UDK 37.013:27(32)"03" ; 27-75(32)"03" ; 37 Протоген ID 208262668

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The Admirable Protogenes and His Christian School

Abstract: The article examines in detail the school opened in Antinoopolis by Protogenes of Edessa, as reported by Theodoret of Cyrrhus (HE 4.18.8–9). The school's programme and Christianized syllabus are compared with two systems of education: the relatively new (Christian) Syrian and the established Graeco-Roman. After the school is placed in the latter system, its exact place within it and its nature are considered, in particular regarding the teaching of stenography. Lastly, the article examines why Theodoret's focus is on Protogenes as a proselytizer rather than an innovative teacher, the value and standing of high literary culture in later Roman society, and the role schools and education played in forming and maintaining this culture.

Key Words: Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Protogenes of Edessa, ancient education, Christian education in antiquity, late antique schools, grammatodidaskaleia.

The purpose of this article is to examine a passage found in the *Ecclesiastical History* by Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, concerning Protogenes of Edessa and his school in Antinoopolis. While this passage has frequently been cited by historians of ancient education and late antiquity, they have mainly used it to display a noteworthy exception of a Christianized education.[1] To the best of my knowledge a more thorough consideration of Theodoret's report is still lacking. I shall consider this passage in the context of comparable educational traditions possibly existing in Syria in the later fourth century; practices and traditions of late Roman education and the significance of education in late Roman life and culture; and Theodoret in terms of his education and his place in late Roman culture.

Protogenes, a revered and highly placed cleric from Edessa adhering to the Nicene creed, was exiled to Antinoopolis (Antinoe) in the Thebaid, along with his compatriot Eulogius, by the fervently Arian emperor

[1] E.g. MARROU 1958, 430–431; JONES 1964, 997; HARRIS 1991, 310.

Valens in the 370s. Edessa at this time was already a town with a long Christian tradition and, it would seem, a large Christian population (certainly larger than the one in Antinoopolis, so Theodoret). Saddened by this state of affairs, Eulogius shut himself up in a room and prayed, while Protogenes decided to go another way:

> The admirable Protogenes, educated in Eunomian stenography and well-versed in rapid writing, procured a suitable spot and there made a schoolroom and a waiting room for the pedagogues. And, having set himself as a boys' teacher, he trained them not only in rapid writing but also taught them divine texts: he dictated to them the psalms of David and prepared useful articles of apostolic teaching for them to learn by heart.[2]

Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History* (finished 450–451) is the earliest source to report on this Protogenes. The origin of the report is therefore unknown, as is its validity. There are some reasons to doubt it, for instance the fact that this programme (as will be discussed below) presents a very convenient arrangement, and is nowhere else attested in late antique education.[3] This convenience, however, can equally speak to the truth of the report: its essence at least, if not the details which Theodoret provides (the person, time and place). While such a programme might be arranged as a simple intellectual exercise and never in fact be realized, it can just as easily be realized in the (by our standards) free-form world of Roman education. Theodoret would have no reason to invent it, though he might be seduced by its appeal. In the end, this does not bear great relevance to us: realized or not, the idea of such a programme was known at least since Theodoret's time.

That this passage has received less attention in previous scholarship is not that surprising: Theodoret himself treats its contents casually. The narrative is brief and straightforward, it is presented as almost an oddity

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[2] *HE* 4.18.8–9: Πρωτογένης δὲ ὁ ἀξιάγαστος, τὰ Εὐνομίου γράμματα πεπαιδευμένος καὶ γράφειν εἰς τάχος ἠσκημένος, τόπον εὑρὼν ἐπιτήδειον καὶ τοῦτον διδασκαλεῖον καὶ παιδαγωγεῖον ἀποφήνας, μειρακίων κατέστη διδάσκαλος, καὶ κατὰ ταὐτὸν γράφειν τε εἰς τάχος ἐδίδασκε καὶ τὰ θεῖα ἐξεπαίδευε λόγια. Δαυϊτικάς τε γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὑπηγόρευε μελῳδίας καὶ τῆς ἀποστολικῆς διδασκαλίας ἐκμανθάνειν τὰ πρόσφορα παρεσκεύαζεν. (PARMENTIER 1911, 241.)

[3] The mostly legendary account of the martyr and διδάσκαλος Babylas alleges that he taught Christian hymns and psalms to young boys (παιδία) in Nicomedia at the turn of the fourth century. See KASTER 1988, II, *192 (= p. 387).

and, as has already been remarked,[4] Theodoret saw it as a novel way to convert pagans to Christianity. Although this school is apparently only of passing interest to Theodoret, to modern scholarship the report is as intriguing as it is succinct. Christianizing the relatively fixed curriculum of ancient education was a rare exception,[5] as was indeed any significant alteration of it. With this in mind, how significant was Protegenes' innovation? Was it truly innovative or was he simply adapting a known programme? Did he, as the pre-eminent historian of education once concluded,[6] simply transplant a familiar, Edessan tradition to Egypt?

