practically speaking, disestablished pagan worship.”

⁵⁶ “...yet if (Constantius) discovered any ground, however false or slight, for suspecting an attempt upon the throne he showed in endless investigations, regardless of right or wrong, a cruelty which easily surpassed that of Caligula and Domitian and Commodus.” Chapter 16 of book 21 details the character of Constantius.

⁵⁷ Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 535. “(Bishops) accepted that he had the power to summon councils and to legislate to protect the church against pagans and heretics. What they objected to was Constantius’s efforts to integrate the church with the state, with resulting imperial intervention in church law and ecclesiastical decisions, and they viewed with dismay his increasingly open rejection of Nicaea.”

inquiry, but in Constantius II can be seen an evolution of his father that takes imperial involvement in theology and ecclesiastical hierarchy to a new level.

It is impossible to offer a concrete date for the total triumph of Christianity. Despite this, a relative date can be established as when Christianity became if not dominant then at least powerful or present enough for the emperors Theodosius I and Gratian to mandate Nicene Christianity as the only acceptable religion within the Roman Empire. The Edict of Thessalonica was issued in 380 and the Council of Constantinople in 381 both sought to enforce Nicene Christianity at the expense of Arianism and paganism. Whereas the Edict of Milan in 313 called for a return to religious freedoms these later imperial efforts mandated an official religion. Pagan sacrifices would also be officially proscribed in 391 and a majority of the remaining temples would be confiscated in 392.⁵⁸ It would fit too well into the Christian narrative of triumph to view the end of the fourth century as the “death” of paganism, but it is these years that it can be said that Christianity (most importantly Nicene Christianity) had become the religion of the empire. The conversion of the empire should not be viewed as the product of imperial decree and effort alone, but the result of many people working at the local and imperial level. We turn now to the bishops and churchmen in order to view this conversion process more effectively.

Bishops and Holy Men in Late Antiquity

What makes a person powerful? For bishops and other holy men of late antiquity their power could come from many sources. Claudia Rapp traces the power of late antique Christians

⁵⁸ Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 636-40. “...in February 391 the celebration of pagan sacrifices and other pagan rites was forbidden. Finally, this decade of repression reached its climax in a law of June 392 ordering that heretical clergy be fined ten pounds of gold and that their places of worship be confiscated. Landowners, imperial bailiffs, and tenants alike were liable to be punished if forbidden practices took place on lands for which they were responsible.”

stemming from three categories: spiritual, ascetic, and pragmatic.⁵⁹ Spiritual authority is derived from theological knowledge and an ability to perform the tenants of the faith correctly. Saint Augustine is the exemplar of this quality with his emphasis on theological teaching and thought. Ascetic authority is derived from a severe separation from the secular world. The Stylites are an example of this ascetic quality where common and elite peoples would be awed at the Stylites' ability to stand atop their pillar for extended periods of time in contemplation. The last is the easiest to discern. Pragmatic authority is derived from material wealth and a willingness and/or ability to engage in secular matters. These secular matters included charity to the poor, being an intermediary between troubled parties, and/or having a proximity to the emperor or imperial policy. Saint Ambrose is a clear example of this pragmatic authority. Even the emperor Theodosius would have to relinquish his majesty to the authority of Ambrose when the bishop demanded the emperor perform penance for the Massacre of Thessalonica in 390. None of these are hermetically sealed categories and bishops were able to at times personify elements from all three of these categories.

Imperial policy represents decisions made at the top and these are important to note. However, it is too simplistic to think that it was Constantine or Constantius II or Theodosius alone who were responsible for the process of Christianization. Christians had, by the time of Constantine, already been able to create an ecclesiastical system so the process of Christianization had already begun before Constantine's usurpation. This is not to imply that the Christianization of the empire was inevitable, but that the proselytizing mission of late antique Christianity demanded conversion. In this way, Christianity can always be seen as a process. This established ecclesiastical system is vital to understanding the success of the conversion

⁵⁹ Rapp, *Holy Bishops*, 164.

process. This system provided a basis of infrastructure both spiritual and material that aided bishops and other holy men in their mission. Constantine's reforms took the shackles off the ecclesiastical system and showered various churches and churchmen with wealth. One of the functions that this wealth facilitated was extreme charity, this material charity represented an interpretation of "love of the poor" in a very real way. This charity was distributed to large numbers of the urban poor. These urban poor would most often be made up of people new to the cities or migratory, they did not necessarily live within the city's walls. This contrasted with previous patrons of cities who only distributed charity to members of their cities.⁶⁰ This distribution of charity compelled a loyalty that bishops were able to leverage in order to bolster their own powerbase.

Christians lamented the material world for its sin and corrupting nature, but faith alone does not put bread on the table. The wealth and privileges that Christianity had following Constantine's reforms and throughout the remainder of late antiquity provided the grease, so to speak, for the wheels of conversion to operate at maximum efficiency. That this wealth routinely came from confiscated pagan temples only strengthened Christianity at the expense of paganism as a whole. The common farmer or townsman would only see their emperor on coinage, but the local bishop or priest offered a far more direct and personable representation of Christianity. When given imperial sanction these representatives of Christianity took that sanction and ran with it. What compelled this, however? Why did Christians feel so determined to convert the empire to their religion?

