Education and Religion in Late Antiquity.
Genres and Discourses in Transition

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Workshop at the Lichtenberg-Kolleg of the University of Göttingen (June 13-15, 2013)

organised by Peter Gemeinhardt, Lieve Van Hoof, and Peter Van Nuffelen

Conference abstract

Can or should education – grammar, rhetoric, philosophy – play a role in religious affairs, and if so, to which extent? This long-standing question was the topic of a lively debate in late Antiquity: between the fourth and the seventh century, Christians adopted and adapted pagan educational traditions, religious topics underwent a literary reworking, and normative texts like the Bible or Plato's writings were subjected to critical exegesis. This workshop explores how the relation between education and religion was transformed in various genres and discourses. It focuses in particular on monastic education and the reception of classical and hellenistic philosophy in Syriac Christianity, on the transformation of ancient rhetoric for the purpose of debates concerning religious questions, and on the development of Christian hagiography, based on pagan as well as biblical models. The public lecture at the start of the workshop analyses the ambivalent attitude of elite young men to the attractive careers in Roman administration which their education opened up for them: whilst some saw great dangers in a worldly career and chose to flee to the desert, they hardly ever lost contact with the world. Internationally renowned scholars present papers on these and other aspects of the dynamic relationship of education and religion in late Antiquity. The workshop is held in cooperation with the Courant Research Centre „Education and Religion From Early Imperial Roman Times to the Classical Period of Islam" (EDRIS), founded in 2009 at the University of Göttingen.

Programme

Thursday, June 13th
20.00 *Peter Gemeinhardt and Lieve Van Hoof:* Introduction
Public Lecture: *Edward Watts, University of California, San Diego*
      Monks as Hippies: Tuning in and Dropping out of the Fourth Century Imperial System
Reception at the Lichtenberg-Kolleg

Friday, June 14th
CHAIR: Peter Gemeinhardt

09.00 *Ioannis Papadogiannakis, King's College, London*
      An Education Through Gnomic Wisdom: The Pandects of Antiochus as 'Bibliotheksersatz'

09.45 *Peter Van Nuffelen, University of Ghent / Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Göttingen*
      The Quest for the Right Argument: Disputations and Late Ancient Education

10.30 Coffee break

11.00 *Lieve Van Hoof, University of Ghent / Lichtenberg-Kolleg, Göttingen*
      Falsification as a Protreptic to Truth: The Forged Epistolary Exchange between of Basil and Libanius

11.45 *Jan Stenger, University of Glasgow*
      Athens and/or Jerusalem? Basil's and Chrysostom's Views on the Didactic Use of Literature and Stories

12.30 Discussion

13.00 Lunch

CHAIR: Peter Van Nuffelen

14.30 *Lillian Larsen, University of Redlands, California*
      Early Monasticism and the Rhetorical Tradition: Sayings, Stories and Schooltexts

15.15 *Peter Gemeinhardt, University of Göttingen*
      Christian Hagiography and the Rhetorical Tradition: Victricius of Rouen, In Praise of the Saints

16.00 Coffee break

16.30 *Derek Krueger, University of North Carolina at Greensboro*
      Scripture and Liturgy in the Life of Mary of Egypt

17.15 Discussion

19.00 Conference Dinner

Saturday, June 15th

CHAIR: Peter Gemeinhardt

09.00 *Alberto Rigolio, Corpus Christi College, Oxford*
Syriac Translations of Greek Secular Literature: a Gnomic Format for an Instructional Purpose?

09.45 *Daniel King, University of Cardiff*
The Role of Philosophy Within Syriac Religious Education

10.30 Coffee break

11.00 Final Discussion moderated by Peter Van Nuffelen

Abstracts

Public Keynote Lecture (Thursday, 13 June 2013)

Monks as Hippies: Tuning in and Dropping out of the Fourth Century Imperial System

Edward Watts, San Diego CA

The generation of Romans who came of age after the tetrarchic and Constantinian administrative reforms entered a world in which governmental positions were far more numerous and lucrative than ever before. The Roman educational system opened the doors to these opportunities and socialized students to take best advantage of them by developing social networks. In the 360s, 370s, and early 380s, however, we begin to see a movement (catalyzed by texts like Athanasius' Life of Antony) in which educated elites turn against both their education and the careers for which it prepared them. Intriguingly, part of what makes their rejection of elite social norms and aspirations possible are the networks of friends their education helped them to develop.

