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PARENTING IN LATE ANTIQUITY: GENDERED ROLES IN IDEOLOGY AND EVERYDAY LIFE

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Abstract:
This article is about family relationships among the Roman Christian elites of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. How did the moral principles and ideologically "proper" behaviour interact with the forms which the parental relationships took in everyday social interaction? I limit my discussion to the parent–child relationships in elite families between ca. 370 and 450 CE, with the writings of John Chrysostom as my main source; these are compared with the views of other contemporary ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical writers. I argue that the elite children were carefully integrated into their families and into gendered social roles through the informal instruction and the practice of daily routines, in ways that frequently differed from the ideological framework. In this, the significance of the direct parental involvement of both mothers and fathers was more prominent than suggested in the earlier research.

Key words:
Parents, children, authority, education, ideology, everyday life, discipline, affection, socialization, teachers, gender, John Chrysostom

Introduction

This article is about family relationships among the late Roman elites, as seen in the Christian writers of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Even as recently as the 1990s, the research on parent–child relations in the Roman world was preoccupied with the "Ariès-discussion", that is, with showing that parents did not consider their children as miniature adults, and indeed had affective relationships with them. By the beginning of the new millennium, there had emerged a consensus among scholars that the traditional view of the stern and authoritative Roman male family head is an oversimplification even for the Roman families of the Late Republic and Early Empire. Not only demographic realities, which prevented most of the fathers from seeing their children become adults, but also prevalent values that highlighted the reciprocal duties and care (*pietas*) between parents and children, would have left little space for any despotic use of paternal power. As a whole, attitudes towards the children and ideals with regard to childhood dominated this field of research; the questions regarding the everyday family dynamics were set aside.[1]

For research on Late Antiquity, Brent Shaw's seminal article in 1987 on the family in Augustine's writings was an early but solitary example of a study with an interest in everyday family relationships. Since then, research on Late Roman families has mostly focused on the ideological aspects of the family hierarchy and juridical principles concerning family life, preoccupied with the question of what difference Christianity made, and what happened to the extensive rights and power the Roman law had traditionally granted to Roman fathers (*patria potestas*) in Late Antiquity.[2] On the other hand, the study of Late Roman children and childhood has recently aroused growing interest, with a focus both on rhetorical and on social issues. Still, only a handful of these studies have been devoted specifically to the study of parent–child dynamics.[3]

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[1] Emma Southon, Mary Harlow and Chris Callow, "The Family in the Late Antique West (400–700 AD): A Historiographical Review", in: L. Brubaker & S. Tougher (eds.), *Approaches to the Byzantine Family*, Birmingham: Ashgate 2013, 109–130 (esp. 118–119), and Ray Laurence, Mary Harlow, and Ville Vuolanto, "Past, Present and Future in the Study of Roman Childhood", in: S. Crawford & G. Shepherd (eds.), *Children, Childhood and Society*. Oxford: Archeopress 2007, 1–14. The first to point out the inconsistencies in the "traditional" views of the Roman father's power was Richard Saller; see esp. his *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994, 105–114. This is becoming the new paradigm; see, e.g., Beryl Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003, esp. 220.

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[2] Brent Shaw, "The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine", *Past & Present* 115 (1987), 3–51; Antti Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996; Geoff Nathan, *The Family in Late Antiquity. The Rise of Christianity and the Endurance of Tradition,* New York and London: Routledge 2000; Odd Magne Bakke, *When Children Became People: The Birth of Childhood in Early Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2005; Judith Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1995; Judith Evans Grubbs, "Marriage and Family Relationships in the Late Roman West", in: P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2009, 201–219; Cornelia B. Horn & John Martens, *'Let the Little Children Come to Me': Childhood and Children in Early Christianity,* Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press 2009. See, however, the articles in M. Harlow & L. Larsson-Lovén (eds.), *Families in the Roman and Late Antique World*, London etc.: Bloomsbury 2012, 181–253. For the *patria potestas* specifically, see Antti Arjava, "Paternal Power in Late Antiquity", *The Journal of Roman Studies* 88 (1998), 147–165; Judith Evans Grubbs, "Promoting *Pietas* through Roman Law", in: B. Rawson (ed.), *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Oxford and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell 2011, 377–392. See now also Ville Vuolanto, "Child and Parent in Roman Law", in: C. Ando, P. J. du Plessis, & K. Tuori (eds.), *Oxford Handbook for Roman Law and Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2016, 487–497.

[3] See Christophe Badel, "Introduction. Que sont les stratégies devenues", in: C. Badel & C. Settipani (eds.), *Les stratégies familiales dans l'Antiquité Tardive,* De Boccard: Paris 2012, v–xx (x–xi) for a discussion of family strategies and family dynamics in studies on Late Antiquity. Most of the articles in the collection concern marriage strategies; see, however, Sylvie Joye, "Filles et pères à la fin de l'Antiquité et au haut Moyen Âge. Des rapports familiaux à l'épreuve des stratégies", in: Badel & Settipani (eds.), *Les stratégies familiales*, 239–266, on the authority of fathers vis-à-vis their daughters, and Patricia Clark, "Women, Slaves, and the Hierarchies of Domestic Violence: The Family of St. Augustine", in: S. Joshel & S. R. Murnaghan (eds.), *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, London: Routledge 1998, 109–129, on violence; Ville Vuolanto, *Children and Asceticism in Late Antiquity: Continuity, Family Dynamics and the Rise of Christianity*, Farnham: Ashgate 2015, on asceticism and family dynamics, and Ville Vuolanto, "Family Relations and the Socialisation of Children in the Autobiographical Narratives of Late Antiquity", in: Brubaker & Tougher, *Approaches to the Byzantine*

My task here is to combine the above-mentioned strands of scholarship, to study the kind of relationship that existed between the ideological framework and the social reality of family hierarchies in the Late Roman Empire of the late fourth and early fifth centuries. How did the moral principles and ideologically "proper" behaviour interact with the forms which the parental relationships took in everyday social interaction?[4] This question has not been seriously addressed before now in the context of Late Antique family history. I limit my discussion here to the parent–child relationships in elite families, which makes it possible to concentrate both on the issue of ideologically proper family and gender hierarchies, and on the actual social practices, in the context of attitudes and values at play in the Late Roman family.

