EDUCATION IN THE CHRISTIAN ROMAN EMPIRE: CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN THEORIES UNDER CONSTANTINE AND HIS SUCCESSORS*

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Ever since the days of Socrates and Plato, at least some statesmen have been very much aware of the role of education in the preparation of men for their duties in the state as well as in private life. Modern educational problems, which will affect the welfare of the state, are only too familiar; and we know that similar problems existed in antiquity. A characteristic understanding of what was involved appears in the brief treatise on educating children written by St John Chrysostom, in the latter part of the fourth century. Toward the end of the work, Chrysostom describes in painfully familiar terms the way in which children become fractious over incidents which seem quite trivial to their parents, such as the loss or breaking of writing implements. Chrysostom gives expert advice on dealing with such crises, and then breaks off and exclaims, "I am not speaking of trifles; we are discussing the governance of the world."[1]

Many scholars have dealt with this subject, in greater or less detail. The classic treatment of this topic in Greek times, Werner Jaeger's masterly *Paideia*, sets the standard for any study of the subject in the other periods of ancient history.[2] There are other works of different scope and character, such as Marrou's *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité*,[3] and, for the period with which we are concerned here, Cochrane's *Christianity and Classical Culture* and Laistner's valuable monograph, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire*,[4] which gives a survey of the theory and practice of pagan education and the relation of this to Christian education, especially as this was developed in the fourth century. In addition to his three chapters, Professor Laistner provides a translation of Chrysostom's address on educating children which has been quoted. The present study ventures to offer some observations on another aspect of pagan and Christian education, namely, the question of the particular effect which the educational problems of the day may be thought to have had on the current problems of the state. How far, indeed, can we trace, in the activities of the leading figures of the times, any specific consequences of the merits or defects of the education which they had had? This is not a subject which it is difficult to discover, but

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[1] §74, p. 117, trans. M. L. W. Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire* (Ithaca, 1951).

[2] W. W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, trans. G. Highet (Oxford, 1939–1944).

[3] H. I. Marrou, *Histoire de l'éducation dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1948); English translation, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York, 1956).

[4] C. N. Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford, 1940; revised reprint. 1944); Laistner, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 1). The recent study of R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge, England, 1954), is so wide in scope that it cannot include any detailed consideration of the present topic.

there does not appear to have been made any explicit study of the subject in the eastern portion of the Roman empire, in the first part of the fourth century, with which the present paper will be concerned.

Here some of the central problems arise out of the toleration of Christianity and its eventual adoption as the religion of the state — problems some of which still have their effect today. Following upon the intensive studies of the period which have been in progress, we can try to see, from the specific point of view of education, some of the effects of the triumph of Christianity on the statesmen and scholars of the day, who had had the traditional classical education, and on the state itself, which had been built up and administered by men who had received this type of training. We may try to see how their education affected the statesmen and churchmen as they attempted to deal with the problems of the times, many of which were new; how the classical educational tradition affected Christianity after the religion had been emancipated and favored by the state; and how the development of the Christian state may have been influenced by these factors. Some of these questions have been raised by scholars such as C. N. Cochrane, and Edwin Hatch in his famous Hibbert lectures of 1888.[5] The writer is greatly indebted to all these researches, but the purpose of the present study is different, and it deals with certain types of evidence which other students either have not had occasion to use, or have approached from a different point of view. Among the individuals known to us from the sources of the period, the views of Constantine and some of his contemporaries are characteristic.

The Problem for the Christians: Constantine, Lactantius, Eusebius

The Emperor Constantine, the central figure here, encountered many problems arising out of the extreme difficulty of the position in which he found himself with respect to Christianity and paganism. Different interpretations of his personality and policies have been proposed, which can be found conveniently set forth in the recent studies by N. H. Baynes, A. H. M. Jones, J. Vogt and P. Franchi de' Cavalieri.[6] It would seem as though every possible interpretation has been offered, by one scholar or another, of the genuineness of Constantine's conversion to Christianity, and of the motives which led to his toleration and then support of the religion, accompanied by the maintenance, for a considerable period after his ostensible conversion, of some of the official pagan cults which formed part of the Roman state religion. We also find that pagan symbolism was continued on the coins, which were an important expression of imperial policy, and vehicles for imperial propaganda. When we have, in addition, the ambiguity which surrounds the accounts of Constantine's religious visions and of his conversion, it is not surprising that among modern scholars, with their own

[5] Cochrane, *op. cit.* (above, n. 4); E. Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church* (London, 1890).