⁶⁰ Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 77-8. "Nowhere was the Christian representation of the church's novel role in society more aggressively maintained than in the claim of Christian bishops to act as 'lovers of the poor'... In fourth-century conditions, however, 'love of the poor' took on a new resonance. It was an activity that came to affect the city as a whole...By the end of the fourth century their authority rested on a newly created constituency."

“Loving All” and Imitating Christ

Christianity has often adopted a self-imposed proselytizing mission that emphasizes itself as a proactive religion. This was most certainly the case in late antiquity. It was the job of the faithful to preach the truth of faith to all corners of the Roman Empire and beyond. By the time Augustine had developed the theology of Original Sin in the early fifth century, converting non-Christians was enough of a will to power that certain commandants could be discarded or reinterpreted. This is not to say that Christianity became a bloodthirsty religion, but that according to theological teachings it was of paramount importance for Christians to save the souls of all humans. To do otherwise would cosign lost sheep to oblivion amidst a life of sin. Christians used every tool they possessed in order to save those they believed were destined for damnation. Sometimes the Christian will to power took the form of bountiful charity for the improvised, sometimes it took the form of a smashed pagan altar. Sometimes both actions could be found in the same person. This need to convert, this belief that in conversion was the ultimate expression of love is the epitome of “loving all” being an unalterable command. The protestations of pagans and those outside orthodoxy were bad, but to allow them to continue in ignorance was believed to be far worse.

Another expression of Christian piety can be found in imitating the suffering of Christ. As Christ suffered temptations in the desert, the betrayal of Judas, the agony of torture and eventual crucifixion so too did Christians of late antiquity wish to emulate the anguish of Christ to prove their piety.⁶¹ It is important to note that this was never pain for pain’s sake. Christian theology teaches that only through the death and resurrection of Christ was it able for humans to

⁶¹ Peter Brown, “The Saint as Exemplar in Late Antiquity” *Representation* No 2. (Spring, 1983), 8. “The imitation of Christ, therefore, strove to bring the elusive touch of the majesty of Adam into the present age.”

be forgiven for sin. This point must be emphasized: Sin is a real thing in Christian theology. To sin is to act counter to God's design for the proper functioning of, to put it bluntly, existence itself. One need only be reminded of the fire and brimstone that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah to know that God can be a stern parent when His anger is unleashed. Sinning was believed to risk a similar form of divine punishment. Therefore, the Resurrection is the most important part of Christian theology. It allowed for forgiveness of sins in a real sense. Not just the minor things like coveting a neighbor's new significant other or major things like murder, but all sins. Ready forgiveness of all sin is to emphasize the absolute and infinite depth of God's love for His creations. It was this love that shone through the torture of Christ and it was through struggle and hardship that Christians hoped to capture the essence of imitating Christ. Saint Augustine states that when saints faced death they did so with gladness. Indeed, these deaths were "precious" and emphasized that it was better to face death instead of sin. Death was only a prelude to everlasting peace in heaven. (August. *De civ. D.* 13.7.)⁶² By placing oneself in harm's way, be it in preaching to dangerous men or standing outside the pagan governor's palace calling for one's own death, it was believed to reveal the sheer depth of that person's devotion. This ready acceptance of hardship allowed for a far greater deal of conviction where acts of extreme violence or suffering could be justified and even celebrated.

Theology alone cannot explain every action taken by Christians in late antiquity and it cannot explain the process of Christianization. Theology can, however, help to frame the mindset that the Christians of the era operated within. Understanding how these churchmen conceptualized their world and their role and task in it helps to explain how a peaceful religion

⁶² "Therefore, the death of the saints is precious, the saints for who the death of Christ was the price already paid in advance. And such grace came from Christ's death that to gain him they did not hesitate to pay the price of their own death, the death which showed that what had been imposed as the penalty for sin had been turned to such good use that it brought to birth a richer harvest of righteousness."

could be wielded in a violent way. What of the other religion of the empire? What of paganism? A short excursion into pagan interaction and resistance to Christianization can help to highlight that there was no singular conversion point within the empire. It will also help to further reinforce that a modicum of understanding was a required element between the two faiths despite what Christian narratives may lead us to believe.

Paganism in the era of Christianization

A common misconception about the process of Christianization is that it was a contest between equals. This view forces the whole length and breadth of pagan philosophies, practices, and expressions of faith into one box. This is a dangerous thing to do as it totally contorts and blurs the real lines that existed between pagan practitioners. A pagan who paid particular attention to Sol Invictus may not have felt any compulsion to offer sacrifice to Mithras. An Egyptian who worshiped the old gods could have felt the need to offer genuine sacrifice to the Roman pantheon as well. Some pagans also may have only chosen to sacrifice to one god in particular or placing that god above the others to such a degree that a form of pagan monotheism emerges.⁶³ Others would embrace the esoteric stoic philosophy of the Divine Nature that believed the universe and life itself was the godhead.⁶⁴ Ancient peoples were at times able to put on one hat, several hats, or even a plethora if they had to. Paganism within the Roman Empire in late antiquity was not a monolith with a clear hierarchy that clearly delineated space or responsibility or even expressions of faith. The early Christian church often lacked a clear hierarchy as well yet the various bishops that made up the ecclesiastical hierarchy were able to

⁶³ Peter Van Nuffelen, "Pagan Monotheism as a Religious Phenomenon" in *One God* ed. Stephen Mitchell and Peter Van Nuffelen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16-33.

