

## Chapter 1

# Academic Life in the Roman Empire

### *Libanius to Aristaenetus*

*. . . Now that I have gained two governors as my friends through your agency, I return your gift with one person crammed full of learning. For this man is Harpocraton, a good poet and a better teacher: he is clever enough to instill the works of ancient authors into young men, and clever enough to make himself an equal to those authors . . . He shared a common upbringing and education with Eudaemon, in times past as a pupil and now as a teacher, and though almost of one flesh and blood with his friend, he has been torn away by your irresistible attraction . . . I will comfort Eudaemon but you, become [a friend] to Harpocraton just as I am to Eudaemon.<sup>1</sup>*

This letter of 358 A.D. from Libanius to his Nicomedian friend Aristaenetus is not an exceptional document. It contains the simple request that Aristaenetus provide hospitality to Harpocraton, a young rhetorician on his way from Antioch to a more prestigious teaching position in Constantinople.<sup>2</sup> Harpocraton was relatively unknown outside of Antioch and, when he decided to make the trip to the capital, he turned to Libanius to provide him with letters of introduction to men who could help him along the way. The letters Libanius wrote on his behalf were like countless others in antiquity.<sup>3</sup> They were carried to their addressee and served both as a letter of introduction and as a recommendation of the character of the bearer. Though typical of the genre, Libanius's recommendation reveals something crucial about late antique society. Libanius's introduction emphasizes Harpocraton's education as the foremost indication of his good character. To clarify the point, Libanius spells out that Harpocraton is well read, skilled at composition, and

1. Libanius, *Ep.* 364 (Foerster).

2. A similar letter on his behalf (*Ep.* 368) serves to introduce the rhetor to the Constantinopolitan philosopher Themistius. It seems that Themistius was able to oblige Libanius's request, because a later letter from Libanius (*Ep.* 818) speaks of Harpocraton as if he was an established teacher.

3. On this convention, see C. H. Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 4 (Missoula, Mont., 1972).

effective in his communication with his students. All of these were products of his education.

By virtue of their training, Harpocraton, Aristaenetus, and Libanius were all initiates into the common culture of the educated man (*paideia*). *Paideia* was the unique possession of those who had separated themselves from the average man by their knowledge of and appreciation for the words, ideas, and texts of classical antiquity.<sup>4</sup> *Paideia* was acquired through an expensive and time-consuming process of education that not only taught literature but also allowed men of culture to master a code of socially acceptable behavior.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Aristaenetus met Harpocraton and read Libanius's letter, he would recognize the visitor as a gentleman with similar intellectual interests. Above all, he would recognize the stranger as a fellow man of culture.

Although something of a typical document, this letter illustrates the premium men of high status placed upon literary and philosophical education in the late Roman world. By the late Roman period, the training of young men in rhetoric and philosophy was well established as the basic form of elite education.<sup>6</sup> The influence of *paideia* did not rest solely upon its function as a tool to acquire basic literacy. The system of education in the Roman world was essentially two-tiered and, at its most accessible level, not geared towards the literary training of *paideia*.<sup>7</sup> For the average man, education consisted of study at a school of letters.<sup>8</sup> These schools taught basic, functional literacy, and their students left with an education unencumbered by classical reminiscences or arcane rules of grammar and composition. The average student

4. For this idea, see most notably J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), 78; and P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, 1992), 35–36. For an earlier period, note as well S. Goldhill, *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic, and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge, 2001), 13–14.

5. For education as a process of socialization, see particularly M. Bloomer, "Schooling in Persona: Imagination and Subordination in Roman Education," *Classical Antiquity* 16.1 (1997): 57–78.

6. Hence the remarkable cohesion of the Hellenic, Hellenistic, and Roman sections of H. I. Marrou's *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité* (Paris, 1956). This cohesion is, of course, also a product of Marrou's methodological interests and emphasis upon educational continuity. For a critique of these methods, see Y. L. Too, "Introduction: Writing the History of Ancient Education," in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Y. L. Too, 1–21 (Leiden, 2001).

7. Marrou's *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité* remains the standard work on ancient education. For more specific recent treatments see R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton, 2001); and T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998). As Cribiore has recently shown, the division between basic and literate education was quite fluid. On this point, see as well R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), 45–47; and A. D. Booth, "Elementary and Secondary Education in the Roman Empire," *Florilegium* 1 (1979): 1–14.

8. The γραμματοδιδασκαλεία.

who had attended these schools could presumably read and write enough to get by on a daily basis, but he would certainly never recite poetry with correct inflection or compose orations. These skills were not taught in the schools of letters.<sup>9</sup>

Those who had the means received a more specialized education.<sup>10</sup> This emphasized such things as correct grammatical rules, eloquence in composition, and the knowledge of a canon of authors. Students who followed this track would first pass through the school of the grammarian. In his classroom they would learn such aspects of grammar as correct pronunciation and the behavior of each part of a sentence. The grammarian would also read texts with his students, stopping at each mention of a significant figure or event in order to explain its moral and historical significance.<sup>11</sup> This was the initial phase of grammatical training. At its more advanced stage, the grammarian's training centered upon a series of exercises called the *progymnasmata*, compositional exercises in which students were taught how to elaborate upon stories or themes using the linguistic skills they had acquired in the previous years.<sup>12</sup>

The school of rhetoric was the next level in classical literary education.

9. The availability of this basic educational track did not, by any means, lead to widespread literacy in the Roman world. For some estimates of the levels of literacy, see W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 256–83. Note, as well, the more optimistic picture provided by the various essays collected by M. Beard et al., *Literacy in the Roman World* (Ann Arbor, 1991). Note also the important work of H. C. Youtie, “ΑΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΟΣ: An Aspect of Greek Society in Egypt,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 75 (1971): 161–76 and “βραδέως γραφών: Between Literacy and Illiteracy,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 12 (1971): 239–61.

10. What follows is a description of the ideal path a student followed. The realities of late antique education were often more complicated, however. Some students, for example, did their grammatical training with rhetoricians like Libanius. On this, see Libanius, *Ep.* 625 and 678, as well as R. Cribiore's *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 37–43; and P. Wolf, *Vom Schulwesen der Spätantike: Studien zu Libanius* (Baden, 1952), 69–70. Grammar schools that also taught elementary letters as well as rhetoric are attested as well. For these, see A. C. Dionisotti, “From Ausonius' School-days? A Schoolbook and its Relatives,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 72 (1982): 83–125.

11. For the function of the grammarian see R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 12–14; S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977); and H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 243 ff.

12. For an especially thorough discussion of the *progymnasmata* see R. Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 221–30. For the exercises as a sort of primer for the lifestyle of the cultivated, see R. Webb, “The Progymnasmata as Practice,” in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Y. L. Too, 289–316. A number of *progymnasmata* have come down to us. Most important among them are probably the works of Theon and Hermogenes. The former has recently been edited and translated into French by M. Patillon in *Aelius Theon: Progymnasmata* (Paris, 1997). The latter was translated by C. Baldwin in *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works* (Gloucester, Mass., 1959), 23–38. These continued to play a role in rhetorical education through the Middle Ages and, in some parts, even into the twentieth century. See now also G. Kennedy trans., *Progymnasmata: Greek textbooks of prose composition and rhetoric* (Leiden, 2003).