The period under discussion here – 370 to 450 CE – was the "classical" patristic period of Late Antiquity, when the Christian male elites were pondering questions of social and cultural enculturation and differentiation. The Christian writers, often holding authoritative positions in the local churches, were aiming to define the distinctively Christian roles for family members, while simultaneously, albeit unintentionally, supplying the historian with material not available from the earlier periods. For the present study, the writings of John Chrysostom are the main source. I will, however, compare his views to those of other writers: first, a few central eastern patristic writers, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, originally from Antioch (which is also the context for most of Chrysostom's writings), and Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzen from Cappadocia; second, the contemporaneous western patristic authors Augustine of Hippo and Jerome of Stridon. Moreover, in order to give a comparative view for the opinons and experiences of the ecclesiastical elites, I occasionally use also the writings of Ausonius and Paulinus of Pella, Christian lay aristocrats from Southern Gaul, along with the non-Christians Symmachus, a sen-

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Family, 47–74, on family dynamics in autobiographical narratives. Nathan, *Family*, 143–159, discusses relationships between parents and children but concentrates on the normative side.

[4] However, the question of what difference Christianity may possibly have made here is beyond the scale of the present article, since an answer would need an in-depth analysis of the relevant sources from the period before the rise of Christianity.

ator from Rome, and Libanius, a scholar with a local aristocratic background also from Antioch. Despite the geographical variation across the Roman Mediterranean, these writings – letters, sermons, and biographical texts – form a coherent group, both culturally and chronologically: they represent a shared male elite culture and mentality, based on a common educational background and values.[5] Rather surprisingly, these texts have seldom been used as a group for writing family history, although, naturally enough, they have been subject to extensive study by theologians and scholars of early Christianity who have been interested in the discourses about theology and Church.[6]

In tracking relationships between parents and children in one specific time period, one has to be aware of the dangers of generalizations. Although there is a relatively large quantity of source material from Late Antiquity, the evidence is mainly prescriptive and is bound to remain anecdotal. In order to scrutinize the interplay between ideology and social reality, the texts must, therefore, be studied from a new angle: since these texts reflect the religious rhetoric of the day, and almost invariably take a strong moral stand, they require a reading which pays attention to the web of personal interests, rhetorical strategies, and the expectations of the audiences at play. Thus, one has to draw information from the themes and ideas that the writers themselves took for granted, and which often serve as the background to their actual argumentation, which is directed toward other (moral and theological) ends. Although it may not be possible to reconstruct the individual family life experiences, the particulars (the building blocks of the discourse) of these stories had to have been plausible. They reveal what the writers themselves assumed to be true in their audiences.[7]

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[5] On the shared elite culture of the time, see Michelle Salzman, "Elite Realities and Mentalités: The Making of a Western Christian Aristocracy", *Arethusa* 33 (2000), 347–362 (353–5, 362).

[6] See Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity", Martha Stortz, "'Where or When Was Your Servant Innocent?': Augustine on Childhood", in: M. J. Bunge (ed.), *The Child in Christian Thought*, Grand Rapids: Eerdman 2001, 78–102, and Clark, "Women, Slaves", on Augustine; Blake Leyerle, "Appealing to Children", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5:2 (1997), 243–270; Douglas O'Roark, "Parenthood in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of Chrysostom", *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 40 (1999), 53–81, and Vigen Guroian, "The Ecclesial Family: John Chrysostom on Parenthood and Children", in Bunge (ed.), *The Child in Christian Thought*, 61–77, on John Chrysostom; Cornelia Horn, "Children in the Fourth Century Greek Epistolography: Cappadocian Perspectives from the Pens of Gregory Nazianzen and Basil of Caesarea", in: C. Horn & R. Phenix (eds.), *Children in Late Ancient Christianity*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2009, 103–141, on Gregory Nazianzen and Basil of Caesarea; Phyllis Katz, "Educating Paula: A proposed curriculum for raising a 4th-century Christian infant", in: A. Cohen & J. Rutter (eds.), *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy*, Princeton: The American School of Classical Studies 2007, 115–127, on Jerome; S. Huebner, "Pères et fils dans l'antiquité tardive – L'expérience de Basile de Césarée", in: B. Caseau (ed.), *Les réseaux familiaux à la fin de l'Antiquité et au Moyen âge*, Paris: ACHCByz, 2012, 45–68, on Basil of Caesarea; Ville Vuolanto, "The Construction of Elite Childhood and Youth in Fourth- and Fifth Century Antioch", in: C. Laes, K. Mustakallio, & V. Vuolanto (eds.), *Children and Family in Late Antiquity: Life, Death and Interaction,* Leuven: Peeters 2015, 309–324, on Theodoret, Libanius, and Chrysostom; Cornelia Horn, "From the Roman East into the Persian Empire: Theodoret of Cyrrhus and the Acts of Mar Mari on Parent–Child Relationships and Children's Health", in: Laes, Mustakallio, & Vuolanto (eds.), *Children and Family,* 257–288, on Theodoret.

According to these texts, who is a child? Mostly, childhood is defined in relation to the parents, not in relation to the (biological) age. Naturally, these texts discuss the situations in which the children live in the same household with their parents – daughters have not yet married, so they are younger than fourteen to seventeen, and boys have not yet moved away from their parental home, often because of their studies elsewhere in their late teens.[8] But it seems that we can be somewhat more precise: it seems that when referring to children who had not started their schooling (which took place between the ages of six and nine), the writers often add an explanation that these anecdotes and examples have "small" children in mind. Moreover, unsurprisingly (given the elite patriarchal culture), unless otherwise indicated, the child discussed is a boy of a wealthy family – not necessarily of an aristocratic background, but certainly privileged.

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[7] For a similar approach, and on the methodological principles for interpreting these sources, see Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity", 5–7, 10, cf. Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism,* 9–14, and Andrew Jacobs & Rebecca Krawiec, "Fathers Know Best? Christian Families in the Age of Asceticism", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11 (2003), 257–263 (esp. 261). For family concepts and metaphors, see esp. Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism,* 41–80.

[8] Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism,* 96–101.