⁶⁴ Niketas Siniouoglou, "From Philosophical Monotheism to Imperial Henotheism: Esoteric and Popular Religion in Late Antique Platonism" in *Monotheism Between Pagans and Christians in Late Antiquity* ed. Stephen Mitchell and Peter Van Nuffelen (Leuven-Walpole: Peeters, 2010), 127-48

exert more influence and/or rely on their fellow churchmen for support enough that the process of Christianization was able to proceed. The conversion process was not a contest between equals, but a theological argument between two crowds with many voices and many interpretations of their individual faith or faiths. For some, it was less an argument and more a polite discussion, one such example can be found in the letters of Quintus Aurelius Symmachus.

Symmachus was an old pagan by the end of the fourth century. He was also a man of some importance having been consul, a proconsul of Africa, and an urban prefect. It is not surprising then that Symmachus wrote a large number of letters and corresponded with a lot of people. What is surprising is that no small amount of these letters were sent to Christians and that Symmachus is quite friendly in these letters even going so far as to make syntax jokes.⁶⁵ These letters reveal a few things: that Symmachus was corresponding with a fellow man of letters since syntax jokes only work when the recipient is versed in letters. This in turn reveals the assumed reader was a man of some wealth since attainment of *paideia* was never cheap. The content of the letters also reveal that Symmachus felt no need to hide his pagan identity even after the Edict of Thessalonica. It is likely that his lack of fear could be due to the social cache and material wealth that Symmachus had been able to accumulate after working within the imperial and Roman state apparatus for decades. That the reader was at times a Christian also reveals that Symmachus did not hide his pagan identity even when dealing directly with prominent Christian men. It is one thing to simply avoid persecutors, it is another to engage with said persecutors in a friendly way. A shrewd politician like Symmachus surely knew how to play the political game, but if that was the case than it follows that adopting a Christian “costume” would be the most

⁶⁵ Alan Cameron, “Were Pagans Afraid to Speak their Minds in a Christian World? The Correspondence of Symmachus” in *Pagans and Christians in Late Antique Rome* ed. Michele Renee Salzman, Marianne Sághy and Rita Lizzi Testa (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 64-112

advantageous decision. This he did not do but maintained his pagan identity throughout his life.

How much leeway pagans had in dealing with the Christian Roman Empire is less important than the fact that some pagans were able to maintain their pagan identity despite the “triumph” of Christianity.

Chapter 3: Hagiography and Chreia

Introduction

Saint Martin was a busy man during his tenure as bishop of Tours which reflects the seriousness with which he took the role as well as his deep-seated sense of piety. Another example from his *Life* can highlight just how pious Martin was. In a village near Tours, Martin is preoccupied with the removal of a pagan temple which naturally upset the pagan population who, upon learning of the desecration of their shrine, rushed upon Martin intent on harming the bishop. Martin did not experience fear, but instead lent his neck forward beseeching the pagans to harm him. One pagan drew a knife with the intent of slaying Martin then and there. Martin, however, is protected by divine favor and the pagan is struck down by the “fear of God.” Another similar event occurs where the weapon a pagan attempts to use vanishes into thin air before striking Martin. Unwilling to shed human blood, Martin uses theology and good oratory to sway the pagan multitudes on both occasions to follow the teachings of Christ (Sulp. Sev. *Mart.* 15).

Taken at face value, these two stories are impossible to believe in any literal sense. Hagiography as a genre is replete with this problem. The mystical always intrudes upon the material and practical. This fact makes hagiography an unlikely or dangerous source to use for historical research. However, knowing the rules of hagiography, knowing the structure that various authors applied and even pioneered when writing the lives of their various saints can help to show the real intent of the author thereby opening up the path for more refined historical research. Hagiography is an extension of the *chreia* exercises that students of *paideia* were relentlessly drilled in. The purpose of *chreia* was to impart a tidbit of wisdom, a model to base one’s life on, a figure to aspire towards, and could incorporate the far-fetched as rhetorical

devices. In the same way, hagiography must be read. This is not to say that Christians did not or do not believe in the fantastical or improbable, but that these lean to matters of personal belief and faith. Whether or not an author like *Martin's* Sulpicius Severus or *Anthony's* Athanasius believed the fantastical things they wrote down is less important than what the fantastical occurrences represent in the context of hagiography. When the knife that was going to be thrust into Martin's stomach vanishes this is meant to act as the natural result of strong faith. The presumed Christian audience of hagiography should be awed by the total lack of fear in Martin's actions and feel a compulsion to act in a similar manner. What other mechanics did these authors employ and how should they be interpreted? Did these mechanics change over the course of late antiquity? Were hagiographies meant to convert non-Christians?