When a student arrived there he initially continued with the *progymnasmata*, usually under the tutelage of one of the rhetorician's assistants.<sup>13</sup> The student would also be taught rhetorical technique by the rhetorician himself (usually by listening to the man give declamations). When he had finished with the basic rhetorical exercises, the student would then move to more advanced study with the rhetorician in which the literary allusions mentioned by the grammarian were expanded and their moral and historical significance was re-emphasized. At this stage in the training, students were expected to know these anecdotes and write expositions about their meaning. When they left school, it was assumed that students would be perfectly able to apply the morals of these short stories to their daily conduct.<sup>14</sup> As the student progressed in the rhetorician's school, he was expected to produce his own full-length compositions of increasing difficulty. Each of these was done according to the specifics of each rhetorical genre.<sup>15</sup>

In late antiquity, many of those who wished to continue with their schooling would go on to the school of the philosopher. Here they would listen to what amounted to line-by-line discussions of philosophical texts and their meaning.<sup>16</sup> These discussions often worked to place the ideas of the text within the larger doctrinal system of the philosopher or the school. If he followed the course through to completion, a student was expected to understand the philosophical system taught by the school and the place of each text within it.<sup>17</sup> The philosophical curriculum too had an important moral element. Though the study of appropriate behavior was only one of its pursuits, philosophy discussed what the ideals of conduct were and why they were so. In the second century, the Platonist Alcinous centered his discussion of these virtues upon teaching about "the care of morals, the administration

13. This seems to be the role played by Eusebius and Thalassius in Libanius's school. For a description of their role see *Ep.* 905–9 and 922–26. For a discussion see A. F. Norman, *Libanius: Autobiography and Selected Letters*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), Appendix, 454–61.

14. To make these messages even clearer, professors of rhetoric such as Libanius and Himerius gave their students lectures about how to behave. Himerius's lecture is preserved as *Or.* 12. Libanius, *Ep.* 407, mentions his version of this lecture.

15. Rhetorical education taught students the correct way to compose many different types of orations. For a discussion of these various genres and how they were taught, see H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 277–81.

16. This was the basic pattern. For the probable variations of approach from school to school, see R. Lamberton, "The Schools of Platonic Philosophy of the Roman Empire: The Evidence of the Biographies," in *Education in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, ed. Y. L. Too, 442–45, 455.

17. The various prolegomena to philosophy written in late antiquity played a crucial part in making this possible. They introduced each philosopher's system of thought before a student studied the texts. By starting with a complete picture of the system, it was easier for students to understand where each individual text fit. For these discussions see J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena: Questions to Be Settled before the Study of an Author or Text* (Leiden, 1994) and, less directly, J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena Mathematica: From Apollonius of Perga to Late Neoplatonism* (Leiden, 1998).

of a household, and the state and its preservation.”<sup>18</sup> In the fifth century, these teachings about behavior were given equal weight, but they were grouped under a new heading, that of moral and political virtue. The first part of the philosophical curriculum was devoted to explaining them.<sup>19</sup> Aristotle’s *Ethics* was used for moral virtues and his *Politics* (along with Plato’s *Laws* and the *Republic*) was used to teach political virtues.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, these virtues were so important to teachers of philosophy that some even turned away students whose moral failings were without remedy.<sup>21</sup>

The course of study pursued under teachers of rhetoric and philosophy was long, detailed, and expensive.<sup>22</sup> Because of this, it is likely that few who began the course with the grammarian were able even to finish the course of study with the rhetor. Indeed, of the fifty-seven students of Libanius whose term of study is known, fully thirty-five dropped out by the end of their second year.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, the reason a student abandoned his education was often family financial trouble.<sup>24</sup> The cost meant that only wealthy, fortunate, or doggedly determined families could provide their children with a thorough classical education. But this education was a sound investment. This crucial tool had become a way of distinguishing the elite of Roman society from the average man. At the same time, it also bound the men who possessed it closer together.<sup>25</sup>

The value of *paideia* was widely recognized in ancient society. Indeed, there was a belief, common to men throughout the ancient world, that the edu-

18. Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 3.3.

19. *Prolegomenes à la philosophie de Platon*, ed. and trans. L. G. Westerink (Paris, 1990), 26.30–33.

20. For Aristotle and ethical philosophy see Marinus, *Vit. Proc.* 12–13. For Aristotle and Plato as texts for political virtues see *Vit. Proc.* 14. In the sixth century, Plato’s *Gorgias* had come to replace the *Laws* and *Republic* (Anon. *Prol.* 26.33).

21. As Proclus did with the Antiochene Hilarius. Damascius, *Vit. Is.*, fragment 91 B in *Damascius: The Philosophical History*, ed. and trans. P. Athanassiadi (Athens, 1999), and *Epit.* 266 in *Vitae Isidori Reliquiae*, ed. C. Zintzen (Hildesheim, 1967). Because the Athanassiadi edition of this text has not yet become the recognized standard, all citations to the *Life of Isidore* will contain references to both her edition (Ath.) and that of Zintzen (Z.).

22. Part of the expense came in the salaries of professors. There are a number of pieces of evidence for the relative salaries. The most important of these is Diocletian’s Maximum Price Edict (*Pret. Ed.* 7.70–71), which sets the salary of the teacher of letters at 50 *denarii* per pupil per month. Grammarians were to get 200 *denarii* per pupil per month and rhetoricians 250. In addition, rhetoricians customarily received a *solidus* whenever a student completed a composition.

23. R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 26–27, based upon P. Petit, *Les Étudiants de Libanius* (Paris, 1957), 62–65. See Libanius, *Ep.* 379, for a case of a student who left his care before completing his course.

24. This was sometimes alleviated by funds given to poor students by city governors. This was the case with Letoius, the *principalis* of Antioch (Libanius, *Ep.* 552), and Procopius (*Ep.* 319.550).

25. R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 29.

cated man was one whose soul progressed “towards excellence and the condition proper to humanity” while his uneducated contemporaries were less rational, less refined, and less humane.<sup>26</sup> The inherent civilizing value of education was so great that some men advertised their cultivation in their epitaphs<sup>27</sup> and others in monumental inscriptions.<sup>28</sup> Cultural attainment was also frequently celebrated in letters.<sup>29</sup>

This indicates a belief, held by many in the Roman world, that education and excellence went together.<sup>30</sup> The excellence that ancient men associated with education did not arise from, say, a thorough knowledge of the works of Demosthenes. Instead, it was derived from the understanding that an educated man had learned a code of proper behavior. Thus, classical learning also defined one as a gentleman.<sup>31</sup> With *paideia* came an understanding of essential virtues like “what is honorable and what is shameful, what is just and what is unjust . . . how a man must bear himself in his interactions with the gods, with his parents, with his elders, with the laws, with strangers, with those in authority, with friends, with women, with children, and with servants.”<sup>32</sup> These are the words of Plutarch of Chaeronea and, though they were penned in the early second century, his description of education’s importance remained accurate throughout antiquity.

Education provided a young gentleman with an outline of how one was to act, how he was to treat other men, what role he was to play in his community, and the manner in which he ought to approach the divine. In his

26. *IPriene* 112.73; see also H. Marrou, *ΜΟΥΣΙΚΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ*: Étude sur les scènes de la vie intellectuelle figurant sur les monuments funéraires romains (Grenoble, 1937), 209–10; and R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 15–16.