To answer the latter question we must first look at fourth-century Edessa and the famous yet obscure "School of the Persians", active in this city from an undetermined date up to its disappearance in 489.[7]

[4] HARRIS 1991, 310, n. 125.

[5] Father (grammarian and presbyter) and son (rhetorician and later bishop) Apollinarius, as reported by Theodoret's contemporaries Socrates and Sozomen, composed Christian literary works for educational purposes, according to classical norms; they did this in reaction to a ban on Christian teachers in Roman schools, enforced by emperor Julian (AD 362) (see n. 19 below). See MARROU 1958, 429; JONES 1964, 1006. Their works never gained any ground, and nobody seemed interested in them after Julian's law was repealed in 364; it is worth noting that this was only about a dozen years prior to the reported activity of Protogenes. Considering their secular professions, the attribution of poetical works to the grammarian father and prose works to the rhetorician son (NB only in Socrates, while Sozomen attributes all works to the son) is rather neat and convenient. However, if any works were indeed produced (certainly, none were preserved), it is unlikely that the father Apollinarius had anything to do with them, being near death or already dead in 362. See KASTER 1988, II,*14 (pp. 242–243).

[6] "Il faudrait faire de Protogène le créateur de l'enseignement religieux, au sens moderne du mot [...], si on ne se souvenait qu'il venait d'Édesse, un des principaux centres de la culture syriaque, où un tel type d'école, on le sait, était normal." MARROU 1958, 431. Considering *only* the scholarship available to him at the time (large part of it used here), the conclusion is valid.

[7] Although this school was, conceivably, important and influential in fourth- and fifth-century Syria, nothing certain is known of its origins, its curriculum (if any), its organization, the attachment of certain individuals to it, or indeed its exact nature. The school (as an institution) does not figure in any contemporary sources that have been preserved, and later ones that do refer to it present their own set of problems. For an overview and a thorough (re)assessment of sources on "the School of the Persians" or the "school of Edessa", see BECKER 2006, chapters 2–3.

According to tradition, this school had been present in Edessa since time immemorial;[8] this, however, is improbable.[9] It is equally unlikely that the School came into existence or flourished with the arrival of Ephrem in 363, as it would rise to prominence only in the early fifth century, decades after Ephrem's death *c*. 373.[10] Much of what is known about the Edessan school is reconstructed from what is known of the later School of Nisibis.[11] However, the continuity of these two schools is likely rather tenuous.[12] The available sources that testify to the curriculum of the School of Nisibis are dated to the end of the fifth[13] and the mid-sixth

[8] [*I*]*n urbe Edessa Scholam fuisse Persicae gentis, ab immemorabili conditam, in qua sacras litteras Christiani juvenes, qui sub Persarum ditione erant, docebantur*. Assémani, *Bibl. or.*, T. 3, P. 2, 69.

[9] Cf. BECKER 2006, 42–43.

[10] With many other Christians, Ephrem settled in Edessa after fleeing Nisibis, which was ceded to the Persians by the emperor Jovinian. For the opinion that Ephrem was driving force of the School see, e.g., DUVAL 1892, 145 (cf. 152, 160–161). Opposite, cf. BECKER 2006, 59–61 and 229, n. 106.

[11] Nothing certain is known of the founding of this school either. Previous scholarship has assumed that it was transplanted from Edessa after the School of the Persians was destroyed on the orders of emperor Zeno in 489, and the expulsion of all those attached to it from the city. Some, including the Syriac theologian-poet Narsai, crossed over into Persian territory and settled in Nisibis, where Narsai allegedly (co-)founded the School there (see, e.g., KIHN 1880, § 192 (= p. 202); CHABOT 1896, 46). This would fit neatly into the narrative that supposes that the Edessan school was founded or flourished when Christians from Nisibis, and the eminent theologian-poet Ephrem among them, fled to that city in AD 363. However, there is no definitive proof of any direct connexion of Narsai to the School of Nisibis (see BECKER 2006, 49–51, 58–61).

[12] See BECKER 2006, chapters 2–3; for a concise overview of the reconstruction of the School of the Persians in previous scholarship, and the dependence of this reconstruction on the School of Nisibis, see ID. 41–43; specifically on Edessa—Nisibis, cf. 60.