The Mechanics of *Chreia* in Hagiography

A clear example of the similarities in form between *chreia* and hagiography can be seen in Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Life and Wonders of our Father among the Saints, Gregory the Wonderworker*. One day, word reached Gregory of a land dispute that was threatening to turn into violence between two brothers over a marsh (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 7.49). He rushed to the scene to prevent the great sin of fratricide from occurring and tried explaining to the two brothers that whatever boon may be found in the temporary ownership of the marsh the dread sin of murder would haunt whoever survived for all eternity. This did not prove effective, and the two brothers continued their feud. Undeterred, Gregory spent the night in quiet prayer and contemplation. To the astonishment of all those assembled, when the morning dawned the marsh had been drained completely. It is vague, but one can assume that all the wildlife and plant life had also disappeared without a trace. Having the object that so inflamed the passions of the brothers removed created peace between the siblings who now had nothing to quarrel about

(Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 7.53). Gregory of Nyssa cites the story of Solomon and the two mothers as a similar event and explains that Gregory the Wonderworker acted in a similar way. Gregory of Nyssa reinforces his argument that the draining of the marsh is one of the most important miracles by referencing previous examples from scripture such as the parting of the Red Sea and when Joshua stopped the Jordan River. As opposed to these two examples, the marsh that Gregory the Wonderworker drained has remained drained ever since which is far more miraculous (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 7.55). The implicit understanding that it was not Gregory the Wonderworker who drained the marsh, but God who acted on behalf of Gregory's piety and his calls for peace between the brothers.

A quick recap of the proper structural ordering of *chreia* is in order: Libanius' steps for *chreia* were **brief praise, paraphrasing, cause, contrast, example, and brief epilogue**. Gregory of Nyssa begins this chapter offering **brief praise** of the subject as a man who accomplished his acts with "divine power" and whose authority was the most "exalted court of appeal" (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 7.49). In **paraphrasing** what tidbit of wisdom the audience is meant to receive, Gregory extols that good men like Gregory Wonderworker create "good order and peace for the community." If one lives and acts like Gregory the Wonderworker, then "good order and peace" is the natural result. The **cause** for which the following example is written is so "the whole woven garment might be manifested to us by the fringe." Gregory of Nyssa **contrasts** the subject with Solomon whose solution of cutting a babe in two in order to discern the real mother between two competing parties. The author comments that this was a "roundabout way" of discerning the truth (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 7.50). Solomon is used again as well as the two examples of Moses and Joshua as the **example** Gregory uses to reinforce the subject's

importance. The **brief epilogue** recaps why this miracle is so wonderful as the marsh has never returned.

Evolution implies change, sometimes major and sometimes minor. Hagiography is an evolution of *chreia* which implies that some changes between the two will exist in both form and substance. The substance of hagiography is easy to gather as the content is Christian to the core, there is no mistaking the content. The form of hagiography, however, was more open to interpretation for Christian authors. It is in the structural composition of hagiography that it most differs from *chreia*. For example, Augustine's *Confessions* is a lengthy text that does not form to Libanius' structure for hagiography, but *Confessions*, if seen in a *functional* light, is a series of examples extolling certain character traits of Augustine that he believed would be beneficial for a presumed Christian audience. This is *chreia* in spirit rather than adhering to a strict form. Applying an overly schematic approach to reading hagiography as the direct descendent of *chreia* would miss what the most important change was for Christian authors – the movement from the pagan past into a Christian future. They are still texts, however, material objects that are inert. They are important because of the words within and how could those words be used?

Hagiographies could be used by anyone literate in whatever way they saw fit. As a source of solace hagiographies often succeed as they offer examples of bravery under pressure and even reflect a certain radicalness and defiance of authority. A priest could use hagiographical examples of righteous conduct during a homily to inspire a sense of renewed faith in his flock as another possible application. A few examples can even highlight how hagiography was used to enforce Nicene orthodoxy (Sulp. Sev. *Mart.* 6, Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaumata.* 4.31). Owing to a lack of literacy in the antique world, hagiography was not meant for mass consumption in the sense of peasantry or the urban poor being the target audience. Hagiography was intended for

mass consumption for the literate population which could (emphasis on could) imply an inherent amount of wealth. *Paideia* was not cheap, but it would be too restrictive to think that only those who achieved *paideia* could read. Simple charity and natural human curiosity about the power of words compelled some to instruct others on reading and writing. Nevertheless, this distinction does little to change the function of hagiography. The author's intent was to provide a model worth emulating, what the reader did with that information was their own decision. Looking at hagiography as an evolution of *chreia* what can a new reading discern from these texts? What changes can be observed when looking at the changes in substance instead of focusing on form?

The Fantastical as a Rhetorical Device

Before beginning in earnest, some time must be spent further explaining my methodology in reading hagiography. When I use the term “fantastical” to explain an event such as the disappearing knife I am using the term to describe events or situations that defy reality. Material matter simply does not vanish. This is not to declare that miracles cannot happen, but that for the purposes of reading hagiography it does not matter if an event actually occurred. We have already seen that ancient authors were schooled in such a way that encouraged a certain massaging of the text. Students were not instructed to create bold-faced lies, but were encouraged to create a more perfect argument or description or example from available material. The Christian authors who wrote hagiography in late antiquity came from the same education background, they knew the rules and structures. Christian authors had to understand the rules before reinventing the established schema. Fantastical events serve as a rhetorical tool for the author where using something fantastical it can be *proven* that the character of the subject under investigation is noble and worth emulating. How these events are framed also changed over the

course of the fourth century. A look at a few of these fantastical events in various sources will prove the point.