27. See the example of Didius Taxiarches, *CIL* VI.16843.

28. For example, the Epicurean inscription erected by Diogenes in his hometown of Oinoanda, published in English by M. F. Smith, *The Philosophical Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda* (Vienna, 1996); and in French by A. Etienne and D. O’Meara, *La philosophie épicurienne sur pierre: Les fragments de Diogène d’Oenoanda* (Paris, 1996). See as well the supplemental publication of M. F. Smith, *Supplement to Diogenes of Oinoanda, The Epicurean Inscription* (Naples, 2003).

29. One of the best expressions of this idea is Libanius, *Ep.* 1036.

30. This remained essentially true despite the increasingly Christian and military identity of the upper echelons of the Roman state in late antiquity. It becomes clear from authors as diverse as Paulinus of Nola (*Carm.* 24.481–82) and the emperor Constantine. Constantine’s oration on Easter is one of the more interesting examples that prove this point. In this speech, Constantine shows an awareness of the works of Virgil (ch. 19–20) and Cicero (ch. 19) to illustrate his grasp of literature and, by implication, the cultural values that accompanied this knowledge.

31. For this line of thought see P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 122. M. Bloomer, “Schooling in Persona,” 59–63, has described the particular role that *fictio personae* played in developing a student’s conception of gentlemanly behaviors.

32. Plutarch, *Moralia* 7E. Here Plutarch is speaking about the benefits that came from studying philosophy. In his mind, this was the pinnacle of a man’s education.

personal comportment, an educated gentleman was trained to demonstrate his status by maintaining his composure at all times.<sup>33</sup> The educational system also emphasized that one was supposed to treat a similarly cultivated man with respectfulness appropriate to his cultural achievements.<sup>34</sup> Libanius's letter to Aristaenetus has already shown how this worked on a social level. On the legal level, a man who was a city councilor was exempt from disfiguring penalties like torture or lashings.<sup>35</sup> In addition, traditional education also taught those in power to pay the utmost attention to the requests made of them by cultured men simply because they were eloquently presented.<sup>36</sup> For this reason, men of culture were often called upon to act as emissaries to the emperor and to plead cases on behalf of their cities. Common to both emissary and official, the set of values taught in the schools enabled these educated men to command respect.<sup>37</sup>

Late Roman schools did more than provide a blueprint for the appropriate activities of a gentleman. Liberal education also assisted in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. The Roman world was a vast collection of cities and towns scattered like islands throughout a sea of countryside. Within these cities were cultivated men, but the connections of these men to their cultural compatriots were rarely sustained by face-to-face contact.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, the administration of the empire rested upon these men, and anyone who hoped to have his interests protected needed to develop a network of connections among the cultured class. The common cultural and educational background that they all shared lay at the heart of these networks.

33. Plutarch, *Moralia* 10C: "Being without anger is the mark of a wise man." For additional elements of this ideal, see Plutarch, *Moralia* 10F, 37C; and Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* 561. For the evolving view of anger and the necessity of its restraint in antiquity see W. V. Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 88–127 (esp. 112–27). P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 48–58, discusses these ideas in the late antique environment.

34. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 52–57.

35. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 54. Libanius, *Ep.* 994, describes a complaint filed against a governor who violated this code. For the specific case Libanius complains about in Antioch, see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1972), 166.

36. P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 44–45.

37. Without these shared values, such embassies were doomed to fail. When Eustathius, a highly educated philosopher of moderate social status, was sent on an embassy to Persia, the Persians, who did not share in the values of *paideia*, did not recognize Eustathius's education as a mark of distinction. Instead, they were insulted that he, a man of such middling status, was sent to them and they dismissed the embassy with an unfavorable response. Eunapius's story (*Vit. Soph.* 465–66) of this event acknowledges the cultural differences at the heart of this incident. Ammianus (17.5.14) merely reports on the embassy and its failure.

38. See, for example, the amusing stories Philostratus tells of sophists who know each other by the rhythms of their speech but not by their personal appearance (as was the case in *Vit. Soph.* 529 when Marcus of Byzantium visited Polemo).



These cultural links were established early in life. For many youths the first strands in a social network were formed when they left home to go to the schools of grammarians or rhetoricians. This was often their first time away from home and, in many cases, brought their first real encounters with youths from other cities. Often, the bonds they made with their peers at school lasted a lifetime. The scholastic interactions of Basil, the future bishop of Caesarea, and Gregory, the future bishop of Constantinople, show how one such friendship developed.

Gregory and Basil were both students of the same teacher in Athens. When Basil first arrived, Gregory had already been studying in Athens for a year. After a short time in Athens, Basil was miserable. Gregory says "I tried to relieve his unhappiness, both by discussing these things logically and enchanting him with reasoning . . . In this way I restored his happiness, and through this exchange of ideas he was the more closely united to me."<sup>39</sup> He continues, "As time went on, we pledged our affection for one another . . . we were everything to each other, housemates, table companions, intimates, who looked towards one goal—making our affection for one another grow warmer and more secure."<sup>40</sup> Though Gregory has perhaps exaggerated the depth of their attachment here, the friendship that developed between the two men seems to have been a strong one and, despite some disagreements, it lasted for decades.<sup>41</sup>

It was by no means exceptional that friendships of this sort developed at school. The schools provided a comfortable social environment in which youths could meet, interact, and make friends. At the same time, teachers taught these young men the responsibilities that accompanied friendship and how to sustain these relationships in both formal and informal ways. A student came to know that one man could expect a friend to "join him on a trip, another to help him in defending a lawsuit, another to sit with him as judge, another to help in managing his commerce, another to help him

39. Gregory Nazianzen, *Panegyric on St. Basil*, 18.

40. *Ibid.*, 19.

41. On this friendship, see now the excellent discussion of R. Van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia* (Philadelphia, 2003), 129–30 and 155–84. This friendship is notable both for the amount of surviving documentation it produced and for the eventual tensions that developed between the two men. These documents reveal a fundamental tension between the "presupposed consistency in values, character, beliefs and devotion" inculcated by teachers and the inevitable changes a person undergoes in a lifetime. On this, see Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, 130. For a discussion of Gregory's oration as a somewhat idealized representation of this friendship, see D. Konstan, "How to Praise a Friend: Gregory Nazianzus's Funeral Oration for St. Basil the Great," in *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. T. Hägg and P. Rousseau, 160–79 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000). Among the many other friendships that were begun at school were the one between Apuleius and Pontianus, that of Prohaeresius and Hephaestion, and the bond between Zacharias of Mytilene and Severus of Antioch.



celebrate a wedding."<sup>42</sup> He would also learn that he was expected to return his friend's favor whenever he was asked.<sup>43</sup>

Over the course of one's life, friendships formed at school and sustained in this way could prove quite useful, especially when they were between boys from the same region. When Gregory and Basil returned to Cappadocia, they dealt with the same regional administration and the same governors for most of their lives. They also faced some of the same problems. Their friendship allowed them to turn to one another for help when these problems arose. Consequently, when the emperor Valens split the province of Cappadocia in two in order to curb Basil's influence in the churches of the region, Basil could call upon Gregory to help him counter the move.<sup>44</sup>

One development that helped form bonds such as these was the tendency for certain regions to send many of their students to one teacher or one intellectual center. The Roman world provides many examples of this phenomenon. In the first century B.C., Athens became the place to which the young men of Italy went to finish their education.<sup>45</sup> It later played the same role for North Africans like Apuleius and his roommate-cum-son-in-law Pontianus.<sup>46</sup> Athens was also full of Cappadocians in the mid-fourth century and Alexandrians in the mid-fifth.<sup>47</sup> Alexandria itself became the site to which three generations of Gazan students traveled for schooling beginning in the 470s.<sup>48</sup>

This sort of travel was common, but it was still probably atypical of the av-

42. Plutarch, *On Having Many Friends* 95C; an example of the teaching of friendship is found in Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life* 33.