Papers (Friday – Saturday, 14-15 June 2013) (in alphabetical order)

Christian Hagiography and the Rhetorical Tradition: Victricius of Rouen, In Praise of the Saints

Peter Gemeinhardt, Göttingen

Late antique Christianity was deeply indebted to classical culture and education. Whether this heritage might be utilized by Christians, e.g., for preaching, exegesis, or clarifying theological questions was subject to long and heated debate. While Augustine and Jerome struggled for a general solution to this question, their contemporary Victricius of Rouen simply made use of his rhetorical skills. In 396, he delivered a well-elaborated speech on occasion of the advent of relics of martyrs in Rouen, as if they were prominent living persons, perhaps even emperors. The present paper is devoted to the question how classical rhetoric is employed in order to elucidate the impact of this arrival at Rouen. A special focus will lie on the question how the communion of dead and living saints is depicted and how Victricius sets out not only to praise the deceased saints but also to exhort the living Christians to the imitation of the saints. Thus, the rhetorical tradition becomes an integral part of Christian hagiographical panegyric.

The role of philosophy within Syriac religious education

Daniel King, Cardiff

Syriac Christianity has always been well-known for its strong ascetic tendencies and the high spiritual value it placed on the simple and 'uneducated' lives of holy men. But Syriac philosophers are also famous for having maintained the tradition of teaching Greek philosophy as a form of higher education well into the Islamic era. How should we seek to

reconcile these attitudes and to explain the motives behindr the Syriac 'adoption' of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotelian logic, into the curriculum of the monastic schools? Research increasingly demonstrates that this had little to do with the usefulness of logic in sectarian disputes over doctrine and much to do with differing views on how serious learning might be deployed in bringing the individual ascetic closer to a genuine union with the Divine.

Scripture and Liturgy in the Life of Mary of Egypt

Derek Krueger, Greensboro NC

Two biblical citations, both fairly obscure, frame the introductory paragraph of the seventh-century Life of Mary of Egypt. One is from Tobit; the other from the Wisdom of Solomon, neither part of the emerging lectionary, and neither much commented in the patristic corpus. The author supplies references: "Such were the words of the angel to Tobit" and "as Solomon taught with divine inspiration. " Most likely, his intended audience needed the citational help. At the highpoint of the text, the two protagonists Mary and the monastic priest Zosimas engage in a brief liturgical service. She asks him to recite the creed and to lead her the Lord's Prayer; they exchange a ritual kiss, and he provides her with reserve sacrament. Elsewhere the author quotes the refrain of a hymn of Romanos the Melodist. These texts and actions need no citation.

The paper uses the Life of Mary of Egypt as a case study to consider the use and function of biblical quotations and liturgical references in early Byzantine hagiography. There are approximately twenty-five biblical quotations in the text. Quotations familiar from the liturgy tend to appear without the author citing a source. More obscure quotations tend to receive citations, either with the name of the book or the supposed author of the text. Hagiography thus both confirms the extent and limits of the knowledge of the Bible that an hagiographer could reasonably expect from his audience. The Life of Mary of Egypt provides a particularly useful place to investigate these issues, since in the middle of its narrative, it engages again in an early Byzantine version of the footnote when the author identifies the sources for Mary's own biblical quotations and Zosimas registers surprise, since Mary has never received any Christian education. Her Bible knowledge is miraculous.

For earlier texts, this sort of analysis is difficult or impossible, since we cannot reconstruct liturgies or lectionaries with much confidence. But by the seventh century, we can begin to detect trajectories of liturgical usage from a variety of sources, including narrative accounts and eighth-century prayer books. Meanwhile the fifth-century Armenian lectionary and the seventh-century Georgian lectionary allow us to reconstruct parts of the reading cycle for the city of Jerusalem and the region of Palestine, where the Life of Mary of Egypt was most probably written.

In the early Byzantine period, most Christians absorbed their scripture in liturgical settings, either though lectionary readings, the chanting or hearing of Biblical psalms and canticles, or the exploration and interpretation of biblical narratives in sermons or hymns. Because familiarity with scripture derived in large part from the liturgy, hagiography should be seen not merely as participating in a culture of biblical reference, but rather in a culture of

liturgical reference. Indeed the primary and implicit intertext for hagiography should be located in the liturgy, including the liturgical reading of scripture, rather than in the Bible per se.

Early Monasticism and the Rhetorical Tradition: Sayings, Stories and Schooltexts

Lillian I. Larsen, Redlands CA

This paper examines proto-monastic sayings and stories within a broader rhetorical frame. Given the integral role accorded gnomic sentences and maxims in ancient education, it argues the particular merits of reading collections of monastic apophthegmata in light of broader pedagogical models. Throughout the paper, extant material evidence wiil serve to elucidate the parameters of practice identified in schooltexts from the hellenistic period through late-antiquity and beyond. Both common and distinctive aspects of emergent monastic application will be identified and discussed.

An Education Through Gnomic Wisdom: The Pandects of Antiochus as Bibliotheksersatz

Ioannis Papadogiannakis, KCL

The Pandects of Antiochus compiled in the early seventh century AD was an ambitious attempt to distil the Bible in gnomic bits organized under different headings for the education of, predominantly but not exclusively, monks. As intrinsically and eminently didactic as this work was, it has not received the scholarly attention that it deserves. After examining the circumstances under which it was composed and how these affect the nature of the work, this paper will analyse the author's working methods and educational aims.