[13] CHABOT 1896, 62–63. However, without more information, considering the way this is presented in CHABOT, it would appear quite possible that the *Canons* of the School dated to 496 were in fact forged and not recovered in 602. Though the mid-sixth century testimony of Junilius Africanus does confirm that some *regulae* existed (see n. 16 below), these were lost and supposedly rediscovered when the new *Canons* were drawn up (the two redactions differentiated as 'I' and 'II' in CHABOT).

century,[14] and the only date connected to its founding (uncertain as it is) is the year 489, the destruction of the School of the Persians and the banishment of those connected to it. Even if we assume that Theodoret's report is fictional, any influence of these sources on him (or indeed his sources) is wholly impossible. But was Protogenes' school programme, as succinctly described by Theodoret, truly similar to programmes of these Syrian schools? Judging by the *Canons* of the School of Nisibis, a more advanced and decidedly theological programme was offered there.[15] The phrasing of Junilius Africanus likewise indicates rather a theological school, organized *the way* secular schools are organized in the Roman world, not necessarily absorbing their functions.[16] Given the fact that the School of the Persians in Edessa was primarily a Syriac school[17] (if indeed a "school"), that in the 370s Syriac literature and scholarship were still far behind its Greek counterparts, and that there is simply no evidence to indicate that the Edessan School offered anything resembling a traditional preparatory education,[18] any influence of their tradition on Protogenes (or Theodoret) seems unlikely. Although the theory is admittedly appealing, I would have to reject any claim that Protogenes was continuing a Syrian tradition abroad.

[14] Jun. Afr. *Div. Leg*. praef.

[15] For the *Canons* of the School of Nisibis, see CHABOT 1896, II. It is uncertain who taught reading and writing (65). For the uncertain (and rather theological) progamme of the School, see esp. 67–68 (= Assém. *Bibl. or*., T. III, P. I, 939); cf. Jun. Afr. (n. 16 below).

[16] [*Q*]*uendam Paulum nomine, Persam genere, qui Syrorum schola in Nisibi urbe edoctus, ubi divina lex per magistros publicos, sicut apud nos in mundanis scholis grammatica et rhetorica, ordine ac regulariter traditur.* [...] *legissem regulas quasdam quibus ille discipulorum animos divinarum scripturarum superficie instructos, priusquam expositionis profunda patefaceret, solebet inbuere ut ipsarum interim causarum, quae in divina lege versantur, intentionem et ordinemque cognoscerent – ne sparsim et turbulente, sed regulariter singula docerentur*. Jun. Afr. *Div. Leg.* praef. (KIHN 1880, 468).

[17] The most strikingly scholarly activity (NB: not composing theological treatises) known in any connexion to the school is translating Greek works into Syriac and Syriac works into Greek; see DUVAL 1892, 174 (and n. 5: Aristotle = Assém. *Bibl. or*., T. III, P. 1, 85; Theodore of Mopsuestia = Assém. *Bibl. or*., T. III, P. 2, 73; Eusebius: see DUVAL 1892, 161–162).

[18] If so, then almost certainly not to the general public, and only preparatory to theology.

Protogenes' school can, therefore, belong only to the Graeco-Roman tradition. Theodoret, having received an excellent secular education in no lesser an educational centre than late antique Antioch, would naturally be better acquainted with traditional, Greek models of education; it is, in fact, to be expected that he be heavily influenced by them, as any educated Roman would – even if he is a fifth-century bishop. To determine a plausible source and the originality of the programme offered by Protogenes, we must now turn to traditional Roman schools.

A few things need to be considered when discussing Roman education. Perhaps the most important one is that education in antiquity was not centralized or truly regulated;[19] what a school offered depended on tradition (the basic curriculum, once established, was resistant to change), and circumstances (including the skills of the teacher, and the needs and wishes of the (parents of) students). There were three schools that generally corresponded to three stages of learning: (1) the *ludus litterarius* (γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖον)[20] – the school of letters (often termed 'elementary' or 'primary' in modern histories) imparting basic literacy, what some called *litterae communes*; (2) the *schola grammatici* – the grammarian's school (often termed 'secondary'), offering a thorough education in language (not infrequently beginning from basic literacy), poetry and historiography; (3) and the *schola rhetoris* – the school of rhetoric; studies offered in the latter two (along with mathematical disciplines and philosophy) might be termed *litterae liberales*. The generally accepted opinion today is that, while these three schools could indeed form a regular sequence, this was not likely the norm: in reality, most of those who attended the 'common' schools never went on to the 'liberal' schools, and those who attended the liberal ones rarely began their education in the common one.[21]

[19] Some laws concerning education: Diocletian's edict on maximum prices set 50 denarii per pupil per month for the teacher of common letters (*Cod. Theod*. 7.66); Gratian's law establishing and maintaining chairs of grammar and rhetoric in Gaul (*Cod. Theod*. 13.3.11); Julian barred Christians from teaching (*Cod. Theod*. 13.3.5). See also MARROU 1958, 362; JONES 1964, 997.

[20] Although γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖον is not exclusively used in Greek sources, it is by far the most convenient for our purposes, as it most clearly designates this type of school.