Paternal Authority and the Household – The Framework

The traditional account of the Roman familial life has concentrated on the power of the father in running the household and his family.[9] The family group consisted of all those who cohabited in the household. It is curious, that Latin does not have an exact word for this entity. A more flexible and everyday term in Roman culture to denote this group of people would have been *domus*, "the house", rather than *familia*, which had more juridical connotations; yet even *domus* would refer rather to the (male) lineage than to the cohabitating group. The Roman *familia*, in turn, denoted people under the power of the *paterfamilias*, the male head of the family group, that is, not only the members of the nuclear family, or other relatives who were dependent on him, but also servants and slaves. Nor was *familia* restricted to cohabitation. Children (and grandchildren) who had moved away still belonged to the father's power (*patria potestas*), as did the married daughters, and even (ideologically) the freed slaves.[10] A *paterfamilias* could, however, free children from his power. This act, *emancipatio*, was by no means automatic in the Early Empire, and seldom took place before the children had achieved their full legal majority at the age of twenty-five. At least by the mid-fifth century, it had become customary to release children from the *patria potestas* when they were around twenty years of age.[11] On the whole, however, the juridical principles connected with the *patria potestas* remained unaltered in the Late Roman world, and remained an important tool in propagating *pietas*, proper Romanness and proper family relationships both in law and in society more widely.[12]

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[9] For an example of this kind of view, see Yan Thomas, "Fathers as Citizens of Rome, Rome as a City of Fathers (Second Century BC – Second Century AD)", in: A. Burguière (ed.), *A History of the Family, Volume I: Distant Worlds, Ancient Worlds*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1996, 228–269.

[10] For the Roman world in general, see Richard Saller, "*Pater familias, mater familias*, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household", *Classical Philology* 94 (1999), 182–198; for late antiquity, see still Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity", 12–15.

[11] Jane Gardner, *Family and* familia *in Roman Law and Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998, 10–24, and 104–13; Arjava, "Paternal Power", 161–162.

[12] Arjava, "Paternal Power", esp. 164; Evans-Grubbs, "Promoting *pietas*"; more generally, Vuolanto, "Child and Parent in Roman Law", 487–497 (esp. 492–493).

In general, Christianity brought no change to these underlying principles of family ideology. It is true that in some tracts that promote asceticism the message is that it would even be a duty for children to oppose their parents, if they try to hinder their ascetic lifestyle. However, in texts aimed at ordinary parishioners, in pastoral teaching, the theme of honouring the parents clearly stands in the foreground – and in the present article I am concentrating on the features of this more conventional family dynamics. Parents – and writers, whether traditional Roman or Christian – would expect children to honour them (cf. Matt 19:17–19), not hate them (cf. Luke 14:26).[13] Children owe absolute obedience to their father, as John Chrysostom claims: "certainly, he does not command stupid things, however stupid he may be himself". Indeed, honouring one's parents is the first obligation God gives to a person who turns to virtue and Christian life. Only in rare cases may one disobey one's parents, if their command is in direct conflict with the duties towards God.[14] A father's power over his children is due to the force of nature and of laws; nobody can intervene if a father decides to chastise his son.[15]

However, the *paterfamilias* was not always in the middle of the family interaction. A late antique elite Roman household was formed as a wide web of social relationships. In the absence of mother or father, grandparents and uncles were often in charge of bringing up the children, and in any case, they often had a central importance in the lives of the children.[16] Sibling relations were also significant, but only limited research has been done on these. Most importantly, in Late Roman elite households, in marked difference to modern families, servants and slaves were always present and children were constantly in contact with them, and hence they played a crucial role in bringing up and educating the free children of the households. For example, whenever elite children left their houses, they were escorted by slaves or teachers, and nurses were constant companions, especially for the upper-class girls – and they could have a strong influence on their lives even much later in life.[17]

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[13] See e.g. Gregory Nazianzen, *Epist.* 239.1: Children's obligation is to honour their parents, and parents' to instruct their children. For further analysis and examples, see Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism*, 46–50 and 61–68. For asceticism, children, and family conflicts, see Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism*, 102–113, 123–129, and 133–137.

[14] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 21 in John* 1 and *Hom. 21 in Eph*. 1 (PG 62.149: Μάλιστα μὲν οὐδέποτε ἐπιτάττει πατὴρ ἄτοπα, κἂν αὐτὸς ἄτοπος ᾖ). Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[15] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 10 in 1 Thess*.

[16] Regarding influental grandparents, see, e.g., Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 204.6; Jerome, *Apol. adv. Ruf.* 1.30; Jerome, *Epist.* 130.4–5; Gregory Nazianzen, *Epist.* 160; on uncles, see Ausonius, *Parentalia* 3.8–10 and 3.19; Jerome, *Epist.* 107.5; Augustine, *Serm.* 302.21.19; Libanius, *Oratio* 1.13 and *Anthologia Palatina* 8.131–138.

Discipline and Affection

In principle, children were under the control of their father, who was in charge of the upbringing and disciplining of children, especially of boys. Indeed, in the homilies of John Chrysostom, fathers are describe-ed in a matter-of-fact manner as authoritative figures who use both corporal punishment and other measures to maintain their control: for example, by forbidding the child to leave the house or refusing the child a place at dinner table.[18] Even an affectionate father could find himself in a situation that required him to impose his will by force, and to cause fear and annoyance in his son.[19] Sometimes it would be necessary for a father even to destroy a younger child's toys and make him cry in order to stop him neglecting his lessons.[20] Later in childhood, harsher methods would have been necessary: as Chrysostom notes, youth is wild, and sons need taming like a horse or a beast.[21] Similarly, mothers, who would naturally love their small children, would threaten to throw them to the wolves unless they stopped crying and bothering them.[22] Indeed, loving mothers would discipline, and even beat their disobedient small children, if the need arose.[23] The (elite) parents are seen personally to be in charge of disciplining their children; this was not a task to be wholly delegated to the slaves or other educators.

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[17] See, e.g., A. Dionisotti, "From Ausonius' Schooldays? A Schoolbook and Its Relatives", *Journal of Roman Studies* 72 (1982), 83–125 (98, lines 15–17), cf. Jerome, *Epist* 14.3 and 107.4; John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 37–53, 56, 59–62, 79. Regarding nurses, see Augustine, *Conf.* 1.9.14–15; 14.23 and 9.8.17; Jerome, *Epist.*107.4; *Codex Theodosianus* 9.24.1.1, cf. Joye, "Filles et pères", 233–234. For siblings, see Reidar Aasgaard, *'My Beloved Brothers and Sisters'. Christian Siblingship in Paul*, London and New York: T&T Clark 2004, and Ann-Cathrin Harders, *Suavissima soror: Untersuchungen zu den Bruder–Schwester-Beziehungen in der römischen Republik*, Munich: CH Beck 2008. For servants and slaves as companions and educators, see M. Pentti, "The Role of Servants in the Upbringing of the Roman Elite Girls in Late Antiquity", in: K. Mustakallio & J. Hanska (eds.), *Agents and Objects. Children in Pre-modern Europe*, Rome: Institutum Romanum Finlandiae 2015, 113–131, and Chris L. de Wet, *Preaching Bondage*: *John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity*, Oakland: University of California Press 2015, 128–153. On the presence of relatives outside the family nucleus and of the ubiquity of slaves in the Late Roman household, see also Vuolanto, "Family Relations and the Socialisation", 63–66.