[6] N. H. Baynes, *Constantine the Great and the Christian Church*, Proceedings of the British Academy, xv (1929); A. H. M. Jones, *Constantine and the Conversion of Europe* (London, 1948); J. Vogt, *Constantin der Grosse und sein Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1949); P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, *Constantiniana*, Studi e Testi, 171 (Vatican City, 1953).

diversity of interests and religious backgrounds, there should be wide differences of opinion. Some students believe that Constantine experienced a true conversion and that his policy toward Christianity was based upon genuine religious conviction, while others maintain that he was a calculating statesman who concluded that Christianity offered a means of uniting the empire and saving it from the political, military and economic dangers with which his precedessor Diocletian had been struggling. There are also, as one might expect, various combinations of opinions between these two extremes. It seems beyond question that there was some feeling of a *quid pro quo* in the early stages of Constantine's connection with Christianity, a feeling which is certainly visible among Christians of the period, e.g., in Lactantius' work *On the Deaths of the Persecutors.*[7] The diversity of modern judgments is due in part to the diversity of the points of view, purposes, and prejudices of the ancient writers from whom we have to derive our information.

This is not the place in which to review this question in detail. There is some value, however, in reminding ourselves that Constantine came to his problems with a limited and well-defined educational background, and that it was not only his apparently complex personality — which many students have stressed — but his basic store of ideas, and his personal training and acquired intellectual equipment which contributed to the formation of his policy. In any study of the seeming vacillations and inconsistencies of his behavior, for example, of the way in which he clung to some official pagan forms after he had supposedly embraced Christianity (such as his retention of the office of *pontifex maximus*), we must remember that Constantine was the son of a high army officer and government official, a member of the tetrarchy which governed the empire, and that as a boy, Constantine received his education, from his seventh year to his nineteenth, at the court of the Emperor Diocletian at Nicomedia and (in the latter part of this period) serving in the army under one of his father's colleagues, all this time separated from his father and stepmother and the remainder of his family.[8] This was what preceded his acclamation as emperor in A.D. 306, after his father's death, when he was about twenty, or not much more. As A. H. M. Jones has pointed out,[9] Constantine's academic education, as a result of the circumstances of his early life, had been what we should call scrappy. We possess a number of his writings, in the form of laws (preserved in the *Code of Theodosius*) and of letters, quoted by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea in his account of the emperor's religious life, and (to borrow Professor Jones' words) "his involved and bombastic style betrays the muddled thinking of a semi-educated man."[10] Cer-

[7] See J. Moreau in the Introduction (pp. 59 ff.) to his edition of Lactantius' treatise in the series *Sources chrétiennes* (Paris, 1954).

[8] Baynes, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, I, 19.

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

[10] Jones, *loc. cit.* Baynes' opinion (*op. cit.*, pp. 6 ff., 40 ff.) that the letters quoted in Eusebius' *Vita Constantini* are genuine, has been confirmed by a recently published papyrus giving the text of one of Constantine's edicts; see A. H. M. Jones, "Notes on the Genuineness of the Constantinian Documents in Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, V (1954), 196–200. The genuineness of the letters would be indicated in any case by their stylistic resemblances to the decrees of Constantine in the *Code of Theodosius*.

tainly the opening of the edict on polytheism quoted in Eusebius' *Vita* (II, 48) is very obscure and philosophical, and it has been well suggested that this is in part due to this Greek translation having to be made from an obscure Latin original. The turgid style characteristic of Constantine's decrees in the *Code of Theodosius*, which sets these decrees off from the remainder of the *Code*, also suggests, among other things, a certain lack of training in clarity and precision of expression.[11] Constantine had doubtless had as much as could be given to him of the Roman rhetorical training, which was essentially unchanged since the days of Quintilian. This education included, as a part of its rhetorical and ideological teaching, exercises in the composition and delivery of the heavily stylized and artificial panegyrics of the ruler with which we are familiar in the extant collection of the Latin panegyrists of this period, some of which were delivered before Constantine himself or members of his family.[12] In these eulogies Roman boys were taught to praise the virtues and the powers of the emperor in laudatory phrases which became traditional.[13] Not only would Constantine in his schooling be indoctrinated in the official belief in the majesty of the emperor, but a privileged young man in his position would be made constantly aware, especially by his personal association with Diocletian,[14] of the responsibility of the rulers toward the Roman state. According to the *Anonymous Valesianus* and also to the information preserved by the historian Cedrenus, Constantine's literary education was scanty, and Eusebius indicates that his knowledge of Greek was limited,[15] though this was the language of a large part of his empire. Eusebius does say, however, that he was eager for learning, and "sometimes passed sleepless nights furnishing his mind with divine knowledge."[16]

All this has not been unknown, but among the complex and often polemical problems which arise out of Constantine's policy, we sometimes do not bear in mind the effects which his education must have had on his program. For one thing, Constantine firmly believed, as anyone with his training must, in the importance of the traditional virtues which had gone to build up the Roman state as he knew it and had inherited it. In an edict promulgated well after the promotion of Christianity to a favored status, and addressed to Maximus, probably the praetorian prefect of Gaul, who held office A.D. 327–337,[17] Constantine enunciates the principle that "to insist upon the ancient customs is the discipline of future times. Therefore, when nothing that is in the public interest interferes, practices which have long been observed shall remain valid."[18] This expression of the para-

[11] See for example *Cod. Theod.*, I, 12, 1; I, 16, 6–7; VI, 35, 4; VII, 20, 2 (an especially characteristic example); IX, 1, 4; X, 10, 2 (another striking text); XI, 7, 3, trans. Clyde Pharr (Princeton, 1952).