Most scholars have classed the school of Protogenes as a γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖον, a simple school of letters,[22] albeit one that offered something more than basic literacy. Certainly when we look at the type of texts, as reported by Theodoret, this fits perfectly with what we know of rudimentary education in the Roman world. Once the students were first acquainted with letters, the rest of their elementary literary education would consist of morphology, reading, reciting, copying and memorizing shorter texts.[23] In a traditional Roman school these texts would include excerpts from poets[24] and bits of prose: direct quotes, paraphrases or gnomic sayings attributed to philosophers.[25] This was true of both γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖα and of the instruction in common letters given in the grammarian's school.[26]

When we compare to this Protogenes' selection of texts – the Δαυϊτικὰς μελῳδίας and τὰ πρόσφορα τῆς ἀποστολικῆς διδασκαλίας he

[21] The design offered by BOOTH 1979 is at times overly generalized, but significant; the best overview and analysis of literary sources is offered by KASTER 1983; these two articles also offer the best references to opinions in previous scholarship. While KASTER (1983) was somewhat more reserved at first (cf. HARRIS 1991, 307, n. 106), he would later be more decisive in the opinion that most γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖα / *ludi litterarii* served the poorer segments of the population: KASTER 1988, 24. See also HARRIS 1991, 307–308. JONES 1964 (997–998) reserves the school of letters for "children of middle class parents and […] some poor boys", and is in favour of private tuition in the elements for children of the wealthy.

[22] E.g., MARROU 1958, 430–431; JONES 1964, 997; KASTER 1983, 344. HARRIS 1991 (310) does not call it a school of letters explicitly ("being literate, had opened a school there"): the implication is clear, as being literate was the only prerequisite for becoming a teacher on this level (cf. Quint. 1.1.8).

[23] See *Hermeneumata* in DIONISOTTI 1982, esp. lines 23–27 (99), 34–35 (100); MARROU 1958, 214–218; CRIBIORE 2001, 132–134 (an example from a different redaction of the *Hermeneumata* also provided: p. 15 and n. 1).

[24] In Greek education, Homer is the first and obvious choice; cf., e.g., the lowly Timaios quoting Homer in a letter to his master (CRIBIORE 2001, 179). See also MARROU 1958, 214–215. On Menander: see *ibid.*, 218.

[25] For instance, Diogenes: see MARROU 1958, 217–218; preserved on ostraca: see CRIBIORE 2001, 128, 139–140 (cf. 178). Perhaps also Socrates: the *dogmata Socratus* (sic) in Paul. Pell. *Euchar*. 73.

[26] Examples can be best surveyed in KASTER 1983, esp. II (see, e.g., b and g in that section).

παρεσκεύαζεν – we see a comparable selection of poetry and prose. The use of psalms is self-evident; as for the 'apostolic teaching', with παρεσκεύαζεν it would be safe to assume that it was wisdom taken from the Epistles and perhaps the Acts of the Apostles (and perhaps only Paul), as these would correspond more closely to gnomic sayings attributed to pagan philosophers. Even in such a lowly school as the school of letters, the education imparted more than simple literacy: it provided the student with resplendent shards of the common culture which they could now share even with the well-off and well-educated.[27]

More importantly, the Roman school sought to educate its student both in terms of literacy and morality.[28] Selections from poetry and prose were made with a mind on common morality and propagated popular wisdom, preparing the student for life in his or her society. As a proselytizer, even if he accepted pre-Christian wisdom and morality as valid because it ultimately sprang from *the* divine font, Protogenes would naturally consider (divine) wisdom from the most valued of Christian sources more valid and probably the only one needed. If he was aware why gnomic sayings were used in traditional education (that is, that they were vessels for morality, aside from being instruments for learning to read and write), using Christian sayings distilled from a source comparable to a philosopher is an ingenious move. These would not strike any student already educated to some degree as particularly strange or foreign (or indeed his parents, if they were at all educated or familiar with education); though the man whose words they studied might be unfamiliar, the concept of moral instruction was not. The wisdom of the words – so we might reconstruct Protogenes' thinking – would be recognized, and the unbeliever would adhere to the faith.

Undoubtedly, Protogenes maintained a distinctly Graeco-Roman model of education. But one must ask then: if he only replaced the texts, was this innovative? Though perhaps not today, in antiquity simply substituting pagan texts with Christian ones would be considered highly innovative – dangerously so even, considering the patent traditionalism

[27] CRIBIORE 2001, 178–179. On higher education and culture, cf. BROWN 1988, 30, 36, 40; KASTER 1988, 12–13; LIEBESCHUETZ 2001, 223–224.

[28] MARROU 1958, 206–207.

in ancient education.[29] Augustine would, about half a century later,[30] suggest a similar alteration, but neither his outline nor the one hinted at in Theodoret's report would change late Roman education (excluding isolated monastic efforts), which remained secular even as it was becoming increasingly rare, until the point it disappeared completely.