43. Plutarch, *On Having Many Friends* 95F.

44. Basil's decision to make Gregory the bishop of Sasima in response to Valens's actions proved a severe test of their friendship. Instead of taking up the position, Gregory went into seclusion. On this conflict and its aftermath, see R. Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, 163–65.

45. Cicero and his son were among the many Italians who studied in Athens in this period. The academic career of Cicero's son shows both how many Italians were in Athens in the first century and how their parents often competed with one another to show their wealth through their children. Consistent with his character, Cicero ensured that his son had the largest allowance of all the Roman students in the city (*ad Atticum* xii.32.2; xv.15.4; xv.17.4).

46. For Apuleius's account of his time in Athens see his *Apologia* 72 ff.

47. Athens's attraction to these Alexandrian students will be explored in chapter 4.

48. This began with the generation of Aeneas of Gaza in the 470s. The rhetorician Procopius of Gaza and the bishop Zacharias were the next generation. When Procopius returned, he began teaching in Gaza. The writings of Zacharias and Procopius, however, continued to be geared towards an Alexandrian audience. On this, see E. Watts, "An Alexandrian Christian Response to Neoplatonic Influence," in *The Philosopher and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. A. Smith, 215–30 (Swansea, 2005). It is not until Choricus that a truly independent Gazan literary culture develops. It is not difficult to understand how ties of this sort developed. As is the case today, a prestigious center of teaching like Athens or Alexandria attracted a population of students as long as it was able to maintain a reputation for excellence. For more on this process see E. Watts, "Student travel to intellectual centers: What was the attraction?" in *Travel, Communication, and Geography in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Ellis and F. Kidner, 11–21 (Aldershot, 2004).

erage student in late antiquity. One needs only to recall the struggles that the family of Augustine had to endure to send him away to school. Despite the fact that Augustine came from a curial family in the North African town of Thagaste, his education was interrupted for a year while the family scraped together enough money to pay for him to study in Carthage.<sup>49</sup> In this, the efforts of Augustine's father were exceptional. As Augustine said, "No one had anything but praise for my father who, despite his slender resources, was ready to provide his son with all that was needed to enable him to travel so far for the purpose of study. Many of our townsmen, who were far richer than my father, went to no such trouble for their children's sake."<sup>50</sup> It is hard to believe that Thagaste was unique in this regard. Though they would not know as broad a range of people as their peers who had traveled to study, even those students who were educated near to their own town began building their social network while in school.

Scholastic friendships were important even when students came from different regions. As these friendships were secured by the common experiences of student life, a young man could expect them to last long after he left school. Hence Synesius wrote to his schoolmate Herculian in 398, "a holy law demands that we who are joined in mind, which is the best part of us, honor each other's qualities."<sup>51</sup> Their bond as students was kept strong by the regular exchange of letters. It remained so strong that Synesius remarked, years later, "whatever Synesius says to himself, he says also to your honored soul, to you, his only friend, or at least, his best friend."<sup>52</sup>

Besides showing the intensity of the bond that existed between former classmates, Synesius's letters also reveal how useful these bonds could prove to be. Synesius relied upon his classmates for advice,<sup>53</sup> philosophical discussions,<sup>54</sup> lodging, help in recapturing a lost slave,<sup>55</sup> and even bows and arrows when his city was under siege.<sup>56</sup> Like Libanius, he also relied upon his school friends to provide hospitality and assistance to other companions of his who were traveling.<sup>57</sup> Even later in his life, Synesius did not hesitate to depend upon his school friends. This was, after all, what he had been taught to expect of them.

49. *Confessions* 2.3. His break was during the 369–70 school year.

50. *Ibid.*

51. Synesius, *Ep.* 137. On the dating of Synesius's correspondence with Herculian, see D. Roques, *Études sur la Correspondance de Synésios de Cyrène* (Brussels, 1989), 87–103.

52. *Ep.* 145. On Synesius's interactions with Herculian, see Alan Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), 86–89.

53. See, for example, *Ep.* 96, where Synesius asks Olympius for advice about the priesthood.

54. This is apparent from *Ep.* 137, 138 to Herculian.

55. *Ep.* 145.

56. *Ep.* 133.

57. *Ep.* 99.

Though the friendships a student made with his peers were both emotionally rewarding and potentially useful later in life, the most important friendship a student could develop at school was with his professor. This was especially true when the professor was a well-known rhetorician or philosopher. In many cases, such a professor would have been one of the most important and influential people a student met outside of his family, and such professors were sometimes rather difficult to get to know.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, it was expected that even the most renowned teachers would take an interest in their students by looking in on their charges when they were sick, inviting them to dine at their house, and allowing the more insecure youngsters to accompany them to religious services.<sup>59</sup> In fact, it was not uncommon for teachers and students alike to see their relationship in familial terms. Hence Libanius styles himself a father to his students and Synesius describes his teacher, the philosopher Hypatia, as his mother.<sup>60</sup>

The close relationship between a teacher and his student had more concrete importance as well. A student could call upon his teacher to support him if he got into trouble with the law.<sup>61</sup> He could also ask the professor to use his influence to convince government officials to give the student's family special treatment.<sup>62</sup> Finally, and perhaps most important in a student's eyes, a young man could sometimes convince his teacher to ask for a raise in his allowance (ostensibly to buy books).<sup>63</sup> Professors also looked out for the general welfare of their students. Libanius prevailed upon a number of government officials to set aside funds to enable poor students to study.<sup>64</sup> Nearly a century later, the Athenian philosopher Proclus made appearances before the town council to argue for the interests of his students.<sup>65</sup>

When a student finished his schooling, the ties to his professor did not dissolve. Indeed, it was often just at the completion of his studies that a student most depended upon his professor's friendship. Then, as now, many students leaving school were looking for jobs and, when the imperial administration looked to fill bureaucratic vacancies, it asked teachers to rec-

58. One suspects that the philosopher Isidore was a bit like this. Though friendly and concerned about his students (Damascius, *Vit. Is. Ath.* 30D; Z. Ep. 307), he also was difficult to understand (*Vit. Is. Ath.* 37D; Z. Ep. 246). For an example from an earlier period, Philostratus leaves no doubt that the sophist Polemo was a difficult man to know and like.

59. Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 486; Marinus, *Vit. Proc.* 8; Zacharias, *Life of Severus* 15.