[18] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 30, 39; *Hom. 17 in statuis* 10; *Hom. 7 in statuis* 5. See also Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity", 17–24.

[19] John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Hebr*. 4.8; *Hom. 10 in 1 Thess.*; *Hom. 35 in Matth.* 6; see also *Hom. 15 in statuis* 2.

Thus, the familial discipline was unquestionably hard by modern standards. But we should not draw any *a priori* conclusions from this about the nature or strength of the emotional attachment involved, nor should we infer that fathers would not have been expected to act in the best interests of their sons. Chrysostom claims that fathers would combine punishment with soothing and consolation, thereby showing their concern for the child's future. Fear is useful.[24] Indeed, while Chrysostom notes the everyday occurrence of the harsh disciplining of children, his normative message was that a son should "rather at all times fear blows but not receive them".[25]

There are no special exhortations to parents to love their children; as John Chrysostom points out, "nature draws them to this even if they would be unwilling".[26] He sees it as natural that fathers are attached to their sons, and mothers to their children – but we should note that the one relationship John Chrysostom leaves out here is that between fathers and daughters, which he thus seems to regard as less affectionate, or less close, than the other relationships in the family nucleus. In all his arguments appealing to the parent–child relationship, the starting point is that a father would be deeply concerned about the needs and wellbeing of his children, and parents would draw pleasure from seeing their sons grow up.[27] Although the ecclesiastical writers do not question the natural and innate affection, they still feel the need to point out that this affection entails duties: a father should provide for his children and ensure that they are well educated and formed to lead pious and chaste lives.[28] This includes also the need to marry off their sons while still young, so that they will escape the temptation to fornication.[29]

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[20] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 23 in Matt.* 10.

[21] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in 1 Tim.*; *Hom. 59 in Matth.* 7.

[22] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 adv. Jud.* 8 with *Hom. 14 in Philip.*

[23] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 62 in Matth.* 4.

[24] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 16 in statuis* 10; with *Hom. 7 in statuis* 5.

[25] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 30 (transl. by Max Laistner, in: Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture in the Later Roman Empire*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Appendix) with *Hom. 17 in statuis* 10; *Hom. 7 in statuis* 5.

[26] *Hom. 21 on Ephes*. 1 (PG 62.150: Οὐκ εἶπεν, Ἀγαπᾶτε αὐτά· τοῦτο γὰϱ καὶ ἀκόντων αὐτῶν ἡ φύσις ἐπισπᾶται, καὶ πεϱιττὸν ἦν πεϱὶ τῶν τοιούτων νόμον τιθέναι), cf. Leyerle, "Appealing to children", 247; Basil of Caesarea, *Epist*. 24 (natural affection); John Chrysostom, *Hom. 15 in Rom*. 5; *Hom. 33 in 1 Cor*. 2.

Theory and Practice in Everyday Guidance

While paternal affection was taken for granted, this was not the case with fathers' commitment to the kind of educational principles that the patristic writers upheld. They found it necessary to point out that fathers would have the responsibility of nurturing their children, and teaching them the principles of a good Christian lifestyle.[30] For example, fathers are personally to tell educative (biblical) stories to their children, and not to leave the storytelling to servants; it would be good if the mothers listened and commented on the stories. Parents were also to take care that children be familiarized with hymns.[31] It was self-evident that a father would be held responsible for the religious choices of his sons.

In particular, fathers were in charge of supervising their sons: they had to observe in person how their children spent their time; even the teachers derived their authority from the fathers.[32] However, some fathers were incompetent to instruct their children and take care of them. Negligence in supervising one's children also revealed a man's incapacity to assume any leadership role in society or in church.[33] John Chrysostom was saddened that many fathers would let their sons lead a free life, with sex and gaming, not attending the Mass, but visiting theatres or horse races – indeed, some fathers would personally take their sons to these places.[34] Moreover, many fathers tended to indulge their children – clothing them in gold and precious fabrics, and giving them (even boys) golden earrings.[35] Indeed, the ecclesiastical writers lamented that in many cases fathers were not able to see what was best for their children. To take a very concrete example, a father would give cakes and cold drinks to his feeble and "cold-blooded" child even against his own best knowledge and the instructions given by the physicians. With the intention of making the child happy for a moment, he only caused damage. Similarly, parents would also tell their children mendacious fables, rather than educative stories.[36]

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[27] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 in Col.* 3.

[28] Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 2.2, 294 and 300; John Chrysostom, *Hom. in 1 Tim.* 9; *De sacerd.* 1; *Hom. 35 in Matth.* 6; *Hom. 2 in Tit.* 2; *Hom. 7 in statuis* 5. Regarding fathers' duty to set rules, esp. for their daughters, see John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 90 and *Hom. 39 in Gen.* 4; see also Gregory Nazianzen, *Epist.* 230, and Horn, "Children in the Fourth Century", 111–112.

[29] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 5 in 1 Thess.*; *Hom. 9 in 1 Tim.*; *Hom. 59 in Matth.* 7, cf. O'Roark, "Parenthood in Late Antiquity", 69.

[30] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in 1 Tim.*

[31] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 34, 39–46, 60, mothers to sit by and comment: 39–40; Jerome, *Epist.* 107.4 and 128.1.

Other forms of paternal involvement were, if not always appreciated, at least more readily tolerated, and they were employed in similes to explain the nature of the fatherly love of God towards humankind. Thus, according to ecclesiastical writers, fathers would give their sons different playthings so that they would play quietly near him, and not wander away.[37] Sometimes fathers would also play games with their children, and let their young sons win, in this way making them happy and proud.[38] With younger children, the fathers would lisp and call foods with childish names, not using the ordinary Greek words for them.[39] Chrysostom composes an emotionally laden scene with children taken outside to greet with kisses their father, who has just come home, even before he has stepped out of the chariot.[40] An affectionate father would also tenderly allow his sons to rage and hit him on the cheek if he needed to carry his son away from somewhere.[41]

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[32] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 35 in Matth.* 6; cf. Raffaella Cribiore, "The Education of Orphans: A Reassessment of the Evidence of Libanius", in: S. Huebner & D. Ratzan (eds.), *Growing up Fatherless in Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009, 257–272 (261), on Libanius.

[33] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 2 in Tit.* 2.