This in turn leads to the question of the potential significance of such a move. The texts studied (and memorized) so thoroughly in Roman schools formed part of the common culture of the Empire; what is more, in great part they *formed it*, as those most famous stories and quotations – often repeated or alluded to both in literature and communication – were familiar even to illiterate Romans from other sources.[31] Removing these texts from the curriculum would limit any such student's participation in the common culture, since he would not have the school's *crambe repetita*[32] seared into his memory. Now, it is important to keep in mind that this would not heavily impact the children obtaining only a lower-grade education, as they could never truly be full participants in the distinctly literary, erudite culture of the highly educated aristocracy. If, however, such a change was extended to the liberal schools of the Empire (i.e. the schools of grammar and rhetoric, as any schools of philosophy would simply cease to exist as such), the result would likely be a complete collapse of the old culture (to say nothing of the literary language), which still had considerable power and prestige in Theodoret's time.[33]

As already noted, the school of Protogenes is taken by most to have been a γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖον. Certainly, when one follows the discussion above, the classification is credible. Though not in content, in

[29] Though much earlier (92 BC), the censorial edict regarding the Latin schools of declamation in Rome (a novelty, all the schools of declamation being Greek before) might still serve as a good example (Suet. *De gramm. et rhet.* 25.2; Aul. Gell. 15.11.2). The censors' composed "nobis non placere" speaks quite loudly.

[30] *De doctr. chr.* 4 (esp. 4.3, 5–6). This work (its fourth book) was finished *c*. 426, which is to say half a century after the reported teaching activity of Protogenes in Antinoopolis, not after the publication of Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*.

[31] Cf. HARRIS 1991, 310–311 (and n. 127).

[32] Juv. 7.154.

[33] See below.

essence the programme of this school closely matched that of traditional schools of letters. That Protogenes *also* offered training in notarial skills would not surprise a historian of late Roman education. In part because a teacher of common letters, as poor as he was,[34] would seek to complement his income any way he could, and would be at any rate highly attuned to the needs and desires of his community, being wholly dependent on it for survival. And in part because there is a strong possibility that one such primary teacher is attested in Italy.[35] But, a closer, indeed a pedantic, consideration of Theodoret's text may suggest that Protogenes opened a different kind of school.

Regarding the *also* just now spoken of, it is worth noting that, when describing Protogenes' learning and his teaching, Theodoret in fact speaks only of γράφειν εἰς τάχος and τὰ θεῖα λόγια. This is hardly definitive of itself as, unsurprisingly, a disregard for basic literacy is quite common in most sources.[36] However, Theodoret's narrative strongly implies that Protogenes opened his school fairly quickly upon settling in Antinoopolis.[37] This already negates the possible implication that Antinoopolis had no schools before Protegenes arrived:[38] to learn τὰ Εὐνομίου γράμματα,[39] to write εἰς τάχος and quickly absorb the texts

[34] See n. 19 above; NB that this law allows 50 denarii as the *maximum* price an elementary teacher could charge per pupil.

[35] The *magister litterarum* Cassianus from Forum Cornelii: Prudent. *Perist*. 9.21–24, 35–36. For more, see KASTER 1983, 343, n. 68; cf. 333, n. 44 (= Rufin. *HE* 2.14, where it is less clear at which point the *notarius* figured in the education, the only other teacher mentioned being a *grammaticus*).

[36] For a full overview, see KASTER 1983, esp. I and II.

[37] Theod. *HE* 4.18.7–8.

[38] HARRIS 1991, 310; or at least a steady influx of itinerant teachers and instructors, known to be common in Egypt (see CRIBIORE 2001, chapter 2, pass.).

[39] PARMENTIER 1909 identifies Εὐνόμιος with the (in)famous radical Arian Eunomius the Cappadocian from the same period († *c*. 393) Even though this particular Eunomius need not necessarily have any connexion with (what we might be tempted to dub) *notae Eunomianae*, the reading τὰ Εὐνομίου γράμματα advanced by PARMENTIER still makes the most sense; but even if we took an older reading – τά ἐκ νόμου γράμματα – and accepted these as some sort of legal studies (p. 238), Protogenes' students would still have to be educated to some extent in order to have any use from them, in fact even more than they would need to be to learn notarial skills.

prepared for them,[40] the boys would need to be literate already. It might, however, suggest that there was no school offering instruction in notarial skills, which could explain why the pagan parents of Antinoopolis were willing to send their boys to Protogenes' school, despite its Christianized syllabus. It might also suggest that Protogenes opened a more advanced, albeit specialized, school.

The *boys* themselves may bolster the argument that it was a later stage of education, as Theodoret exclusively designates Protogenes' students as μειράκια, which should tell us that these students were in (or at least approaching) puberty and that they were exclusively male.[41] Traditionally, formal education in antiquity was set to begin around the age of seven,[42] and while the barely regulated Roman educational system was not burdened with age limits and a student might begin his or her education only when circumstances allowed for it, it seems unlikely that *all* of Protogenes' Antinoopolitan students would begin their education at roughly the same, later age. Though girls certainly formed a much smaller part of any student population, there are known examples of girls attending the schools of letters,[43] even if their participation in liberal schools may remain doubtful.[44] If Protogenes' school was indeed a

[40] While the ἐκμανθάνειν of the apostolic sayings need not imply literacy, Theodoret says that Protogenes dictated (ὑπηγόρευε) the psalms to the boys.