In the year 286 C.E. and at the age of thirty-five, Saint Anthony sought isolation in the tombs that were nearby his home village. A short time after locking himself away (after instructing an acquaintance to check on him every few days), Anthony is beset by “the enemy” who brings with him a “multitude of demons” (Athanasius, *Anth.* 8). The devil repeatedly strikes a prostrate Anthony causing him immense pain and even crippling the ascetic so badly that he cannot raise himself to stand. Anthony’s acquaintance checks on him in the morning and is shocked by what he sees. He carries the wounded man to the church for treatment. This was most distasteful to Anthony who, through his own strength, leaves the church around midnight and returns to the tombs so that his prayers can continue uninterrupted. The devil with his multitude returns that night but cannot shatter Anthony’s resolve who shouts that “nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ” (Athanasius, *Anth.* 9). Frustrated beyond all reason, the devil and his horde take on the shape of beasts and threaten to destroy the tomb with their baying and rage. Only after some time does “a ray of light” appear and the “demons suddenly vanished.” All of Anthony’s bodily pain is immediately wiped away and he is whole again. The ascetic asks the ray of light “Why did you not appear at the beginning(?)” to which God responds that He needed to see Anthony resist the onslaught before providing succor (Athanasius, *Anth.* 10).

What does the above passage tell us? Taking a literal interpretation, it stretches the imagination past any reasonable point. An army of shapeshifting demons is a fun idea for a story of grand fiction, but it is not realistic. That is because it was never meant to be taken as literal fact. Anthony is routinely believed to be the father of all monks; his reputation lay in his great ability to isolate from the secular world. That Anthony in his thirties spent time in tombs to be

isolated is not hard to believe. That he was beset by problems and temptations, possibly wild beasts of all sorts and perhaps beasts in the shape of men all provide a more believable interpretation of Anthony's troubles in the tombs. Bishop Athanasius who wrote Anthony's *Life* is here using the rhetorical skills of *paideia*, but with Christian language to enhance Anthony's story. This example from *The Life of Anthony* is fulfilling the same function of *chreia* which was to highlight an admirable trait of the subject under investigation. Anthony is isolated which shows his piety, his faith and resolve are tested most painfully which further highlights his resilience of faith, and it is only through the intervention of God that Anthony's faith is rewarded. The noting of Anthony's willingness to be a hermit acts as the **brief praise** with the understanding that asceticism was an expression of piety as suffering like Christ was an admirable Christian trait. His self-discipline is noted which is the reason for the devil's appearance. This is **paraphrasing** what the ultimate ideal was in Anthony's case – self-discipline as an expression of piety. The testing of Anthony's faith is the **cause** Athanasius uses to justify his speaking of the incident. If even the great hermit Anthony can have his faith tested, then he instantly becomes more approachable as a human despite the fantastical events which surround him. A wily priest could emphasize this humanity in order to inspire his flock to greater efforts of self-discipline. The **contrast** in this example is harder to trace but taking an abstracted view of **contrast** as meaning “something counter to what trait the author is emphasizing” it becomes clear that the devil is the counterargument to Anthony. Either emulate Anthony in holiness or embrace demons in sin is the point Athanasius is making. The **example** used to bolster Anthony's pious character is similarly hard to discern, but **examples** were used by ancient authors to frame their subject against an illustrious forebear or mythical figure. When the ray of light appears, Athanasius speaks for God who promises Anthony that He would “(forever)

be a succor to you, and will make your name known everywhere” (Athan *Anth.* 10). What other example is superior to Christians than God? There is no other ancient figure (ancient in this sense implying an inherent pagan faith) in Christian history as important as God. The **brief epilogue** informs the reader that Anthony is perfectly back to normal and continuing in his ascetic lifestyle. This short example is used by Athanasius to showcase what was to him an admirable Christian trait – resilience of faith under pressure. Athanasius would have only written *The Life of Anthony* following the end of the Great Persecution in 313. The scars of the Persecution would have lingered after the formal end so any examples of strained faith being rewarded would have been welcomed as a salve by the presumed Christian audience.

A more innocuous example can be found in Saint Augustine’s *Confessions* which is an example of auto-hagiography. While travelling through Italy in 386 C.E., Augustine was experiencing a crisis of faith. His career as a *rhetor* was successful, but it brought him no joy and even distracted him from living a good life. Indeed, the job was not only a distraction, but kept “those deaf, dead” students of his in darkness which worried him even more for he believed himself to be sinning. One day he sat down with his travelling companions including his mother Monica and began reading the Psalms. The “honey-sweet scriptures” soothed Augustine’s spiritual pain, but a toothache had recently developed to such a degree that he could not even speak. A flash of inspiration came to him and he wrote down on a wax tablet to be read aloud by another that all the assembled people should pray for him and that his pain should be lessened. Instantly, the toothache vanishes and all assembled are in open shock. Some were even terrified, but Augustine is quick to declare that this fantastical occurrence is proof of God’s love. Soon after he retires from his career as *rhetor* and is baptized (August. *Conf.* 9.4).