60. Libanius, *Ep.* 931, 1009, 1070, 1257; Synesius, *Ep.* 16. For a discussion of this type of language see P. Petit, *Les Étudiants de Libanius*, 35–36.

61. Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 483. This especially applied when a student was brought into court for something he did on his teacher's behalf.

62. Libanius, *Ep.* 359.

63. *Ibid.*, *Ep.* 428.

64. *Ibid.*, *Ep.* 552.

65. *Vit. Proc.* 16.

commend qualified candidates.<sup>66</sup> As one might expect, Libanius was especially energetic in putting forth the names of his students. In 363, for example, his former student Hyperechius traveled to Constantinople in search of a position in the administration. Libanius gave his student a series of letters to carry to the teacher's well-placed friends.<sup>67</sup> In these letters, Libanius introduced Hyperechius to each man and, in the subtlest terms, appealed to his friends to help the young man.<sup>68</sup>

While a professor could help his students get a government job, his assistance was especially useful for those who sought a teaching position. As contemporary scholars can understand, good teaching jobs were especially difficult to find. Many a promising student of rhetoric or philosophy found himself entirely shut out of the teaching profession.<sup>69</sup> However, when a chair did open, the recommendation of a famous teacher was often the only way for a student to get the position. Sometimes the committee assigned to choose a new holder of the chair might even ask an especially well-regarded teacher to appoint one of his own students to fill the opening. This was the case when the city of Rome asked the sophist Prohaeresius to appoint one of his students to fill a chair of Greek rhetoric.<sup>70</sup>

After students left school, many continued to rely upon the friendships they developed with their teachers for help and enjoyment. Synesius's correspondence with Hypatia shows how close a student could remain with his teacher. Because his family was wealthy, Synesius had no need of his teacher's assistance in finding employment for himself.<sup>71</sup> Not long after he left school, however, he asked her to use her influence to help two of his friends with a legal matter.<sup>72</sup> He also relied upon her to maintain his ties to the larger cultural world. Synesius wrote to her asking that she secure a hydroscope for him.<sup>73</sup> He also sent Hypatia two manuscripts and requested that she review them.<sup>74</sup> In the last case, the letter described why the works

66. H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'Éducation dans l'Antiquité*, 310–12.

67. Libanius, *Ep.* 805, 810. For parallel cases see *Ep.* 832, 1119.

68. This was despite Libanius's personal distaste for such jobs. He seems to have found them a waste of the talent that men trained in liberal arts had developed (see *Ep.* 331.3–5 for this sentiment).

69. Libanius, *Or.* 1.27: "If I had heard about the sale [of the family property] when I was in Athens, I would still be there now, making no use at all of the learning I possessed, a fate which falls upon many students who, unable to get one of the endowed chairs there, approach old age without showing their eloquence."

70. Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 493.

71. On Synesius's family estates, see D. Roques, *Synésios de Cyrène et la Cyrénaïque du Bas-Empire*, *Études d'antiquités africaines* (Paris, 1987), 136–38.

72. Synesius, *Ep.* 81.

73. *Ep.* 15. The hydroscope was an astrological instrument.

74. *Ep.* 154.

were composed and asked that Hypatia advise him about whether he ought to publish them.<sup>75</sup> It seems that if she found them acceptable, Synesius would then pass along a finished version of each text for her to circulate in Alexandria. Hypatia served as both Synesius's link to the mainstream cultural world of Alexandria and the conduit through which his writings passed into this environment.

Literary culture not only dominated the long-distance interactions between men (and women) of *paideia*, it also played a significant role in the face-to-face gatherings of the well-placed in the late Roman world. Gatherings in which the educated came together and discussed ideas existed in many cities. In a letter to his friend Pylaemenes, Synesius speaks of such a circle of intellectuals in Constantinople; he calls it the "Panhellenion."<sup>76</sup> In the letter, Synesius notes that his manner of expression has been quite careful because "there is no small danger that the letter would be read aloud in the Panhellenion."<sup>77</sup> Synesius describes it as "a place in which many a time I have thought deep thoughts, where the well-known from all parts of the world meet, in which one hears the sacred voice of the old gentlemen whose research comprehends tales both past and present."<sup>78</sup> In essence, the Panhellenion was a literary circle made up of the most cultivated men of Constantinople and their counterparts who were visiting the city at the time. When they assembled, these men read original compositions and discussed literary culture.<sup>79</sup>

The sort of literary discussion that made the Panhellenion a significant part of upper-class life in fourth-century Constantinople was not unique to the capital. Indeed, even in Synesius's home city of Cyrene, intellectual life was vibrant enough to generate disputatious exchanges of texts on subjects like the possible synthesis of oratory and philosophy.<sup>80</sup> While far from the only social outlets available to the cultivated men of the empire, interactions of this sort cemented the ties that bound men of education together in cities like Cyrene. The further exchange of written work that grew out of local discussions bound

75. The "publication" of works in antiquity was difficult, especially when an author desired to publish the works in a city where he did not live. On the difficulty an author faced when trying to preserve his ideas while also insuring the authenticity of his publications, see A. Hanson, "Galen: Author and Critic," in *Editing Texts*, ed. G. Most, 22–53 (Göttingen, 1998).

76. The name is used in *Ep.* 101. This name probably refers to a regular gathering of intellectuals and not an actual building devoted to literary discussion. For discussion of the informal nature of this gathering, see Alan Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics*, 72–84.

77. Synesius, *Ep.* 101.

78. *Ibid.*

79. This perhaps explains Libanius's complaint in *Ep.* 476 that Themistius was publicizing his letters too quickly. It is possible that Themistius was reading aloud letters that contained material Libanius did not yet want made public.

80. Synesius, *Ep.* 154.

these smaller, regional circles into the larger cultural sphere of the late Roman world. Hence, the books that Synesius wrote in response to criticism from men in Cyrene were sent to Alexandria for Hypatia to review and circulate.

These exchanges ensured that the literature upon which *paideia* was founded continued to have vibrancy and immediate relevance long after one left school. They also made it possible for men of culture from the smaller and more remote cities of the empire to get their work known in the larger cultural centers of the Roman world. Most importantly, they provided a framework around which men from diverse parts of the Roman world could continue to interact in a familiar setting.

To this point the relevance of traditional education to late antique society has been discussed in purely practical terms. Education marked a man as someone who possessed excellence of character. It taught him how to comport himself, how to treat his fellow men of culture, and what his public responsibilities were to be. The schools of late antiquity allowed young men to meet their cultural equals and establish friendships with them. The teachers taught these men how to conduct friendships and showed them the appropriate ways to keep in touch with one another. Their classes also were the matrix in which important intellectual questions were formulated, questions that would continue to occupy these men for the rest of their lives. All of this was essential in a society where the strength of one's friendships and personal connections determined whether one would be an effective advocate for his own rights and the rights of his associates.

There was another, less practical draw to *paideia*—the literature one studied was beautiful and pleasurable to read. Then, as now, men of learning developed a taste for certain authors, compiled lists of their favorite quotations, and relished the powerful imagery of classical language.<sup>81</sup> *Paideia* gave men the background to appreciate this literature and the skills to produce similarly elegant compositions of their own. It ultimately engendered a love of classical language and literature among educated men, and men who loved this literature seldom objected to living by the rules it laid out.