[12] These panegyrics are available in the edition of E. Galletier, *Panégyriques latins* (Paris, 1949–1955), with introduction, translation and commentary.

[13] On the place of the panegyric in Roman education at this period, see Galletier's introduction to the first volume of his edition (cited above), pp. XXX ff., and the study by R. Pichon, *Les derniers écrivains profanes* (Paris, 1906).

[14] Eusebius, *Vita Const.*, I, 19.

[15] *Anon. Vales.*, II, 2; Cedr., I, p. 473 Bonn ed.; Eusebius, *Vita Const.*, III, 13.

[16] Eusebius, *Vita Const.*, IV, 29.

[17] Ensslin, "Praefectus praetorio," Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, XXII, col. 2496.

[18] *Cod. Theod.*, V, 20, 1, trans. Pharr.

mount weight of Roman tradition, upon which Roman education was based, must be kept in mind when we consider Constantine's apparent reluctance to make a clean sweep of the old religion and introduce Christianity as the sole religion of the empire. This was not actually done, of course, until the reign of Theodosius the Great, in the last quarter of the fourth century. There would be good reason for caution, for in Constantine's day many high officials remained pagans; but there were other factors, growing directly out of the intellectual preparation which was the only type of education that Constantine in the circumstances could have had. He had started out with the eclectic point of view in religion and philosophy which was typical of the cultivated pagans of his time, including his immediate predecessors at the head of the state. It would have been quite natural for him, in the early days of his interest in Christianity, to consult the official augurs as well as to invoke the aid of Christ; and this tendency to take advantage of all possibilities of aid — as well as the acceptance of this point of view by the public — appears clearly in the official panegyrics addressed to Constantine by pagan orators in A.D. 310 and 313.[19]

It is also important to remember that Constantine would inevitably have looked upon Christianity from the point of view of a sovereign who had been brought up to believe that the Roman state had achieved its success because of the traditional Roman virtues and the official state cult.[20] This belief appears in the appeal to the experience of antiquity which is found near the beginning of the first of Constantine's letters which Eusebius has preserved,[21] and it is surely from the point of view of his official training that Constantine, when the doctrinal troubles among the Christians began to develop, looked upon the prosperity of the state as being dependent upon the unity of the church,[22] and that he held to his vision of a Roman empire upheld by the Christian God and based on an orthodox creed.[23] The fear of the wrath of heaven which appears so prominently in his utterances is something which would have been instilled in him by his pagan religious training and then transferred by a natural process to his Christian beliefs, particularly with respect to the state and its relations with God.[24] Constantine's supposed failure to understand all that was involved in the adoption of the Christian religion has been cited as one of the factors affecting his decision to adopt the religion and then his policy toward it. There may be a question how much of this was really failure to understand the doctrine and how much was simply the result of Constantine's looking upon Christianity from the point of view of his own education and intellectual equipment. Philosophers, Constantine knows, differ frequently on certain points, but are fundamentally in harmony

[19] These panegyrics are found in Galletier's edition (cited above), II, 31 ff., 105 ff. On the eclecticism and syncretism which they represent, see Galletier's observations, pp. 113 ff.

[20] For a masterly exposition of the contemporary political-religious beliefs on these matters, see A. D. Nock, "The Emperor's Divine *Comes*," *Journal of Roman Studies*. XXXVII (1947), 102–116.

[21] Euseb., *Vita Const.*, II, 25.

[22] Euseb., *Vita Const.*, II, 65; III, 17; IV, 42.

[23] Cf. Baynes, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–30.

[24] Cf. Baynes, *op. cit.*, p. 14

through "the uniting power of their common doctrines,"[25] and therefore the ministers of the new religion ought to be in agreement with one another. Constantine has himself inquired carefully into the origin of the differences raised by Arius' doctrine and has found it to be "truly insignificant," "a trifling and foolish verbal difference;" and it was wrong in the first place, he declares, to propose such questions as these.[26] Clearly the education which had been possible for Constantine, or had been available to him, did not prepare him for the problems which the new religion so unexpectedly produced. Constantine, in the words of Lactantius, still had the responsibility for guarding and handing on the Roman state which he had inherited;[27] and so we may believe that hesitations and errors which have sometimes been attributed to personal idiosyncrasies, or to not altogether creditable motives, are simply reflections of Constantine's upbringing, which was normal for one of his age and station.