[41] Theod. *HE* 4.18.8–9. The same word is used in the next sentence, where Protogenes visits one of his students (ἑνὸς δὲ τῶν μειρακίων) who had fallen ill, and cures him with prayer. Immediately after that, Theodoret reports that οἱ τῶν ἄλλων παίδων πατέρες hounded Protogenes to heal their children too, however it seems clear that these παῖδες were not his students at all, merely sick *children* of Antinoopolis. If we follow Cassiodorus' Latin translation, these may have been much younger children (*infantium*, see PARMENTIER 1911, 241).

[42] E.g., Quint. 1.1.15; Juv. 14.10–14. Though, I stress again, hardly a rule; see, e.g., MARROU 1958, 220 (and nn. 62, 64), HARRIS 1991, 240, n. 347.

[43] At least in Rome at the turn of the second century: Mart. 9.68.1–2, 8.3.15–16. Cf. *Hermeneumata* in DIONISOTTI 1982, line 1 (97).

[44] MARROU 1958 supposes they must have on occasion (cf. 203); however, it seems probable that most female students of grammarians got their education in-house: e.g., Pliny, *Ep*. 5.16.3. CRIBIORE 2001 (20–21, 83–86) supposes an in-house education for the girl Heraidous (on account of the καθηγητής, a private tutor), but MARROU 1958 (203), HARRIS 1991 (239 and n. 341) and HAINES-ETZEN 2000 (56, n. 17) put her in a school. Ausonius, writing to his grandson Ausonius about school, mentions that *both*

γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖον and if his main aim was to convert the pagans, as Theodoret reports, then he would have no reason to exclude girls from his school, just as he would have no reason to only begin with teenagers.[45] If, however, his school was a specialized notarial school,[46] the younger boys would not be sufficiently prepared, and girls would make unlikely students.[47] Since basic literacy could also be learned in (at least some) grammarians' schools,[48] we cannot exclude the possibility that Protogenes also taught these skills in his school, whatever its true nature; nevertheless, any definitive proof for this is lacking, and doubts may remain. For one, in the schools of grammarians, it would seem, the *litterae communes* were supervised by an assistant-teacher (ὑποδιδάσκαλος) or older students.[49] The only instructor mentioned in our brief narrative was Protogenes.[50] A far more telling indication is found in an

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the boys' parents "went through the same": *Ep*. 22.33; the school of Bordeaux at that time was a closed system, where all instruction was given by *grammatici* and *rhetores*, from the *communes litterae* to the *liberales*, see KASTER 1983, II,b; cf. BOOTH 1979, 7.

[45] One might speculate that a cleric would want to exclude girls from theological study, however the psalms and the wisdom of the Apostles does not appear to be anything more than what girls would already learn freely in church. The phrasing ("τὰ θεῖα ἐξεπαίδευε λόγια", and particularly "τῆς ἀποστολικῆς διδασκαλίας ἐκμανθάνειν τὰ πρόσφορα παρεσκεύαζεν") should confirm that he inculcated into his μειράκια already digested knowledge, not that he taught them exegesis.

[46] Theodoret's word-choice (διδασκαλεῖον) does not help us determine this, as even a simple school of letters need not be called a γραμματοδιδασκαλεῖον; furthermore, his phrasing (as reflected in my translation) describes a *room* (more specifically, two rooms) rather than a whole *house*. It is hardly ever appropriate to imagine any ancient school situated in a building built for the explicit purpose of educating children. All that διδασκαλεῖον in essence means is 'place of/for learning'.

[47] Though apparently girls could be calligraphers (Euseb. *HE* 6.23), they could hardly expect a bureaucratic appointment.

[48] See n. 21 above; see also DIONISOTTI 1982, 120–123.

[49] See *Hermeneumata* in DIONISOTTI 1982, lines 21, 35 (99, 100; comment for line 21 on p. 111); here one is unusually called a ὑποσοφιστής (*subdoctor*). Cf. the career paths of Bordeaux professors, who would start at the rank of grammarian, but at first teach basic literacy and basic grammar: see KASTER 1983, II,b; cf. with this II,c, concerning Libanius.