In this way, the teachers of the late Roman world fostered a self-sustaining intellectual culture that, while inherently concerned with the beauty of language, played a large and fundamental role in developing, sustaining, and governing social interactions on the highest levels of ancient society. The educational system of late antiquity was entrusted with the task of passing along the skills that were necessary to function in the social world of the cultivated. Hence, the growth of Christianity and the development of Christian

81. See, for example, Libanius's love of his copy of Thucydides' *History* (*Or.* 1. 148–49). The sayings of Greeks and Romans in Plutarch's *Moralia* are one of the biggest collections of quotations preserved from antiquity.

culture did little to change the influence of *paideia* over late antique social relationships. Despite the protests of certain Christians like Augustine and Jerome, the social world that developed around literary culture was as important for upper-class Christians as it was for anyone else.<sup>82</sup> Though bishops sometimes denounced the influence of this culture, it must be remembered that they themselves were usually highly educated men. This is, indeed, true of Jerome and Augustine. Despite their memorable denunciations of the influence of classical authors, their works are still stylistically influenced by the techniques of the rhetorical schools. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, for example, is essentially a work of Christian rhetorical training. It even uses the rhetoric of Cicero to teach Christian students to speak persuasively.<sup>83</sup> And for every Jerome there was a Sidonius Apollinaris who eagerly embraced both Christianity and classical culture.

In the East, educated Christians were usually less shy about showing their affection for and reliance upon classical education. To Basil of Caesarea, the set of virtues taught in the schools of rhetoric and philosophy played an undeniably important role in a youth's upbringing. In his mind, a Christian was to aspire to the same set of virtues that poets, historians, and philosophers spoke about. Basil urged Christians "to apply themselves especially to such literature" and advised his readers to take the "deeds of good men to heart" and from this "trace out a kind of rough sketch of what virtue is."<sup>84</sup> Christian gentlemen were still expected keep their emotions in check and not display them publicly. As both the emperor Valens and his praetorian prefect Modestus learned, observers equated the display of passions in one's public conduct with a boorish and unrefined character, regardless of one's creed.<sup>85</sup> Upper-class Christians were also expected to treat their cultural compatriots as equals. Furthermore, educated Christians were often selected to serve their cities by go-

82. For this criticism see especially Jerome, *Ep.* 22, 30. For Augustine see H. I. Marrou, *Saint Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique* (Paris, 1938), 339–56.

83. This is in the final section of *On Christian Doctrine*.

84. Basil, *Letter to Young Men on How to Derive Benefit from Pagan Literature* 5.1, 4.1, 10.1. Though they were not to be disregarded, it is clear that Basil also thought that these virtues were fully realized only in a Christian context. On the text in general, see N. G. Wilson, *Saint Basil on the Value of Greek Literature* (London, 1975); and R. Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia* (Philadelphia, 2002), 181–85. For the broader context, see as well Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 138–39.

85. Ammianus describes Valens as "something of a boor" who was "unjust and passionate." He continues, "This is a shameful failing, to be feared even in private and everyday affairs" (Ammianus, 31.14). Modestus was classified as a man with an artificial exterior who was "by nature a simpleton unrefined by the study of classical literature" (Ammianus, 30.4.1). Ammianus passes a similar judgment on the emperor Valentinian in 29.2.3. For discussion of these attitudes in late antiquity, see P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, 55, 60.



ing on embassies; not even bishops were exempt from this duty.<sup>86</sup> The common cultural values of *paideia* remained as relevant as ever to these men.

The schools of late antiquity also provided Christians with ways to establish and maintain social relationships of their own. As the examples cited above have shown, Gregory, Basil, and Synesius developed friendships with their fellow students. Like their non-Christian contemporaries, the bishops of late antiquity built and sustained relationships by exchanging letters with educated Christian and non-Christian correspondents. Education also continued to create personal relationships among the upper-class Christian laity. This is clear from the examples of the Gazan authors Procopius, Zacharias, and Aeneas, all of whom followed the same code of friendship outlined by Plutarch. Their friendships were sustained by literary letters that, in some cases, were tinged with mythological references and allusions to classical authors.<sup>87</sup> Despite the steady Christianization of the empire's upper classes and the objections of some of its religious leaders, the code of conduct emphasized in the rhetorical and philosophical schools of late antiquity continued to have a great significance for well-heeled Christians.

Christian affection for the ideas and forms of classical literature also extended beyond their mere utility. Christians appreciated the literary culture in which they were educated and took pleasure in cultural participation. Among bishops, the works of Basil and Gregory in the fourth century and those of Theodoret in the fifth are conspicuous for the influence of classical thought on their composition.<sup>88</sup> In addition, a string of philosophically influenced texts from the pens of bishops and future bishops survive from this period. They include Basil's *Hexameron* in the fourth century, Theodoret of Cyrrhus's *Cure of Hellenic Maladies* in the fifth, and the *Ammonius* of Zacharias (the future bishop of Mytilene) in the sixth century. While all of these texts approached philosophy from a Christian perspective and disproved those parts of philosophical teaching that conflicted with Christian doctrine, the argumentation that each author uses is primarily philosophical.<sup>89</sup> Each of these texts represents an engagement of the classical tradition

86. Synesius's *De Regno* was a result of such an embassy on behalf of Cyrene. Procopius's *Panegyric of Anastasius* is a later work in this vein. Bishop Flavian of Antioch famously went to Constantinople in the aftermath of the Riot of the Statues in 387. For his role, see John Chrysostom, *Homily 17: On the Statues*.

87. For Aeneas's letters see *Enea di Gaza, Epistole*, ed. and trans. L. Positano (Naples, 1962). For the letters of Procopius of Gaza, see *Epistolae et declamationes*, ed. A. Garzya and R. J. Loenertz (Ettal, 1963).

88. The often complicated "marriage of Hellenism and Christianity" is treated particularly well in S. Elm, "Hellenism and Historiography: Gregory of Nazianzus and Julian in Dialog," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33.3 (2003): 493–515. Note as well the important earlier study of G. Bowersock, *Hellenism in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor, 1990), esp. 1–13.

89. This had been a part of Christian intellectual life from at least the time of Justin Martyr.

by an author who still valued its tenets and methods. Even bishops felt the aesthetic appeal of classical language and literature.

This was equally true among lay Christians. Before his selection as bishop, Synesius wrote poetry, treatises, and speeches.<sup>90</sup> All of these were grounded solidly in the literary world that traditional education sustained. Indeed, the most amusing of his works, the *Eulogy of Baldness*, was a satire composed by the bald Synesius in response to the second-century rhetorician Dio Chrysostom's *Eulogy on Hair*. It surely delighted the Panhellenion. Synesius's eagerness to embrace classical culture was normal among Christians even into the sixth century. During the reign of Justinian, Procopius of Gaza and his younger contemporary Choricus show the same interest in creating witty and eloquent rhetorical compositions based upon classical models. Indeed, the encomiums of paintings that Procopius penned worked from the same model as the pagan Philostratus's *Eikones* in the third century.<sup>91</sup>

In the same way that certain ancient sources raise questions about Christian comfort with the educational system, some ancient authors appear to question the degree to which dogmatic pagans adhered to the values of *paideia*. This debate has centered primarily upon Neoplatonic philosophers, a group of people whom both ancient and contemporary observers have portrayed as socially disengaged. Indeed, the fourth-century philosopher Themistius chastised them for leading an overly contemplative life in which they did "not deign to emerge from their couches and secluded spots."<sup>92</sup>

Themistius's criticism is unrepresentative of the historical reality. Even those pagan philosophers most dedicated to a life of contemplation acted in accordance with the norms of conduct expected of men in their social position. For these men, the code of *paideia* represented nothing less than an outline of ideal and virtuous living. In fact, in their view, a truly virtuous life depended upon the possession and exercise of a set of personal, social, and religious excellences.<sup>93</sup> Marinus's biography of the philosopher Proclus

90. His hymns are the poetic compositions of Synesius that have come down to us.

91. For these texts by Procopius, see *Spätantiker Gemäldezyklus in Gaza: Des Prokopios von Gaza Ekphrasis eikonos*, ed. P. Friedländer (Vatican City, 1939). For Philostratus, see *Imagines*, trans. A. Fairbanks (New York, 1931).