[34] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 59 in Matth.* 7; John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in 1 Tim.*; *Hom. 3 in John 1*; *Hom. 58 in John* 4; *Hom. in John* 3.1. Regarding neglectful fathers, see also John Chrysostom, *Hom. 8 in 1 Thess.* 2.

[35] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 53 in John* 3; *De inani gloria* 16.

[36] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 30 in Acts* 4; *Hom. 9 in Philip.* 5; Augustine, *Conf.* 1.10.16.

[37] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 15 in Rom.* 5 – the argumentative point was that in a similar manner, God wants to keep his children near himself.

[38] Basil, *Epist.* 339.

The ecclesiastical writers were thus not so much worried about the possible lack of paternal involvement in the lives of their children as about the concrete forms which the interaction and affection would have taken. For example, they felt it necessary to write that fathers should show their pride in their sons,[42] show them their affection when directing them, and tell their children pleasant stories in the midst of studying, and promise them cakes or money. Both Chrysostom and Jerome add that to make studying enjoyable, children would need little rewards, like sweets, flowers and dolls – and also kisses and caresses from their mother and relatives.[43] The need for paternal support was well understood by the late Roman writers, even if we cannot be sure whether this was always available in everyday situations.

Some elite fathers claimed to have been personally in charge of the education of their sons. Synesius of Cyrene aimed to take care of the preparatory teaching of his son, while Symmachus, a non-Christian Roman senator, started to relearn Greek together with his son.[44] However, it seems that they noted their dedication precisely because this was *not* expected behaviour among their peers. Although John Chrysostom claimed that "every man takes the greatest pains to train his boy in the arts and in literature and speech",[45] the direct involvement of elite fathers in the actual schooling of their children seems not to have been usual.[46]

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[39] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 33 in 1 Cor.* 2; *Hom. 3 in Tit.* 2.

[40] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 8 in 1 Thess.* 2.

[41] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 4 in 1 Cor.* 6

[42] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 80

[43] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 39 and 77–8, with Leyerle, "Appealing to Children", 256–257; Jerome, *Epist.* 128.1 and 107.4, with Cornelia Horn, "Children's Play as Social Ritual", in: V. Burrus (ed.), *Late Ancient Christianity: A People's History of* Christianity, Minneapolis: Fortress 2005, 95–116 (104).

[44] Synesius, *Dio* 4; Symmachus, *Epist.* 3.20.

[45] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 18 (transl. in Laistner, *Christianity and Pagan Culture*, Appendix), and 39–43.

However, much of the cultural knowledge was acquired not from formal educators, nor even from studying, but from lived experience, storytelling, and imitation. Children were agents in their own lives. This is easiest to see in the field of religious upbringing. The basic skills and knowledge of this field were acquired informally, at home and by participating in public religious rituals and festivals. Prudentius complained about the persistence of the traditional beliefs and customs, since children were accustomed to watching their mothers at worship and prayer, and they practiced rituals with their nurses.[47] In late ancient Christian families, most children were baptized only later in life, but those children who had received baptism took part in the Eucharist with their families already as babies.[48] Ideally, it was the father's responsibility to take children to church.[49] Augustine, who was not baptized in his childhood, took part regularly in liturgy throughout his childhood, but as his father was not a Christian, he was introduced to the life of the church and the liturgy by his mother.[50] Clearly, children's socialization to religious practices also included participation in funerary rituals and meals with their families.[51]

The mothers' task was to give birth, bring up and nurture their small children, but their responsibility for education was secondary to that of fathers.[52] We read that it was especially mothers – not fathers or servants – who kept their small children away from dangerous items like knives and swords.[53] Mothers were in charge if anything unexpected happened to their children; when teachers scared the children, the latter would run to their mothers to be comforted by hugs and kisses and to be able to feel safe.[54] Similarly, in case of illnesses, whether mere headaches or something more serious, children are said to cause trouble and worry especially to their mothers, who, in turn, would take practical measures like praying and making amulets to protect them.[55] John Chrysostom even claims that mothers hoped that the illnesses would fall on them rather than harm their children.[56] Fathers could also be desperate when their children were sick, even ready to give their lives for the child, but it seems that they intervened only if there was a particular need, as when the physicians' authority was not enough to make an ill child to eat, and the father was needed to feed the child.[57]

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[46] For the role of the professionals in elite education, see Michelle Salzman, *Making of a Christian Aristocracy*: *Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire*. Cambridge (Ma.): Harvard University Press 2002, 158–159.

[47] Prudentius, *Contra Symm.* 1.197–232, cf. Francesca Prescendi, "Children and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge", in: V. Dasen & T. Späth (eds.), *Children, Memory, and Family Identity in Roman Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010, 73–93 (76–79; 92–93). See also Augustine, *Conf.* 1.9.14–5.

[48] Horn and Martens, '*Let the Little Children*', 291–294, cf., e.g., Augustine, *Epist.* 98.4.

[49] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 41; Gregory Nazianzen, *Epist.* 157.2.

[50] Augustine, *Conf.* 1.11.17 and 3.3.5.

[51] Janet Tulloch, "Devotional Visuality in Family Funerary Monuments in the Roman World", in: Rawson, *A Companion to Families*, 542–563 (esp. 562).

[52] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in 1 Tim.*; Gregory of Nyssa, *Virg.* 3.

According to Gregory of Nyssa, both parents shared the worry about the wellbeing of their children, but the mother's emotional involvement, and thus also her anxiety, was stronger.[58] This can be seen in Jerome's writings too, since he frequently refers to the constant crying of small children as a symbol of the troubles caused by marriage for women.[59] It was especially women who would suffer if their children were absent from the common table – and above all, their hearts would break if their child were to die (this would, of course, be a shock for fathers too).[60] The different parental roles can also be seen in the fact that if a child is absent from the table, an affectionate father would ensure that the leftovers were kept for the child.[61] Thus, the father would take care of the more concrete wellbeing of the child, whereas the mother was in charge of the emotional and immaterial wellbeing of the small child.

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[53] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 66 in Gen.* 4. See also *Hom. 17 in Matt.* 2, where the one who ought to keep children away from the knives is referred as "we", thus including all the audience, men and women alike. Nevertheless, the clear attribution of this task to mothers in the other sermon is revealing.

[54] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 6 in statuis* 1; *Hom. 14 in Philip.*

[55] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 8 in Col.* 5; *Hom. 19 in statuis* 14 (see also Leyerle, "Appealing to Children", 249).