Constantine's policy with respect to Christianity produced one of the greatest alterations of society which we know or can conceive, and all aspects of life, public and private, were affected by the changes which took place. Among the basic elements of the state and of civilization which were concerned, education itself was prominent; for the imperial patronage of the Christian doctrine at once brought up the question of what instruction was to be given concerning not only the duties and rights of the individual and of society, but the status and the responsibilities of the state and of the non-Roman world. When many people remained pagans, there was also the question of the status of the old Roman education and its doctrines concerning the individual and the world.

The answers to these questions were not found in a short time, and it would not be easy to review the process briefly here. In time Christian educators, especially under the influence of St Basil, worked out a Christian Hellenic educational program which in its essential features is still in use, though the classical foundation is not always recognized. What we have to look for here is the overall consequences in Constantine's own time, as they affected the education of the generation which was to follow; for the children born in the 320's and 330's would grow up with a view of the world very different from that of their parents and grandparents, the contemporaries of Constantine and Eusebius, and they would face very different problems. Our own interest in this situation is in the questions whether the educational programs which were followed were suitable or otherwise, whether the programs were adapted to the new situation, and whether, in fact, it was fully realized that education might be in need of change to fit the altered circumstances of the empire and of the world. The Romans, *mutatis mutandis*, were faced with what we think of as our problems.

The questions naturally had different aspects from the Christian and the pagan points of view. For the Christians, the state and society had now come to have a religious basis, with the emperor, as God's representative and counterpart on earth, at the head of the government, the church, and human society, so that

[25] Letter to Arius and Alexander, quoted in Euseb., *Vita Const.*, II, 71.

[26] The same letter, *Vita Const.*, II, 68 and 71.

[27] Lact., *Inst. Div.*, I, 1.

life on earth (in theory) became a *mimesis* or counterpart of the life of the kingdom of heaven. Eusebius of Caesarea, the scholar of the new regime and religious adviser to the emperor, presented this theory in terms combining Christian doctrine and pagan political theory.[28] As a corollary, Eusebius taught that man's knowledge comes from the *Logos*, the all-pervading Word of God, who is the author of the rational and intelligent being which exists in man. Hence, Eusebius goes on, come the natural powers of thought which all men possess, whether they be Greeks or barbarians; and it is the Word which enlivens these powers.[29] Christian doctrine, consequently, transcends the formal traditional education:

> Filled with compassion for this ignorance, the gracious Word of our most beneficent Father freely invites . . . all who are in the path of error, to receive instruction in Divine knowledge; and has ordained the means of such instruction throughout the world, in every country and village, in cultivated and desert lands alike, and in every city; and, as a gracious Savior and Physician of the soul, calls on the Greek and the barbarian, the wise and the unlearned, the rich and the poor, the servant and his master, the subject and his lord, the ungodly, the profane, the ignorant, the evil-doer, the blasphemer, alike to draw near, and hasten to receive his heavenly cure.[30]

Christian education was a great deal more than the traditional pagan curriculum. Moreover, according to Eusebius' theory of kingship, the emperor, as such, possessed certain traditional virtues, such as clemency, justice, piety, love for mankind, which were taught him by his own divine ruler,[31] and so it would follow that the best education, which would produce or attempt to produce the same result in ordinary mortals, would also be religious in its basis and divine in its inspiration. Education thus was looked upon as having the same divine sanction as the theory of the imperial power. Lactantius, the celebrated man of letters (himself originally a pagan, and once professor of Latin oratory at Diocletian's new capital, Nicomedia), who was summoned by Constantine to be the tutor of his son Crispus, wrote at the very beginning of his *Divine Institutes* that human wisdom is of itself nothing, that with Christianity, truth became a matter of divine revelation, and that religion cannot be cultivated without wisdom, nor can wisdom make itself approved without religion.[32] Lactantius, however, goes beyond Eusebius when he teaches that the example of antiquity and the experience of our ancestors have no value when they conflict with "reason" (i.e. Christian reason),[33] and that true wisdom is found in religion alone, and not in

[28] N. H. Baynes, "Eusebius and the Christian Empire," *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales, Université de Bruxelles*, II (1934), 13–18 (*Mélanges Bidez*, I) reprinted in the same author's *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London, 1955), pp. 168–172; F. E. Cranz, "Kingdom and Polity in Eusebius of Caesarea," *Harvard Theological Review*, XLV (1952), 47–66. See also E. H. Kantorowicz, "Kaiser Friedrich II. und das Königsbild des Hellenismus," *Varia variorum; Festgabe für Karl Reinhardt* (Münster, 1952), pp. 169–193.

[29] Euseb., *Oration on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Constantine*, IV.

[30] *Ibid.*, XI, 5, trans. E. C. Richardson.

[31] *Ibid.*, V, 8. On *philanthropia* as a virtue of the emperor, see my study "*Philanthropia* in Religion and Statecraft in the Fourth Century after Christ," IV (1955), 199–208.