[50] Then again, its brevity may be the cause for any omission. Whatever Protogenes' aim, Theodoret's was clear (see below).

edition of the *Hermeneumata*, where a boy receiving the instruction of *grammatici* (one *Latinus* and one *Graecus*) and that of an *orator*, goes on to say that part of his school-day is spent in the *auditorium notarii* as well.[51] We can only speculate why Protogenes' school was popular even among the town's pagans. In the category of rank speculation, we can imagine that the Antinoopolitan church supported both Protogenes and his school, allowing him to offer his trade cheaply or perhaps for free.[52] A more credible assumption, as I have conjectured above, was that Antinoopolis did not have a teacher who taught these skills, or perhaps not one as well-versed (πεπαιδευμένος, ἠσκημένος) in them as Protogenes.[53] Notarial schools in antiquity are poorly attested,[54] but if they existed and were rare, and if Protogenes' school was indeed a specialized

[51] DIONISOTTI 1982, line 18 (98); this text provides a unique mention of the *auditorium notarii* (comment on p. 110); (a *notarius* is mentioned again in a list of words: line 24, p. 99). There is undoubtedly a conflation of two different school scenes in this edition of the *Hermeneumata* – in fact scenes from two different schools, at two different levels of educaton – as DIONISOTTI soundly judged (120–121), and the *notarius* without a shred of doubt belongs to the text treating education at the grammarian's level; the further mention of an *orator* (at this stage, the rhetorician would be teaching just the rudiments of oratory; cf. Aug. *Conf*. 2.3.5) most clearly indicates that the boy is in his teens (for both *grammatici* and *orator*, see comment on p. 110). A different mention of a *notarius (*in the context of education) gives a *grammaticus* as the only other teacher (cf. n. 35 above).

[52] Theodoret, as we have seen, does not report how Protogenes obtained the rooms in which he organized his school, neither does he give any details on how his compatriot and fellow-exile Eulogius obtained the room in which he used to pray night and day (4.18.8). The rather weak indication that they may have conceivably gotten these with the help of the Antinoopolitan bishop and local Christians is found earlier (4.18.7). However, the mention of a παιδαγωγεῖον attached to the school clearly indicates that the students were not indigent, as the poorest parents could not afford to provide their son with a slave attendant.

[53] If we accept PARMENTIER's (1909) identification of Eunomius (see above, n. 39), we can then speculate that a system of shorthand recently improved or popularized might still be unknown to any teachers already established in Antinoopolis.

[54] NB, as organized institutions, comparable to schools of grammarians or rhetors. Cf. Mart. 10.62.1–5. Note, however, that Martial (possibly) testifies to the situation in Rome at the turn of the second century, which might hardly be expected in Antinoopolis in the second half of the fourth.

notarial school, that might also explain its appeal.[55] Whatever the case, it would seem that both Theodoret and the Antinoopolitan parents saw in this school as most worthy the specialized knowledge its teacher imparted. For Theodoret, this was τὰ θεῖα λόγια; for the parents, it was τὰ Εὐνομίου γράμματα – regardless of their creed, as Christian parents would either way make sure their children were brought up in *doctrina sana, id est Christiana*.[56]

Theodoret's report on Protogenes' teaching career is limited to what is quoted at the beginning of this article; of him we are further told that he was called back to Syria after the persecution ended (some time after Valens' death in AD 378), and that he was made the bishop of Charrae.[57] There is no information on his school in Antinoopolis after his departure (nor on any school he founded or supported in Charrae). It would, at any rate, not be odd in antiquity for a school to last only as long as its teacher.

Reading the passage, there should be little doubt that Theodoret gave greater value to Protogenes as an agent of conversion than to Protogenes as an agent of education. One need only look at the remainder of the notice on Protogenes (and Eulogius) for confirmation (9–13). After the end of the passage I quoted, Theodoret tells of Protogenes' visit to one of his students, a sick boy whom he cures with prayer. The next sentence tells how other Antinoopolitans wanted him to cure their children as well: Protogenes, however, refuses to cure anyone before he or she is baptized.[58] These two sentences are quite telling: in conjunction with the second, the first implies that this student of Protogenes must already have accepted baptism; the second reinforces the claim that Protogenes' main concern was to convert the supernumerary pagans of Antinoopolis.[59] In the end, the bishop and the people do not grieve Protogenes'

[55] It would seem that such skills were attained either in a private setting or through apprenticeship: see HAINES-ETZEN 2000, 58–59 (private), 60–61 (apprenticeship).

[56] Aug. *De doctr. chr*. 4.31.64.

[57] Theod. *HE* 4.18.13–14.

[58] Theod. *HE* 4.18.9–10 (cf. n. 41 above); 11–13 still report on conversion and holy deeds.