[56] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 13 in statuis* 14.

[57] On intervening, see John Chrysostom, *Hom. 12 in 1 Cor.* 1; see also *Hom. 35 in John 2–3*. Regarding a father giving his life for his child, see *Hom. 32 in 1.Cor.* 10.

[58] Gregory of Nyssa, *Virg*. 3.

[59] Jerome, *Epist*. 22.2 and 19; 49.19; *Contra Helv.* 20; *Contra Vigil.* 2.

[60] Regarding not being at the table, see John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in statuis*. 3; regarding dying, see esp. *Hom. 18 in statuis* 8; cf. also discussion in Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism*, 181–184.

The mother's role in the education of the sons was secondary, except in earliest childhood, when even sons would be in her custody. In general, the antique male writers were less concerned about daughters. The father's duty was to provide them with suitable nurses and other educators and to marry them off, but otherwise it was the mother who was in charge of daughters' upbringing: they should be brought up to become "keepers at home", pious and modest.[62] As John Chrysostom points out, a mother should so act as to function as a model for virtuous life for her daughters to imitate. In this way, one can extend one's good influence also to grandchildren and to generations to come.[63]

The minds of children were thought to be malleable, and thus the responsibility of parents was a matter of the utmost seriousness: when children hear something, it is "impressed like a seal on the wax of their understanding".[64] On the whole, children would be moulded like wax in the hands of a competent educator.[65] Hence, it is not surprising that the prevalent idea was that children would resemble their parents, not only in their looks, but also in their deeds.[66] It was important that parents were at hand to be imitated and to set an example for their children. How to be a man or a woman, how to conduct oneself as a slave master, and how to run an elite household were all matters which other educators of slave or freed background could not teach.[67] Therefore, although the elite children would have been surrounded by slaves and other non-kin educators, parents had the ultimate responsibility, and it was expected that the influence of parents, with the constant everyday interaction with their children, would be the single most important factor in the process of socialization into proper values and a proper lifestyle.

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[61] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in Gen.* (PG 53.77).

[62] Frequently with a direct reference to Tit. 2:5 (οἰκουργούς); see Jerome, *Epist.* 107 and 128; John Chrysostom, *Virg.* 73; *De inani gloria* 17, 41, and 90, with Salzman, *Making of a Christian Aristocracy,* 155–161. For the obligation of marrying the daughters, see Joye, "Filles et pères", 223–227.

[63] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 9 in 1 Tim.*; *Hom. 10 in Col. 5; Virg*. 73.

[64] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 3 in John* 1 (PG 59.37: καθάπερ τινὸς σφραγῖδος τῆς ἀκροάσεως ἐν κηρῷ τῇ διανοίᾳ τῇ τούτων ἐντυπουμένης). See also *Hom. 10 in Col.* 5 and Jerome, *Epist.* 107.4.

[65] John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 20, 22–29, cf. Teresa Morgan, "*Ethos*: The Socialization of Children in Education and Beyond", in: Rawson, *A Companion to Families*, 504–520 (515).

[66] Gregory Nazianzen, *Epist*. 52; Basil of Caesarea, *Epist*. 17 and 302; see also Ville Vuolanto, "Children and the Memory of Parents in the Late Roman World", in: Dasen & Späth, *Children, Memory,* 173–192.

Lifestyle according to Status: Socialization and Conflict

One part of the elite children's education by their parents was their socialization to the roles demanded by their social status. It is clear that fathers actually took charge of the introduction of their sons to the public life of the cities, and they would, for example, take their sons to the forum to see taxation rituals and juridical matters, as we read in the "background story" in a Greek textbook for Latin-speaking youth in Late Roman Gaul.[68] Boys' introduction to the public sphere and proper lifestyle also involved various kinds of leisure activities. Teenage boys would regularly visit baths and watch spectacles (*ludi*), theatre, and gladiator shows, first with their fathers or trusted slaves, and later by themselves – even if many Christian writers disapproved this.[69] Aristocratic fathers seem regularly to have hunted with their teenage sons, a pastime mentioned not only as a remedy for both a weak body and mind, but also as a means to learning a skill needed in social life.[70]

Elite children did not need to work to earn their living, but their parents might nevertheless think that some tasks would be useful for introducing the children to their future. It was part of the religious upbringing of Theodoret of Cyrrhus that he carried food to the hermits on the mountain, and using one's protégées or sons of a relative to carry letters would not only show the addressee honour, but also allow children to take part in public life and enable them to meet important acquaintances.[71] Daughters, in turn, followed their mothers in order to learn their future responsabilities. John Chrysostom tells a story about a young girl imitating her mother in taking care of the household: she has her small treasures in a little case which she can lock in a closet and then guard the key.[72] It seems to have been expected that small tasks were used to introduce elite girls to the workings of a household. Monica, the mother of Augustine, was sent to the cellar to draw wine from the cask "as was the custom" by her parents. Similarly, Macrina, the ascetic sister of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, is depicted by her brother as engaged in household tasks like wool working and preparing meals, although the point in mentioning this was also to show her familiarization to ascetic Christianity.[73]

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[67] See further de Wet, *Preaching Bondage*, esp. 164–165.

[68] Dionisotti, "From Ausonius'", 104–105, lines 70–77.

[69] For baths, see Dionisotti, "From Ausonius'", 102–103, lines 55–64; Augustine, *Conf.* 2.3.6; for spectacles, see Libanius, *Oratio* 1, 4, and 5, Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 66; Hilarius of Arles, *Vita Honorati* 6.1; Augustine, *Conf.* 6.7.12; 6.8.13; 1.10.16, and 1.18.30; John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria,* 56, 77, 78; *De Anna serm.* 1.6.

[70] See, e.g., Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticon*, 121–153, Gregory Nazianzen, *Or.* 43.12 and Hilarius of Arles, *Vita Honorati* 6.

For elite girls, the life sphere was limited to the household, and when John Chrysostom discusses the problems in protecting girls vowed to God, his starting point is the everyday experience (which he assumed would be shared among his audience) of an elite father watching over his daughter: if she ever goes out, it is only at dusk, and she never comes into the presence of men. In this guardianship, the father is helped by her mother, nurse, and maids. Girls were to keep to the company of other women.[74] The differences in upbringing and social interaction between daughters and sons are evident, and they reflect the gendered expectations for their future family roles: girls' future as wives and mothers should be in the focus. It was important that they be introduced to adult responsibilities.

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[71] Theodoret, *Hist. relig.* 13.3; Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 260.1.