[32] Lact., *Inst. Div.*, Book I, preface, and ch. 1. On Lactantius' teaching, see R. Pichon, *Lactance, étude sur le mouvement philosophique et religieux sous le règne de Constantin* (Paris, 1901).

[33] Lact., *Inst. Div.*, II, 7–8.

philosophy.[34] Education was thus given a kind of authority which it was not possible to deny. Christian truth could be taught for social and political purposes on the authority of divine communication.

There were practical points in educational matters in which Christianity, by virtue of its new position, found itself facing problems not all of which could be solved at once. The equal opportunity for salvation offered by Christianity was matched by, and in part grew out of, the equality of opportunity for Christian education, which was available to all who wished it. Lactantius for example maintains, as one of the basic and most salutary truths of the faith, that all Christians are equal and that they have equal opportunities for acquiring wisdom (though there are inevitably differences in personal virtue, in which some individuals may become more distinguished than others).[35] Christian education, he affirms, is superior to pagan education because Christian teaching leads everyone, at every stage of life, to God, while pagan education is designed only for boys and young men.[36] Finally (and one of the most important claims which an apologist could put forward) Lactantius, the former pagan professor, points out that Christians do not need to have an elaborate secular education in order to understand Christian truth, for God expressly caused the Scriptures to be plain and unadorned in style so that all men, without regard to education, might understand them.[37] This point of view, as we shall see, is quite different from the pagan attitude, which was aristocratic, not democratic; and in fact the simplicity and artlessness of the Christian doctrine and writings had been an obstacle to the spread of Christianity in "cultivated" circles, in the past and in Constantine's own time. Lactantius observes that educated pagans who had received the usual training in Hellenic philosophy could not understand or believe Christianity because it was not a formal philosophic system.[38] One pagan criticism of Peter and Paul, and of the other disciples, was that they were unlearned, and that some of them, indeed, were actually fishermen! Such men could not be expected to be intelligent enough to advance any valid claim or argument.[39] The Scriptures would not appeal to the same highly placed and educated people because of their pedestrian style, which would offend the fastidious tastes of those accustomed to classical literature.[40] A serious consequence, in Lactantius' day, was a want of suitably trained and educated teachers who could expound Christianity in terms which could be understood by, and would appeal to, pagans with the usual classical training. This lack of teachers, Lactantius tells us, was an important hindrance to the spread of Christianity.[41] Here we gain a revealing insight into the basic, if often unper-

[34] *Ibid.*, III, 27.
[35] *Ibid.*, V, 15–16.
[36] *Ibid.*, VI, 3.
[37] *Ibid.*, VI, 21.
[38] *Ibid.*, V 1
[39] *Ibid.*, V, 2–3.
[40] *Ibid.*, V, 1.
[41] *Ibid.*, V, 1–2.

ceived, role played by education in those times, for it is plain that it was possible for Christianity to obtain a considerable diffusion and success without the educated and governing classes, as a whole, realizing what was happening. Their whole training and mental orientation had been such that they were, by and large, aware neither of the spread of a doctrine such as Christianity nor of its social and political significance. Lactantius' testimony is the more valuable because it comes from an educated Christian who had been a pagan until he was himself a mature man. Thus we see something of the questions, caused by this educational problem, which both the government and the church had to face in the time of Constantine; and we can once more perceive what lay behind Constantine's supposed failure to understand Christianity.

One question which students today will immediately think of is the problem of the way in which the Christian view of education and learning was to be reconciled, not only with the traditional pagan educational curriculum, but with the oligarchical, non-democratic view of the government which was the normal concept among the governing classes at this period. How well this problem was understood we cannnot be sure. It was a delicate question. Lactantius alludes to the matter very little; but he does once, toward the close of the *Divine Institutes*, appear to speak quite plainly of the way in which, as he understood it, the content and purpose of the traditional secular education was affecting public affairs. The devil, he writes, "dashes philosophy" before the eyes of those who seek wisdom, "that he may blind them with the appearance of light, lest anyone should grasp and hold fast the truth. Thus he has blocked up all the approaches against men, and has occupied the way, rejoicing in public errors (*sic hominibus obstruxit aditus omnes et obsaepsit vias publicis laetus erroribus*); but that we might be able to dispel these errors, and to overcome the author of evils himself, God has enlightened us, and has armed us with true and heavenly virtue."[42]

The Pagan Claim: Themistius

The reaction among the pagans to the apparent success of Christianity took different forms. In A.D. 313, when Christianity was achieving toleration, the pagan author (now unknown) of the Latin panegyric addressed to Constantine represents the rather vague and generalized monotheism of many pagans of the day when he writes in very general terms of Constantine's divine inspiration, which was responsible for his success,[43] and concludes his eulogy with a prayer to the sovereign creator of the world, who, he says, can be addressed by so many names.[44] In the panegyric by Nazarius, addressed to Constantine in A.D. 321, the divine favor is spoken of in carefully neutral terms which both Christians and pagans could take as referring to their own beliefs.[45] The pagan authors (many of them schoolmasters or professional orators) of such utterances apparently felt that it was best to confine themselves to the traditional literary forms and either

[42] *Ibid.*, VI, 4, 24, trans. William Fletcher.
[43] *Paneg.* IX, 2 and 4, pp. 124, 126 Galletier.
[44] *Paneg.* IX, 26, p. 144 Galletier.
[45] *Paneg.* X, 2, 12, 13, 16, 17.

ignore Christianity or, at most, speak of divine matters in neutral phraseology.