Syriac translations of Greek secular literature: a gnomic format for an instructional purpose?

Alberto Rigolio

Syriac translations of Greek secular literature, composed between the fifth and early sixth centuries by Western Syriac communities living under Roman rule, provide evidence for the endurance of Greek cultural traditions within early Christian communities. On the one hand, the selection of the authors that were translated was part of the corpus of texts with which late antique pepaideuomenoi were familiar, while, on the other hand, the treatment and the transmission of the Syriac translations attest to their expected use within Christian ascetic settings.

My paper concentrates on the Syriac translations of Plutarch's De cohibenda ira and De capienda ex inimicis utilitate, Ps.-Plutarch's De exercitatione (lost in Greek), Lucian's De calumnia, Ps.-Isocrates' Ad Demonicum, and Themistius' De amicitia and De virtute (lost in Greek). Since the translation process gave the translators room to intervene on the texts

with omission, additions, and changes, their textual editing has the potential to reveal their interests and aims in translating Greek secular literature into Syriac.

Three of these adaptations are particularly noticeable. (i) The Syriac texts have been Christianised through the omissions of all references to pagan religion; (ii) the exempla, which are regularly drawn from Greco-Roman culture, have been selected, and, as a result, most mythological material has been omitted; (iii) proper names of most of the figures drawn from Greco-Roman literature and history, such as Gaius Gracchus, Socrates and Philip, have been replaced by formulas such as 'a wise man,' 'a philosopher,' and 'a king.' The nature and extent of the changes show that a primary interest of the adaptors lied in the edifying exempla contained in the original texts.

Another crucial feature affects the textual form of the translations. Their rephrasing in Syriac suggests that the adaptors were familiar with instructional compositions that characterise gnomic literature. By providing textual samples, the present paper puts forward the hypothesis that the adaptors designed their works for instructional settings. The scenario depicted by John the Solitary in the Four dialogues with Eusebios and Eutropios (early fifth century), in which the author instructs less experienced ascetics through exempla and sentences, may suggest the setting that the Syriac translators were expecting for their works.

Athens and/or Jerusalem? Basil's and Chrysostom's views on the didactic use of literature and stories

Jan Stenger, Glasgow

The paper deals with two treatises on Christian education, composed nearly at the same time: Basil's Address to Young Men and Chrysostom's On Vainglory. These two programmatic texts originated in a similar cultural context and promote roughly the same idea, i.e. to lead young Christians to a virtuous life. With regard to the methods to achieve this aim, however, they differ considerably. While Basil adopts an inclusive approach, which combines the best of pagan literature with Christian faith, Chrysostom aims at replacing traditional schooling with storytelling based on Scripture. A comparison between these two approaches to the use of texts can reveal fundamental assumptions about the role of education in a Christian framework, which were available to Christians in the fourth century. They bear witness to concepts of identity characteristic of this period.

Falsification as a protreptic to truth: The forged epistolary exchange between Basil and Libanius

Lieve Van Hoof, Göttingen and Ghent

This paper studies the forged epistolary exchange between Basil of Caesarea (329/30-379) and Libanius of Antioch (314-393). Consisting of twenty-six letters, this epistolary collection must have been composed shortly after the death of these two major participants in the fourth-century debate between Christians and 'pagans'. Whilst previous research was largely focused on the question of authenticity, this paper reads the forgery as a literary composition in its own right. More specifically, it argues that the forgery serves the protreptic function of converting young students from a life dedicated to rhetoric and worldly values to a sacred life in which rhetoric could have a place, yet would be subordinate to the higher values and truth of Christianity.

The quest for the right argument. Disputations and late ancient education.

Peter Van Nuffelen, Göttingen and Ghent

A theme that recurs often in the rich documentation on public disputations in late Antiquity is the choice for the correct mode of argumentation to conduct the argument. It occurs in the criticism of Eunomian dialectics, but also in the distinction made by the Donatists between a legal mode of argumentation and an ecclesiastical one. These texts will be used to argue the following points: (1) these texts do not reflect a desire to do away with disputation as such (Lim), but rather point to a theoretical problem: what is the appropriate mode of argument to discuss theological or ecclesiastical issues? This is, in turn, connected with considerations about modes of education, and the possibility of applying the right type or part of education in the right context. Bildung is thus not rejected but rendered relative to the context and subject being discussed. (2) The Donatist and Catholic bishops participating in the conference of Carthage (411) seem capable of switching between a legal and an ecclesiastical mode, whilst still maintaining the distinction and valuating negatively the former one. Whilst reflecting the depths of secular and religious education of late ancient bishops, it also suggests a consciousness of the limits of forensic training and its application (pace Humfress).