Augustine's career as a rhetor naturally involved a great deal of oratory and mastery of speech, speaking well was believed to have some magical quality about it where good speech should compel a desired response. Continuing to look at occurrences of fantastical events as rhetorical devices it becomes clear that Augustine is concerned that the very tool which he and other rhetors use most often to perform their task is itself polluted or damaged. The toothache represents a tortured soul who is concerned about what he is saying, about what damage his words may be doing. This concern is the **cause** for writing this occurrence down. Only after "(urging) all (his) own people who were there to pray" is the toothache removed. (August. *Conf.* 9. 4.) He must first compel right action from others even with a damaged mouth before the pain is removed. There must be a conscious decision to make right. Faith is not passive but must be active for it to be rewarded. Augustine had by this point in the Confessions been in a sort of religious flux between paganism, Manicheism, and Christianity. The year 386 is his conversion point with his baptism occurring shortly after in 387. Adopting the Christian doctrine entirely is for Augustine the only way to remove the pain of bad speech. Bad speech, rooted in pagan *paideia*, is **contrasted** with the good speech of the Christian scriptures. The incident ends with Augustine writing to Bishop Ambrose of Milan who serves as an **example** of good Christian character throughout *The Confessions*.

Another quick example comes from Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Gregory*. Gregory Thaumaturgus was active in the mid to late 3rd century, but Gregory of Nyssa wrote the *Life* in the late fourth century. During the Persecution of either Decius (250) or Valerian (257), Gregory flees into the mountains surrounding Neocaesarea in Pontus. With him is a former pagan priest whom Gregory was able to convert after expelling the demons that had made their home in a pagan temple. After being trailed by their persecutors for some time Gregory stops running and

“ordered his companion to stand with firm and unwavering confidence towards God” (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 12.85). The two men await their pursuers with arms outstretched towards heaven waiting to be caught and tortured. This does not happen as when found, the pursuers only see “two trees standing a short distance apart” (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 12.86). Through illusion, the two men are saved from torture and eventual death.

Gregory of Nyssa’s prose is relatively basic and easy to decipher. Gregory Thaumaturgus flees into the mountains in order to protect himself from undue persecution which is surprisingly reasonable as Saint Anthony welcomed a chance for martyrdom while visiting Alexandria. This does not stop Gregory of Nyssa from offering **brief praise** of his subject. Gregory the Wonderworker advises caution so that most Christians who were afraid of death would not flee and become “deserters of the faith” should open battle between Christians and Romans begin. Gregory the Wonderworker is praised for his willingness to practice what he preaches and flees into the mountains (Greg. Nyssa *Greg. Thaum.* 12.84). Despite this willingness to protect himself, when cornered Gregory Thaumaturgus gives himself over to God’s hands. This display of faith is rewarded by God who obscures Gregory and his partner from the pursuing pagans. This occurs only after displaying a ready acceptance for martyrdom. Moreover, one of the pursuers realizes what has occurred and is instantly converted to Christianity. The section ends with an **example** extremely similar to Eusebius’ history of the church where so much effort is wasted pursuing good Christians that the jails and courts of the Roman state become overwhelmed (Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 8.5-6). Unlike Athanasius or Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa offers a far clearer image of what he is trying to present. This is reflective of there being no singular school for hagiographical writing. Paideia was never uniform and Christian education

was similarly never uniform in late antiquity. There is no single framework that is going to apply for all hagiography, but every author is going to draw from the same thematic well of *chreia*.

Christian Scripture in place of Ancient Citation

When students of *paideia* referenced ancient sources or myth this was done to reinforce their argument about any particular subject. The belief was that by utilizing the more perfect knowledge of glorified forebears it showed the student to be more knowledgeable of not only the subject but also of what the established beliefs were. This made refuting the argument more difficult because not only did the student's opponent have to dismantle the first argument, but they would have to dismantle the argument of those philosophers that came before. Citing ancient sources or examples immediately upped the challenge for anyone who disagreed with a presented argument. In the same way Christians understood scripture to serve the same function in hagiography. By referencing scripture this showed the author to be immersed in the faith itself and reinforced not only their position or argument, but also their own image as a pious Christian. The use of scripture also served the purpose of creating distance between Christianity and paganism. Understanding that Christians viewed themselves as adherents of a barbarian philosophy that they believed to be totally and completely severed from the pagan tradition leads one to view the use of scripture as another expression of this identity. If pagan authors used their history and myth to prove their superiority, then Christians would use their scripture to do the same. In hagiography, the use of scripture not only reinforces an argument, but also highlights a conscious choice on the part of the author to shift *chreia* from the pagan past into the Christian future.