The classical education could easily have been carried on for some time in these terms. But beginning with the generation following Constantine's death (A.D. 337) we have a pagan orator and educator who had very positive ideas on the subject of paganism and had great success in expressing them. This is the famous Themistius, whose preserved orations are over thirty in number. Some were addressed to the successive emperors from Constantine's son Constantius (A.D. 337–361) to Theodosius the Great (A.D. 379–395), others to distinguished audiences in Constantinople, Rome, and elsewhere. They give a clear picture of the way in which intelligent pagans sought to show that paganism could offer spiritual satisfactions and practical ethical teaching equal to what could be found in Christianity; and a considerable part of what Themistius says is concerned with the values and purposes of the pagan educational system, and the effect which this course of study might, he hoped, have on the Empire and its history.

Themistius began his public career with a discourse on love of mankind (*philanthropia*) as the main virtue of the ruler, addressed to Constantius, evidently in the year A.D. 350.[46] Constantius, not yet sole emperor, had ruled jointly with one or more of his brothers since Constantine's death in A.D. 337. Like his brothers, he had been educated by the most expert teachers, for Constantine (aware perhaps of the lacunae in his own upbringing) was anxious that his sons should have the best possible training.[47] Yet the testimony of the contemporary historian Ammianus Marcellinus, which most scholars are disposed to accept, is that Constantius, while he had many excellent qualities, possessed a narrow and sensitive mind, and that, although he made great pretensions to learning, he had actually failed in his study of rhetoric through dulness of mind, and had to turn, for that literary activity which was expected of every educated man, to the making of verses, which was looked upon as distinctly inferior in importance to rhetoric; and even in this, it was said, he accomplished nothing worth while.[48] Constantius was a conscientious ruler, and had been carefully trained by his father, but he had conspicuous intellectual limitations, the results of which are plain in the history of the empire during his reign. He was tyrannical, suspicious, and jealous, oblivious of the distinction between right and wrong in legal questions, and (in the eyes of his pagan historian Ammianus) prone as a result to stir up controversy in religious matters.[49]

Making his debut under such a prince, Themistius set himself the task (which

[46] On the date, see A. Piganiol, *L'Empire chrétien (325–395)* (Paris, 1947), p. 78.

[47] Euseb., *Vita Const.*, IV, 51. Julian in his *Panegyric of Constantius* (10c ff., pp. 26 ff. Loeb edition) describes Constantius' princely education in detail.

[48] Amm. Marc., XIV, 5, 2; XXI, 16, 4, cf. Piganiol, *op. cit.*, p. 90. Julian, it is true, praises Constantius' intellectual accomplishments in his *Panegyric* (preceding note) but this discourse is a perfunctory piece, written when Julian's own position at court was insecure. Ammianus was writing in Rome long after Constantius' death, and, indeed, after the end of his dynasty.

[49] See the general estimate of Constantius and his reign by Ammianus, XXI, 16. Gregory of Nazianzus, in his *Panegyric of Athanasius* (*Or.* XXI, 21), says that Arius was able to win over Constantius because the emperor, though zealous, had not much knowledge.

he pursued all his life) of keeping before the successive Christian emperors the pagan educational and philosophical ideal. In another study[50] I have tried to show how Themistius conducted his persistent campaign, which gives us a valuable counterfoil to the story of the success and spread of Christianity. Here the main points of his doctrine may be summarized.

The fundamental theme of all Themistius' teaching is the value of "philosophy," based upon literary study, for all classes of society, though it should be put in different forms for different kinds of people. Themistius held this kind of education up in contrast to the dangers of the rival educational theories of the rhetoricians, who, with their emphasis upon form and technique at the expense of content, were destroying the values of pagan philosophy and not substituting anything of real worth. From the practical point of view, Themistius' system, he was sure, was important for the state in that it would provide a virtuous and instructed people and a virtuous and instructed emperor, through whose labors the state could prosper and dwell in security. Themistius held the traditional view of the Roman state and of the sources of its power and success in the virtues of people and their rulers and in the favor of the gods. But he also claimed to have new and modern views on the position of the emperor and his powers, on the kind of training which was needed for public service, and on the place which philosophical learning should have in the life of the individual.