[72] John Chrysostom, *Virg.* 73.

[73] Augustine, *Conf.* 9.8.17–18 ("cum de more puella sobria iuberetur a parentibus de cupa vinum depromere"); James O'Donnell (ed.), Augustine, *Confessions,* vol. 1. Introduction and Text, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992, 110); Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 3–4.

[74] John Chrysostom, *De Sacerd.* 3.17, cf. Lisa Alberici & Mary Harlow, "Age and Innocence*:* Female Transitions to Adulthood in Late Antiquity", in: A. Cohen & J. B. Rutter (eds.), *Constructions of Childhood in Ancient Greece and Italy*, Princeton: ASCSA Publications 2007, 193–204 (esp. 201).

Family life was not always smooth and accommodating, and this fact was also acknowledged (indirectly) by the ecclesiastical writers, as when John Chrysostom compares a man trying to escape God and his commands to a child that wants to get away from his father's control.[75] But there are very few traces of actual conflicts between children and parents. If disagreements existed and children were set against their parents, the conflicts were to be solved by waiting and using evasive tactics. In a culture much preoccupied with the issues of honour and shame, it was essential that domestic conflicts (and the loss of authority) must not become public matters.[76] For example, Stagirius, a friend of John Chrysostom, was able to join a monastic community despite the opposition of his father, since he concealed what he had done with the help of his mother. On some occasions, however, it was not possible to keep such matters exclusively within the family: Augustine tells of a North African girl who had been re-baptised by the Donatists against the will of her parents. The father had used blows in order to persuade the girl to return to the Catholic communion. These glimpses are significant, since the first anecdote does not follow the ideologically important *topos* of an open break with one's household, and the second depicts the father as a violent figure, who, nevertheless, had lost much of his authority in his family.[77]

Even if the actual conflicts were resolved, a certain distancing between sons and their fathers is a regular feature in late antique narratives. Augustine's difficult relationship with his father is well known. Gregory Nazianzen depicts his father as a distant character who tyrannized his son; his virtues were dependent on the good influence his wife had on him.[78] This was not solely a Christian phenomenon: Libanius notes that he would have found himself in the local town council of Antioch or in the imperial bureaucracy if his father had reached old age – although Libanius carefully avoids claiming he was happy that his father died young.[79] Paulinus of Pella, an aristocratic layman in Southern Gaul, is exceptional in presenting his relationship with his father as affectionate in his teenage years, and he even refers to his father as a "dear comrade" in hunting and other pastimes, claiming that their relationship surpassed the friendship of age peers. He also gives equal credit to his father and mother for his education.[80] One wonders whether this difference in viewpoint may have something to do with the fact that Paulinus (unlike other writers cited here) was neither a cleric nor a scholar.

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[75] John Chrysostom, *Hom. 15 in Rom.* 5. See also Joh. Chrys., *Hom. in Hebr*. 4.8 and Augustine, *Conf.* 1.10.16.

[76] See also Kate Cooper, "Closely Watched Households: Visibility, Exposure, and Private Power in the Roman *domus*", *Past & Present* 197 (2007), 3–33 (29–31).

[77] John Chrysostom, *Ad Stagirium* 1.1 and Augustine, *Epist.* 35.4. On familial conflicts (and rhetorical strategies to exaggerate them), see Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism*, 102–113; on family honour and familial harmony, see Aasgaard, *'My beloved brothers and sisters'*, 51–57.

Mothers and Their Children

In ideological terms, it was the father's task to train his sons, and the mother's responsibility was to instruct her daughters. In many cases, however, this was not so in practice, and mothers were frequently depicted as the crucial persons for the intellectual and spiritual development of their sons – much against their ideologically expected role – especially in transferring the cultural values and family traditions from one generation to the next. Monica's influence on her son Augustine is one well known example of this: she tried to bring him up as a Christian, prayed for him year after year, and provided him with financial support in his studies. Similarly, Gregory Nazianzen eagerly highlights his mother Nonna's dedication to him and her authority with regard to his future spiritual endeavours.[81] Emmelia, the mother of Macrina, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nyssa, is depicted in a similar manner, as taking care of both the religious and the secular education of her children and constantly praying for them.[82] Similarly, in the case of Theodoret, the father has a minimal role. His mother dedicated him to God (just as Nonna dedicated Gregory Nazianzen), told him stories about the family history, and took care of his religious education.[83] Again, this was not limited to Christian families: Libanius highlighted his mother's love and role in his education by referring to her principles in upbringing: "A loving mother should never sadden her children in any way"[84]. Thus the influence of the mothers over their children was especially pronounced in the domestic context, away from public life, for instance in religious education.[85] Although it would be an exaggeration to claim that fathers did not take part in the (religious) upbringing of their children,[86] it certainly was socially accepted and expected that mothers could take responsibility for this – otherwise, the figure of the mother in the argumentation of these narratives would not make sense to the contemporary audience.

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[78] Augustine, *Conf.* 3.4.7; 9.9.19, cf. James O'Donnell, *Augustine, Sinner and Saint*: *A New Biography*, London: Profile Books 2005, 57–58, and Tomas Hägg, "Playing with Expectations: Gregory's Funeral Orations on His Brother, Sister and Father", in: J. Børtnes & T. Hägg (eds.), *Gregory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections*, Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press 2006, 133–151 (145–146).

[79] Libanius, *Oratio* 1.6; also Ausonius, *Parentalia* 1 and 2.5.

[80] Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharisticon* 60–67, 89–97; 154–155, 176–186, 242–147, cf. Evans Grubbs, "Marriage and Family Relationships", 217–218.

The role of the mothers is further highlighted by the fact that there were plenty of fatherless, underage children, whose mothers were still alive, because of the age difference between the spouses. Elite women married often in their early or mid-teens, but men married only between five to more than ten years later. On this point, there are no marked changes between the early Roman and the Christian late

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[81] Augustine, *Conf.* 3.4.7–8 and 9.9–13; Gregory, *Carmina* 2.1.1.118–122; 424–444; 2.1.11.51–94, cf. Raymond Van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2003, 88–93.

[82] Gregory of Nyssa, *Vita Macrinae* 2–7, 11 and 13, cf. Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, 100–102.

[83] Theodoret, *Hist. relig*. 9.4, 9.9–15, 13.3, 13.16–18, cf. Ville Vuolanto, "A Self-made Living Saint? Authority and the Two Families of Theodoret of Cyrrhus", in: J. S. Ott & T. Vedriš (eds.), *Saintly Bishops and Bishops' Saints*, Zagreb: Hagiotheca 2012, 49–65.