Saint Augustine was still a student of rhetoric at Carthage when he first read Aristotle's *Ten Categories*. Augustine read the text in private hoping to learn what made his teachers so

wise, learned, and proud. To his astonishment, very few other students seemed to understand what Aristotle had written and even the teachers seemed to only grasp the very basics of the text. This was baffling to him as he understood *The Ten Categories* without any challenge or misunderstanding. This was well before his conversion event and Augustine laments that he “mistakenly attempted to understand even you, my God, in terms of (the categories)” (August. *Conf.* 4.16).⁶⁶ He continues saying that “No, the reading had been no profit to me – a hinderance, rather.” The most important element in this example comes at the end when he writes that “As you had commanded, so did it befall me: the earth brought forth thorns and thistles for me, and I garnered my bread by much labor.” The use of thorns and thistles harkens back to Genesis 3:18-19 right as God is expelling Adam and Eve from the Garden. Thorns and thistles are the worst the earth can provide for nourishment and they are used by God to punish the first humans. Augustine is here using the same imagery to describe what he believed he actually gained from reading *The Ten Categories* which was nothing of any substance. Indeed, he even states that “What profit to me then was the ingenuity that nimbly picked its way amid those teachings...if I was crippled and led astray by sacrilegious depravity where the teachings of true godliness were concerned?” Augustine then goes on to say that even children who, though not educated, but were Christian, were infinitely better than even the wisest of *rhetors*. He ends by referencing Psalms 84:3 and noting that “(those that were faithful) stayed safely in the nest of your Church to grow their plumage.”

This type of thinking would have been abhorrent to teachers like Libanius who placed the most importance on their education. Kimbros celebrated his *paideia* even when corporal punishment was meted out. Augustine is here using an expanded form of *chreia* to destroy the

⁶⁶ All references to *The Confessions* on this page come from book 4, chapter 16.

very education that he took part in as a youth and young man. He **paraphrases** early on that pagan education is worthless if used to understand God. The inadequacy of *paideia* is the **cause** he uses to justify writing about this incident when he read *The Ten Categories*. The issue for Augustine is that without God in *paideia* there is no value to it, it is as thorns and thistles. God's infinite wisdom is **contrasted** against the inadequate knowledge and human pride of the pagan teachers. Escaping entirely from an education as rigid and severe as *paideia* is impossible, however. His form is not entirely new but created out of the education he received as a young man and student. He incorporates new methods and new elements in order to create something different from the past. Moreover, he uses Christian scripture in place of ancient citation to reinforce his argument to the reader.

Hagiography as a tool of Conversion?

The Christian will to power came from a need to convert in order that the command "love all" was fulfilled. While this command was never so thoroughly enforced as some Christian authors would have us believe the process of Christianization was handled with an assumed eventual end. Total conversion was the desired outcome for late antique Christians, anything less would have been seen as cruelty on the part of Christians for not saving more sinners. Can hagiography, then, be read as a possible bridge to reach educated pagans? Was the genre created to serve as a bridge in much the same way as *paideia* itself allowed educated men from all across the Roman Empire to converse as equals? A surface reading of hagiography makes it plain that various hagiographical authors viewed paganism in extremely harsh terms and equated the old gods with demons. However, men of *paideia* were expected to submit themselves to superior philosophy and the Christians not only believed their philosophy to be superior, but that it was

the sole philosophy due to the monotheistic nature of the religion.⁶⁷ It is likely that some Christian authors thought it possible to convert a few pagans and even heretics in this way. All things considered I am not convinced that the first purpose of hagiography was to convert. Hagiography is a genre that was made by Christians for Christian consumption. What are some examples that can highlight this?

It is ironic that a man who sought isolation as much as Saint Anthony should find himself to be constantly entertaining uninvited guests. When he was an old man whose “speech was seasoned with the divine salt,” Anthony lectured several groups of pagans who had come to visit him (Athanasius, *Anth.* 72). This was meant to be a discussion between the two parties of Christian and pagan, but Anthony barely lets the pagans get a word in edgewise. He instead dismantles the entirety of pagan philosophy through logic and oration. Anthony poses a question to a group of pagans asking which is better “mind or letters? And which is the cause of which – mind of letters or letters of mind” (Athanasius, *Anth.* 73). The pagans answer that “mind is first and the inventor of letters.” Anthony refutes them by saying that ““Whoever...has a sound mind has not need of letters.”” This response is greeted with astonishment by all assembled and the pagans leave “marveling that they had seen so much understanding in an ignorant man.”

This story is probably pure fiction, but it serves as a good example for proving that pagans were not the target audience of hagiography. Anthony is **briefly praised** as a man whose voice carries a great deal of import and authority. Indeed, he is so renowned that the pagans travel into the desert to converse with him. The answer that Anthony provides to the pagans is a good one as it showcases a classic example of *paideia* training – Anthony was able to take the

⁶⁷ Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy*, 57. “Christian thinkers...saw themselves as the proud possessors of a *barbarous philosophia*, different, older than and superior to the Hellenic philosophical tradition.”

pagan answer and with barely any effort change the words around to completely dismantle their argument. The refined and sophisticated education of the pagans is **contrasted** here with the earthly, but holy wisdom of Anthony. *Paideia* was not the only way for a man to learn wit, but it is unlikely that a man who spent his life in the wilderness and actively sought isolation (going so far as to even remove himself from the care of others when he was injured) would have such skill in subtlety. That the two parties had to speak through a translator only amplifies the disconnect. Anthony also dismantles the entirety of *paideia* here as well by saying that a good mind has no need of formal education. We have already seen how students of *paideia* prided themselves on their education, being educated was a core component of their personal estimations. Athanasius, speaking through Anthony, is stating that even “uneducated” Christians were superior in intellect to even the most educated pagans. This type of thinking clearly continued as Augustine’s examples above prove. The pagan characters that Anthony converses within this section of his *Life* are foils to his wisdom. They are not meant to be accurate depictions of pagans, but constructs that ask the correct questions so that Anthony can provide the correct response which destroys their positions. The intended interpretation here is that Christian philosophy is superior to anything Greek philosophy has to offer and even an uneducated man like Anthony can defeat them with their own tools. The **example** Athanasius uses to reinforce his argument is that despite the persecutions the religion of the Christians continues to spread unabated. What else, but real divine authority could allow for such a thing? The specific passages here offer an image to the presumed Christian audience of their great enemy being brought low and, as an example of *chreia*, tells the Christian reader to be brave in their faith even when dealing with pagan intellectuals because Christian philosophy is superior.