92. Themistius *Or.* 28. 341d. Themistius's attack is part of an ongoing argument he had with a group of less politically active philosophers. A more charitable modern view is that of G. Fowden ("The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 102 [1982]: 54–57), who feels that Neoplatonic philosophers took on less of a public role both because they preferred a life of contemplation and because their "lack of rapport with the common man" doomed whatever attempts they made.

93. *Vit. Proc.* 2. In support of this view, Damascius states, "Men tend to bestow the name of virtue on a life of inactivity, but I do not agree with this view. For the virtue which engages in the midst of public life through political activity and discourse fortifies the soul and strengthens what is healthy and perfect" (*Vit. Is. Ath.* 124; *Z. fr.* 324). As P. Athanassiadi (*Damascius*,

makes this connection especially clear. The text described Proclus as a man who followed the teachings of philosophy in every aspect of his life. This also meant that he followed the code of conduct that philosophy emphasized. Proclus was liberal in his giving and restrained in expressing his emotions. More importantly, “he checked his anger as much as is possible.”<sup>94</sup> Proclus’s conduct towards his friends and associates was equally in keeping with that expected of an educated man. “Proclus revealed a liberality with his possessions and a generosity in his giving to both friends and relatives, strangers and fellow townspeople, and showed himself altogether above the possession of money.”<sup>95</sup>

Proclus was also active on behalf of his city, a role that Marinus presents as an integral part of the virtuous life. He is careful to note that Proclus “effectively demonstrated his political disposition in another way when he wrote to governors and in this way benefited all cities.”<sup>96</sup> Proclus was not alone. Indeed, the emperor Julian’s teacher, Maximus of Ephesus, willingly served as a patron for those men of his region who needed help from the court.<sup>97</sup> At a later date, Damascius states that Ammonius, Proclus’s student, used his influence with government officials to his advantage in clashes with the praetorian prefect of the East.<sup>98</sup> It seems hard to deny that even the most religiously inclined Neoplatonists still thought it appropriate to continue acting as public advocates for friends and communities.

Despite seeing a vital religious significance in traditional education, even the most dogmatic Neoplatonists appreciated the utility of the social system traditional education sustained. Like their Christian contemporaries, pagans valued the code of conduct and the rules of communication that were taught in the schools. Pagans too developed friendships in school and sustained them with letters written according to the rules of scholastic culture. The letters of Libanius have shown this well enough, but even the least conciliatory pagans observed the code of the educated class. The letters of Julian, written in appropriately allusive language, make requests of friends and share classical reminiscences with pagans like Libanius and Christians like Basil of Caesarea.<sup>99</sup> As a man of culture who was communicating with

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287 n. 335) has perceptively observed, Damascius’s statement appears to be an answer to Themistius’s criticism of Neoplatonists.

94. *Vit. Proc.* 21. For a parallel see *Vit. Is. Ath.* 15A; *Z. Ep.* 18.

95. *Vit. Proc.* 13.

96. *Ibid.*, 16.

97. Eunapius, *Vit. Soph.* 477.

98. *Vit. Is. Ath.* 78E; *Z. fr.* 178.

99. Those addressed to Basil are letters 26 and 81. *Ep.* 26 contains an allusion to Astydamas that Basil was expected to know. Julian treated other Christian correspondents in the same way.

other educated men, Julian wrote according to the conventions of *paideia*. In so doing, he acknowledged that his correspondents were men of culture. Not to do so would both insult the recipient of the letter and make Julian himself look uncultured. The common culture of the schools bound even the emperor.<sup>100</sup>

While most upper-class men appreciated the beauty of classical language and the utility of the values taught in the classrooms of late antiquity, there remained a very real component of classical pagan mythology and theology in the teaching curriculum.<sup>101</sup> This was by design. The Roman system of education was supposed to teach a boy not only how to behave but also “how a man must bear himself in his relationships with the gods.”<sup>102</sup> This last element was unquestionably pagan and, although the Christianization of the ruling class meant it was less forcefully expressed in late antiquity, its presence in the curriculum disconcerted Christians. On occasion it could even lead to the pagan conversion of Christian youth.<sup>103</sup> Although this frightened some Christians, most do not seem to have been especially concerned. Nevertheless, even when the rhetoric of men like Augustine, Jerome, and their more extreme Western contemporaries is disregarded,<sup>104</sup> Christians did not agree about how to deal with this awkward component of classical education. Most Christians saw the utility of the personal and social skills taught in the schools, but they were divided about the significance of the pagan elements. On one side were men like Zacharias of Mytilene<sup>105</sup> who were concerned with the religious implications of some parts of teaching. They actively sought to reform teaching by neutralizing pagan elements. Arrayed against them

100. The friendships of the pagan *iatrosophist* Gessius with Aeneas and Procopius of Gaza show that *paideia* still sustained pagan-Christian friendships into the sixth century. Ironically, Gessius was also well known by Damascius, the uncompromisingly pagan final scholar of the Academy. For Aeneas's correspondence with Gessius, see *Ep.* 19, 20. For Procopius's, see *Ep.* 16, 102, 122, 125, 164. Damascius mentions him in *Vit. Is. Ath.* 128; Z. fr. 334–35.

101. This was especially true of the philosophy classrooms of the time. For mythology and its role in teaching, see Hermogenes, *Progymnasmata* (23–24 in Baldwin's translation).

102. Plutarch, *Moralia* 7E. The particular religious importance of the training can be seen in the colloquia of *hermeneumata*, a collection of exercises in which a student works through the narrative of an ideal day. They begin with a prayer to the gods for a good outcome. On these exercises and their role in defining student social behaviors, see M. Bloomer, “Schooling in Persona,” 71–74.

103. E. Watts, “The Late Antique Student's Perspective on Education Life,” *New England Classical Journal*, 27.2 (2000): 73–78.

104. Among the more creatively extreme is Caesarius of Arles who once fell asleep over a classical book and, as he dreamt, saw it change into a coiled serpent (*Vit. Caes.* 1.8–9). For more on this see R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 70–71.

105. Zacharias will be discussed in chapter 8.

was a group of Christians who focused upon the utility of the system and laughed off the pagan elements as irrelevant triflings. These were men like Choricus of Gaza, a Christian who saw that one could “cull from poetry whatever was useful while smiling at the myths.”<sup>106</sup> He saw no need to eliminate the pagan elements of the educational system.