This philosophical training, Themistius points out, begins at home with the individual and spreads out to embrace successively the family, the fatherland, and finally all mankind.[51] This is the real basis of a man's life; for if he has had the right kind of education, he will exhibit a divine life on earth.[52] The study of virtue has been devised in order to enable men to consult together for the common good,[53] and virtue is to be attained through philosophy.[54] There is a practical value in this, for intellectual power is superior to force and can accomplish things which force cannot achieve.[55] In the first and second orations addressed to Constantius, Themistius develops at length the teaching that the highest success of the state depends upon the emperor and his subjects having received the right education, which will equip them with virtue and philosophy. It is illuminating to see that the theme also appears in the Oration of the Emperor Constantius, a reply to Themistius' first panegyric, which is preserved among Themistius' writings. Constantius, among other things, tells how the new capital Constantinople, through Themistius' efforts, has become a center of philosophy, and how he (Constantius) is especially pleased by this.[56] Constantius closes his

[50] "Education and Public Problems as Seen by Themistius," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, LXXXVI (1955), 291–307.

[51] *Or.* VI, 76d. Citations are of W. Dindorf's edition of the *Orations* (Leipzig, 1832). *Or.* XXXIV is cited from Dindorf's text, according to the pagination (printed in Dindorf's margins) of the *editio princeps* of A. Mai.

[52] *Or.* XXXIV, p. 18 Mai.

[53] *Or.* XXVI, 323c.

[54] See the *Oration on Virtue*. This is preserved only in a Syriac version, which has been translated into German by J. Gildemeister and F. Bücheler, *Rheinisches Museum*, XXVII (1872), 438–462.

[55] This doctrine appears frequently in Themistius' writings; see for example *Or.* I, 2b ff.

[56] *Oration of Constantius*, 20b ff.

discourse with the words:[57] "It is necessary to give to literature, before everything else, the dignity which befits it, to give to wisdom (*sophia*) its proper adornment, and to give fitting honor to education (*paideusis*) and its deserved prize of virtue, and to make the noblest of sciences, I mean philosophy, shine forth everywhere and among all men. In this way it will come to pass that the other arts will meet with more careful attention, when the first and best receives its own honor . . . ."

Such were the views of Themistius and (in theory at least) of the Emperor Constantius; but there was a lively debate in progress over the purposes and methods of education. One school of thought, with which Themistius strongly disagreed, was that philosophy was an aristocratic accomplishment, which only a few were fitted to attain. This teaching, which went back to Aristotle, was evidently widely accepted,[58] but Themistius, in order to secure the greatest good for the whole population of the empire, set out to make philosophy available to all men.[59] In this, as he pointed out, he was simply following the examples of Socrates and other ancient philosophers.[60] He was attacked for doing this, but this, he says, was because his rivals were jealous.[61]

The real danger, in fact, came from these rivals, the rhetoricians and sophists who claimed that the best intellectual training, and the best preparation for worldly success, came from the study of rhetoric. This contest between rhetoric and philosophy, representing the doctrines of Isocrates and Plato respectively, was one which was very much in men's minds during the fourth century, as it was at other times in the ancient world.[62] Rhetoric could claim some importance, in a utilitarian educational program, in that it prepared men for public life and especially for a forensic career. This everyone would admit; but Themistius felt that the rhetoricians carried their claims too far and that they had come to dominate the whole of education. Themistius devoted three orations (XXIII, XXVII, XXVIII) to the subject of the relative merits of rhetoric and philosophy for human improvement, and to the vices and shortcomings of the sophists. He showed that their teaching was shallow contrasted with the lasting merits of philosophy, and that the methods taught by the rhetoricians were devious and dishonest. Philosophy indeed was so great a thing that some people even considered that the greatest public office was inferior to it; but it was possible for a philosopher to take public office (as Themistius himself did) and place his virtue and wisdom at the service of the state.[63] The Emperor Theodosius, Themistius was happy to point out, was particularly aware of the value for the statesman of philosophical training.[64]

[57] *Ibid.*, 23c ff.

[58] *Or.* XXVI, 319b–c.

[59] *Or.* XXVI, 320b.

[60] *Or.* XXVIII, 341d.

[61] *Or.* XXI, 246c ff.; *Or.* XXVI, 313d ff.

[62] The contest appears also in the *Dio* of Synesius, written ca. A.D. 405. On the debate see A. D. Nock, *Sallustius, Concerning the Gods and the Universe* (Cambridge, England, 1926), Introduction, pp. xvii ff.; E. K. Rand, *Founders of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1941), p. 241.

[63] *Or.* XXXIV, pp. 14, 16 Mai; *Or.* VIII, 104b ff.; *Or.* XXXI, 352b ff., 354d.

[64] *Or.* XVII, 213c ff.