Another example comes from Augustine when he was travelling with friends and family in Milan in 385. He relates that while he was in the midst of his great crisis of faith the scriptures were working on his heart and mind despite the walls that *paideia* had established around both. There were still doubts in his heart as “some of the (Catholic) propositions were not demonstrated rationally,” but that when compared to the philosophy of pagans “who rashly promised knowledge and derided credulity” the philosophy of Christianity was infinitely superior for being “more moderate and much less deceitful” (August. *Conf.* 6.4).⁶⁸ He continues, saying that “(God) persuaded me that the truly blameworthy people were not those who believed in your scriptures...but those who refused to believe in them.” Greek philosophy, to Augustine, had a terrible problem with argument. There were simply too many interpretations, and no definite answer could be found to disprove God’s existence. He writes “not one of the slanderous disputes to be found in the works of philosophers who disagreed among themselves...had ever been able to wrench away from me the belief that you exist, whatever may be your nature.” One of the more subtle aspects of this particular critique of paganism is that Augustine believes that once the seed of Christian knowledge had been planted there was no way to escape the inevitable realization that acceptance of God was the only outcome.⁶⁹

One of the requisites for a good education in *paideia* was subtlety. Good philosophers were not meant to bludgeon their opponents into submission with repetition or shouting bad arguments. The best argument comes in the form of a subtle twisting of logic or language like the example from Anthony above. Augustine’s prose is dense, yes, but he does not rely on brute repetition to prove his point. Indeed, he states that he only needed a drop of Christian theology to

⁶⁸ All references to *The Confessions* on this page come from book 6, chapters 4-5.

⁶⁹ “So it was, Lord, that you began little by little work on my heart with your most gentle and merciful hand, and dispose it to reflect how innumerable were the things I believed and held to be true, though I had neither seen them nor been present when they happened.”

water the doubt in his mind before he totally rejected Greek philosophy. In this way Augustine's argument is the epitome of subtlety. A clear logical mind will, through its own functioning, naturally lead to the acceptance of Christianity. Despite what he says here, we need to remember that pagans interacted with Christians and retained their pagan identity. Greek philosophers were able to learn about Christianity without totally accepting it. Could the above example from Augustine be used to convert pagans? Could the kernel of doubt that was planted in him have persuaded pagans to abandon their faith? I do not believe so. The only way for the above argument to be effective in converting pagans is if Augustine totally forgot the art of subtlety and went for a direct route of argumentation. Conversion is typically a dialogue and a process, his own example from the *Confessions* is that the conversion process for Augustine was a lengthy one with no small amount of back and forth. He ultimately lays the responsibility of this conversion on the absolute truth, as he sees it, of Christianity. The subtle and elegant truth of Christianity is **paraphrased** before being **contrasted** with the logical fallacies of pagan *paideia*. Looking at the above example as an example of *chreia* and intended for a Christian audience makes for a much more solid interpretation. Augustine is writing for Christians and, in short, writing the same argument as Athanasius though with a few elements of the argument reversed. Anthony is an uneducated man while Augustine is an exceptionally educated man as he even achieved the position of *rhetor*. Despite the difference in education, the outcome is the same for both men. A simple powerful faith is celebrated in Anthony and a refined sense of faith is celebrated in Augustine, but in both cases the **brief epilogue** makes it clear that the celebration is in the acceptance of Christianity. No real attempts are made to converse with or bridge the gap to a possible pagan audience.

Conclusion:

Christians and pagans shared an educational background in late antiquity where oratory, rhetoric, and knowledge of classic literature was emphasized. Christians grumbled at pagan classics, but ultimately found merit in the education pagan instruction had. This was not permanent, and Christians moved beyond the confines of pagan education by adding in their theology and ethics. The incorporation of *chreia* elements mixed with Christian characters and morality led to the creation of hagiography which can serve as a microcosm of the Christianization of the Roman Empire. The process of Christianization was not a clear and distinct severing from the pagan past, but a miasma of compromise and gradual change. Hagiography can represent this change from the pagan past towards a Christian future. Hagiographies were didactic tools created by their respective authors so that they could highlight admirable Christian traits the audience was supposed to receive. This audience would primarily be literate Christians who could use the didactic wisdom in whatever way they deemed appropriate. Saint Martin attacking pagans could be used to instill a sense of righteous faith in a congregation while Saint Anthony's severe isolation could be used to inspire a sense of serenity amidst a life of troubles. Hagiography should not be read at face value if historical fact is the motive for investigation, but a certain amount of reading against the grain can be used to highlight trends that are crucial to late antiquity as well as explaining various facets of Christian thinking and how they conceptualized their world.

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