While Christian opinion was divided, many pagans understood the deep religious meaning in the myths and writing of the ancients to be an essential part of the educational system. This was especially true of the later Neoplatonists, for whom philosophy was a part of one’s cultural patrimony that taught one how approach the divine. To purists, this element of philosophical training could never be sacrificed but, given the constraints Christian society placed upon pagans, religious teaching had to be done with great care.

Much teaching in late antiquity was done by pagan teachers and, when Christian attention was directed elsewhere, those professors tended to make the religious elements of their teaching more pronounced.<sup>107</sup> This increased religious focus usually did little to alter the utility of *paideia* for both Christians and pagans. It did have the potential to do so, however. The emperor Julian’s edict that prohibited Christians from teaching was merely a natural extension of the idea that pagan religion needed to be appropriately emphasized in teaching.<sup>108</sup> Standing behind this edict was the frighteningly logical notion that one could not effectively teach the classics, which were in truth religious works, if one did not accept their religiosity. If one saw Homer as a work of religion, as Julian did, then a Christian who taught it in an allegorical or non-religious way was intentionally not teaching the work correctly.<sup>109</sup> While logical, the exclusion of Christians from teaching endangered the cultural unity that *paideia* encouraged. For Julian, this was a side effect of an otherwise beneficial law. For more moderate pagans, however, the threat it posed to established custom was uncomfortable. Their reactions ranged from the strange silence of Eunapius<sup>110</sup> to Ammianus’s criticism of “the harsh decree forbidding Christians to teach rhetoric or grammar.”<sup>111</sup> At the heart of their discomfort was the unexpressed fear that this edict would eventually lead to a fragmentation of elite culture. In the end, pagans were of two minds about the purpose of education. On the one hand, pagans appreciated the practical utility of the common cultural values of *paideia*. On

106. Choricus, *Laud. Marc.* 1.4. See also R. Kaster, *Guardians of Language*, 80–81. This is actually a passage taken from a description of the bishop of Gaza.

107. This tendency is fully explored in chapter 8.

108. Julian’s law is described in chapter 3.

109. For Homer’s religious importance, see R. Lamberton, *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986).

110. Eunapius’s silence is especially notable given his normally positive reaction to all that Julian did. This law, however, negatively affected Eunapius’s teacher, Prohaeresius.

111. Ammianus, 22.10.7; 25.4.20.

the other, their paganism demanded that the religious aspects of the training be acknowledged.

The story of education in late antiquity chronicles the conflict between its religious aspects and its vital purpose as a source of upper-class cultural unity. As we have seen, upper-class pagans and Christians of all religious attitudes loved classical literature, accepted the tenets of behavior it laid out, and remained joyously engaged in literary pursuits. Education provided a set of values common to people of all religions and, in a time of religious tension, it allowed men of all faiths to bridge religious gaps while interacting as equals. At the same time, Christians and pagans had dramatically different views of the religious significance of classical education. For Christians, the pagan religious elements present in the schools conflicted with their own beliefs. Their emphasis in the classrooms presented a real danger that Christian students would prefer pagan ideas to their own. Pagans experienced a different sort of frustration. Many wanted to express freely the religious teachings that, while inherent in the educational system, were prudently downplayed under Christian emperors. Just as pagans and Christians agreed upon the utility of *paideia* as a common culture, they disagreed about how its religious elements were to be perceived. Men of all faiths privileged the utility of classical education as a unifying force, but there were times when religious conflicts about education allowed individuals more concerned with religion to dominate the discussion. At times like these, when events caused moderate people to abandon their natural conservatism, *paideia* was susceptible to change. The eventual shape of education at the dawn of the Middle Ages, then, was determined by how often and in what places religious divisions disrupted this common culture and endangered its utility.

This situation reveals an important truth. The evolution of classical education in late antiquity was not propelled by a steady empire-wide intellectual and political movement against pagan teaching. Instead, it occurred within a cultural environment typified not by Christian opposition to pagan teaching but by almost constant mainstream Christian support for traditional education. This support wavered only occasionally and, on such occasions, the cause was not imperial or ecclesiastical policy but local events and concerns. Consequently, the ultimate fate of pagan education can only be understood properly by exploring the historical interaction between local power structures and pagan teachers.

To this point, my discussion has focused upon the general significance of education in late antiquity and the trends that affected its development. The rest of this work will focus upon two cities, Athens and Alexandria, and the determinative effect that their specific local settings had upon the shape of

teaching in each place. The study will tell the story of education in these two cities from the second until the sixth centuries.

By emphasizing the cultural similarities between each city while illustrating their religious and political distinctions, it will show that local, historically defined attitudes towards education created unique Athenian and Alexandrian ideas about the position of pagan religious content in classical education. It will also reveal that these ideas and the patterns of interaction that helped to form them ensured that Athenian and Alexandrian schools would not share the same final fate.

In late antiquity, these two cities were as different as can be. Athens was a poor, sleepy city, which possessed few industries besides its schools. It also had a relatively influential pagan population well into the sixth century. This meant that education was always a major part of life in the city and pagan teachers had a degree of freedom to teach as they pleased. Alexandria, by contrast, was a major city with a diverse and vibrant economy in which education played but a small part. Socially, Alexandria was equally vibrant and diverse. The various Christian communities in the city engaged in vigorous and occasionally violent debate with one another and with the city's declining yet still potent pagan minority. While a part of public life, education only occasionally represented a major concern in Alexandria.

The distinctions between these two cities and the role education played in each one are mirrored by the differences in their educational institutions. In Athens, the institutions and their leaders were influential, well connected, and, in many cases, adept at working together with the city council to protect their interests. Consequently, the schools, and their pagan teachers, enjoyed a high level of autonomy that enabled Athenian professors to preserve many religious elements of their teaching. In the end, however, the teaching done in Athenian schools proved unable to adapt to changing political and religious circumstances. The most prominent teachers in the city fell out of favor with those controlling political life and the government closed the city's most famous school in 529.

In Alexandria the situation was more complicated. The major schools in the city had long interacted with the city's Christian community. From the second century forward, Alexandrian pagan teachers had taught Christian students and had become accustomed to their particular needs. In the second, third, and fourth centuries, the Alexandrian Christian community had deep intellectual ties to Alexandrian pagan teachers. Consequently, it developed mechanisms to control the impact of pagan intellectual culture upon Christian students. As the Alexandrian church grew into a major local power, this relationship changed. The informal contacts between church and school were supplemented by the distant but intense scrutiny and meddling of the city's clergy. Over time, this official pressure combined with Alexandria's historically inclusive intellectual culture to create an environment in which



the religious aspects of classical education were controlled, but pagan teaching was never officially destroyed.

The ultimate fates of pagan teaching in Athens and Alexandria differed despite the close relationship between the doctrines and methods used in each place. The religious and social differences between the cities did much to determine the fate of teaching, but they are not the sole reason teaching continued in Alexandria and was stopped in Athens. At the center of the story were the teachers, students, and men of education in the two cities. These men, and their responses to the religious and systemic tensions surrounding the schools of late antiquity, determined the fates of the Athenian and Alexandrian schools.