[59] A state that grieved him greatly. Theod. *HE* 4.18.7.

departure because they are losing a valued teacher of stenography, but because they are losing a beloved holy man.[60]

It would be worthwhile now to explore – rather briefly – the possible reasons for Theodoret's lack of interest in Protogenes' Scriptural syllabus as anything more than a tool for proselytizing.[61] Beyond any doubt, Theodoret received an exemplary secular education, like many a son of wealthy parents. His writings themselves testify to it. That Theodoret adhered to the high culture is manifest in his elegant Attic diction, his tremendous erudition,[62] and the use of classical literary reminiscences in his letters.[63] Even more telling than those reminiscences might be some of his correspondents themselves, and one in particular: the pagan sophist Isocasius.[64] Theodoret, while bishop of Cyrrhus, would send boys from his congregation to Isocasius' school of rhetoric in (presumably) Antioch.[65] Neither such relationships nor the approval of secular education and learning[66] by Christians were strange in later antiquity.[67] As a full participant in late Roman culture and, despite his asceticism, a member of the upper class,[68] Theodoret was wholly aware that young men of his status needed a classical education. As proven by his *Curatio* (or Basil's *Ad juvenes*), a sound mind and a careful selection would inoculate the reader of pagan works, giving only what is useful.

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[60] Theod. *HE* 4.18.13.

[61] Although religious strife and Church politics undeniably played a role, they are of little interest in the passage here treated.

[62] His *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* contains quotations from over a hundred pagan authors, including more obscure philosophers.

[63] See, e.g., examples quoted by SCHOR 2011, 160.

[64] There are five letters of Theodoret addressed to this sophist. For these and other sources on Isocasius, see KASTER 1988, II,85 (301–302).

[65] See n. 64 above (Theodoret's letters = p. 302). See also KASTER 1988, 79; SCHOR 2011, 160.

[66] With precautions, naturally. Cf., e.g., Aug. *De doctr. chr*. 2.40.60, where Augustine compares the *spoliabitis Aegyptum* of Ex. 3:22 with the Christians' right to use secular learning; or Basil the Great's († 379) *Ad juvenes*.

[67] For a wider overview, see KASTER 1988, 70–95 (Theodoret and Isocasius on p. 79); though somewhat generalized, the brief overview given in SCHOR 2011, 160–163, is useful for the fourth and fifth century East, especially in reference to Theodoret (via his letters).

A man of Theodoret's culture, education, and social status would have little regard for the teaching of basic literacy – to him a simple tool, as basic as clothing – and nearly no interest in providing a general population with it.[69] It is likely that he would see no particular use in Christianizing a school curriculum; all that he considered the good and sound wisdom of Christianity would be imparted by preachers in churches, not teachers in classrooms. Protogenes found himself in a situation that was quite specific and quite foreign to Theodoret: in a town in which the pagans outnumbered the Christians, had no interest in the Christian faith, and this happened at a rather precarious time for the church he deemed orthodox. Protogenes using his secular learning to open a school that offered a useful and profitable skill, in order to entice the pagans into hearing "the Truth" (and, one would expect, to accept it on its merits), would seem an admirable idea to Theodoret, but only suited to that specific situation: the place, the time, and the man.

In the lower reaches of the educational system, which do not seem to have figured greatly with Theodoret, the idea of Christianizing the syllabus would be nearly moot. Protection from the dangers in pagan learning for the young attending schools of liberal letters was already secured and, in fact, firmly established by Theodoret's time. Furthermore, the tradition of Graeco-Roman secular education enjoyed a treasured existence for such a long time that the adoption of any other system must have been nearly inconceivable to those in a position to affect any change. Theodoret's pagan friend Isocasius advanced higher in society because of his classical education, and the same can be observed in the even more illustrious career of Ausonius. It was the secular career of Augustine that ultimately brought him to the episcopal throne in Hippo; and it was his classical learning,[70] as was the case with Theodoret, that enabled him to become an influential theologian. Theodoret, dedicated as he was to his God and his Church, and who cared greatly even for the secular careers of the young men of Cyrrhus,

[68] See SCHOR 2011, 163.

[69] Cf. HARRIS 1991, 305–306; cf. 319–322.

[70] Although Augustine would later rethink the value of such learning (as evidenced, most notably, by Book Four of *De doctrina Christiana*), one should take into account the different circumstances in Northern Africa and Syria in the fifth century.

would certainly not wish to deny future great clerics all the worthy *spolia* of classical education.

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Lucida intervalla 43 (2014)

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Дивљења вредни Протоген и његова хришћанска школа

Апстракт

У чланку се разматра школа коју је у Антиноопољу отворио Протоген од Едесе, према извештају Теодорита Кирског (*HE*, 4.18.8–9). Програм ове школе и њен христијанизовани наставни план пореди се с познатим системима образовања: релативно новим (хришћанским) сирским, и устаљеним грчко-римским. Школа се најпре препознаје у потоњем систему, а потом се разматра њено место унутар тога система и покушава открити њен истински карактер, особито што се тиче учења брзописа. На крају се разматра зашто је Теодориту Протоген од већег значаја као крститељ него као иновативни учитељ, на којој цени је била висока књижевна култура у познијем римском друштву, и какву су улогу имале школе у очувању те културе.

Кључне речи: Теодорит Кирски, Протоген од Едесе, образовање у антици; позноантичке школе, хришћанско школовање у антици, *grammatodidaskaleia*.