It was the emperor himself, as the most important of the public servants, who needed the most advanced and best education and philosophical training. This was the theme which Themistius treated the most often and with the greatest feeling and forcefulness. The emperor, because of his special duties and responsibilities, needed a special education.[65] He must have practical knowledge of the everyday difficulties and problems of his subjects.[66] Basically the ruler's training should be the same as that which his subjects should receive, being founded upon philosophy; and "philosophy sharing the throne" was a return to the happy days of the "good emperors" such as Trajan, Marcus, and Antoninus.[67] This type of imperial training was to be based upon literary study. Writing to the Emperor Valens, Themistius says:[68] "I have often considered that there is no other cause for that love of mankind (*philanthropia*) of yours, which is so widely celebrated, than love of literature (*philologia*) and the desire to listen to it. That man, indeed, who loves learning must perforce love man as well, just as, if a man admires swiftness, he must also admire horses. . . . And it is clear that the man who sets great store by wisdom, and ever exalts it and makes it sit beside him, will naturally love and make much of this creature in which alone God has planted the seeds of wisdom."

Themistius is always careful to point out that this type of education has a practical value in that it enables the emperor, by means of his intelligence and his store of wisdom, to accomplish things, especially in dealing with the barbarians, which mere force could not bring about. In this way the barbarians, instead of being merely slaughtered, can be brought peacefully within the frontiers of the empire, and, when settled on the land, will restore to prosperity the districts which they themselves devastated.[69]

We can be reasonably sure that Themistius' educational ideas had a certain amount of influence in his own day, for even though he was a pagan, he was appointed by the most Christian Emperor Theodosius to be tutor of the crown prince Arcadius;[70] and the mere fact of his continued activity at the courts of the successive Christian emperors shows that he was listened to. Another index of his importance is the considerable number of the manuscripts of his works which have been preserved. There was certainly recognition within the government itself of the importance of liberal education for public functionaries. Constantius and Julian published the following edict in A.D. 357:[71]

In the distinguished order of decuries which bears the name of either copyists or fiscal clerks or tax assessment clerks, by no means shall any person obtain a place of the first order, unless it is established that he excels in the practice and training of the liberal studies and that he is so polished in the use of letters that words proceed from him without the

[65] *Or.* IX, 126a; *Or.* XI, 142c ff.; *Or.* XVIII, 224c ff. As has been noted above (n. 48), the education of Constantius is described (in terms of conventional praise) by Julian in his *Panegyric of Constantius.*

[66] *Or.* VI, 81b; *Or.* VIII, 114a–b.

[67] *Or.* XVI, 204d.

[68] *Or.* XI, 145a.

[69] *Or.* III, 45b ff.; *Or.* XVI, 210d ff.; *Or.* XXXIV, pp. 64 ff. Mai; *Or.* XI, 146a ff.

[70] *Or.* XVIII, 224b ff.

[71] *Cod. Theod.*, XIV, 1, 1, trans. Clyde Pharr, p. 405, quoted by permission of the translator.

offense of imperfections, and it is Our will that all men shall be so informed. Moreover, in order that its rewards may not be denied to literature, which is the greatest of all the virtues [Gothofredus emends to: "the teacher of all the virtues"], if any man should appear to be worthy of the first place on account of his studies and his skill in the use of words, Our provision shall make him of more honorable rank . . . or Your Sublimity shall report his name to Us, so that we may deliberate as to the kind of high rank that should be conferred upon him.

In conclusion, we may point out some of the futher questions which need to be studied in this connection. We must ask ourselves whether the course of study at this period was really adapted to the problems with which the state and the individual had to deal. As a consequence of the barbarian invasions and other factors, conditions of private and public life in the fourth century were radically altered, and the Roman empire was following new directions in both internal and external matters. The question then arises whether these changes were thought of as making necessary any corresponding alterations in the educational system. How far, in fact, can it be said that the people of the time really understood their own educational needs and problems? There was, for example, the question of relations with the barbarians, who formed a growing problem on all frontiers and were gradually penetrating the empire. Should one, and how could one, introduce them to Graeco-Roman culture? How far should Romans study the history, culture and language of Persia, which was now a rival power of the first magnitude? Some writers, in the fourth century, no longer class Persians as barbarians. Was a democratic educational system necessary or desirable? Could and should universal education to be introduced? These are all questions which we need to bear in mind. Of course, if any real change had been made, the old Hellenic education would have ceased to be Hellenic and the character of the state and society would have been altered; and this evidently was not wanted. The schools were looked upon as the custodians of a body of texts which, it was thought, formed the best possible curriculum. This conservatism was not reactionary or hieratic, as it has sometimes been thought to be, but simply represented the conviction that the classical texts were the best possible school of humanity, and that as teaching material they could not be improved upon. The final question, which we all encounter in so many ways, is that of the factors behind the survival, down to 1453, of the Graeco-Roman, Byzantine state itself; and it seems clear that one of these factors was the continuance, in Christian form, of the ancient educational heritage.

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