[84] Libanius, *Oratio* 1.27.

[85] A question for further research, as pointed out by the anonymous referee, would be whether we actually see here a change brought about by Christianity.

[86] See further Jerome, *Epist.* 128; *Epist.* 107; Augustine, *Epist.* 266, cf. Nathan, *Family*, 149, 153–4.

Roman families.[87] Although this is bound to remain speculative, it may even be the case that this age difference also served to increase the difference between the adult male lifestyle and the milieu in which the women and children lived. It would have made the mother–child bonding stronger, even for the sons.

Be it as it may, the importance of the mothers was all-pervasive for the lives of most late antique writers. The list of late antique elite widows depicted as having taken care of the upbringing and education of their children is long, and the role of the mother is often portrayed as self-evident.[88] This was not only a Christian phenomenon. Libanius, for example, underscored his mother's role in his education as the person in charge of both the financial costs of his upbringing and the educational principles to be used. Libanius' mother certainly listened to the opinions of her brothers (his uncles), but it was she who had the decisive role. Libanius recalls his mother's principles in his upbringing: "It was a loving mother's part never ever to upset her child".[89] Moreover, widowed mothers were legally allowed to take the guardianship of their children in late antiquity, although they were obliged to ask for a (male) guardian for them if they remarried.[90] Thus, while remaining a widow became culturally appreciated because of the rise of ascetic forms of Christianity, the influence of mothers over their children was also institutionally acknowledged. The prominence of mothers (and of grandmothers)[91] in the autobiographical anecdotes of bishops, lay Christians and non-Christians, cannot be understood merely as a strategy for highlighting the ideologically proper role of the heavenly Father instead of the biological father. It also reflected mothers' actual role in the family dynamics as major contributors in the lives and upbringing of their children.

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[87] Melissa Aubin, "More Apparent than Real? Questioning the Difference in Marital Age between Christian and Non-Christian Women of Rome during the Third and Fourth Century", *Ancient History Bulletin* 14 (2000), 1–13.

[88] See e.g. *Vita Macrinae* 2–7, 11 and 13; John Chrysostom, *De sacerd.* 1.5; Ambrose, *Exhortatio virginitatis*; Augustine, *Epist.* 188, and Jerome, *Epist.* 7, 8, 24, 108, 127 and 130.

[89] Libanius, *Oratio* 1.4 (Transl. by A.F. Norman, in: Libanius, *Autobiography and Selected Letters,* vol. I. Edited and Translated by A.F. Norman, Cambridge (Mass.) and London: Harvard University Press 1992). See also *ibid*, 5, 12 and 27.

[90] Vuolanto, "Child and Parent", 90.

[91] Ausonius, *Parentalia* 5.9–10; Basil of Caesarea, *Epist.* 204.6.

Conclusions

In comparing the ideologically proper way of organizing family life with traces of actual family interaction, one should, first of all, note the inevitable variation in adjusting ideals to social realities and in attempts to adapt the depictions of social interaction within the ideologically proper limits – in individual cases, depending of the age and sex of the children, and of the family structure, families ended up with quite different solutions. Although the picture of an authoritative but caring father is strongly present in the depictions of the actual family circumstances, the social practices referred to frequently do not fit the ideal model. Not all fathers could retain their authority towards their children – and it even seems that some fathers were less authoritarian, and were keener to do things with their children (sons) the way *they* wanted them to be done, rather than what the ecclesiastical writers would have liked to happen. On the other hand, certainly not all children looked back on their father's relationship towards them as benevolent or loving.[92] Methodologically, these breaks in the ideologically proper and expected responses are significant, since in the original contexts these passages often represent a challenge to the rhetorical purposes the authors were otherwise promoting.

Whereas the nature of the relationship between the father and the child varied in the narratives, it is striking that the picture of the relationship between the mother and the child is invariably positive. The relationships with mothers are depicted with nearness and affection, whereas fathers were, in general, presented as rather distant, and sometimes overtly authoritarian and frightening figures for many children. In face of the ambivalence towards fathers, it makes no sense to refute these depictions of close interaction as mere rhetorical fictions. Even more significantly, mothers are depicted as the crucial persons for the intellectual and spiritual development of their sons – much against their ideologically expected role – especially in transferring the cultural values and family traditions from one generation to the next.

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[92] See similarly Joye, "Filles et pères", 238–239, and Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity", 25–26 (for Augustine's perspective), with Clark, ""Women, Slaves", esp. 125–126, for domestic violence in Late Antiquity, mostly concerning marital relations, but also affecting the parent–child relations.

In Late Roman households, social control was certainly a persistent feature, even if parental severity was tied to social expectations and was intended to be counterbalanced by love and reciprocal *pietas* – affectionate relationship characterized by mutual responsibilities. Parents were to take care of their offspring during their minority, and children were to obey their parents and offer them both material and psychological support in old age. Children were sources of the continuity of family reputation and lineage. In one word, they represented hope for their parents – especially sons to their fathers.[93] What we lack in these anecdotes and stories, are depictions of father–daughter relationships. This must be due, at least partly, to the nature of the source material used in this article: the patristic writers used children in their argumentation in a way which reflected both their own past experiences as sons, and boys' ideologically more visible role as the principal intermediators of family wealth, status, and name.[94]

Blake Leyerle has claimed that the children best known to John Chrysostom "seem not to have been raised predominantly by their parents but were instead entrusted to the care of specialized slaves like nurses and tutors".[95] This view needs to be nuanced. It is indeed true that Chrysostom takes it for granted that the elite children would be constantly surrounded by a number of servants and other educators, who would play a major role in nursing, educating, disciplining and punishing of the child.[96] Still, the way in which Chrysostom refers to parental duties and to the actual interaction between parents and children shows that parents were directly responsible for any educational choices taken in the bringing up of their children. More importantly, they were available and present in their children's everyday lives: the late Roman elite household did not keep parents and children separate in daily life. Thus, even if "physical care was often left to nurses and specialized slaves",[97] it was not only the "inculcation of ideology"[98] that was a task for the parents; they were to act as moral and practical examples and role models in their everyday lives – and this certainly would require personal involvement in raising the children. As I have shown above, these attitudes were not limited to the experience of John Chrysostom – and they were not limited to the Christian writers.[99] Moreover, parents disciplined their children, mothers were ready to soothe and console them, and fathers kept company and played with their sons. Indeed, both parents were expected to have close emotional ties with their children. In this way, the informal instruction, religious and moral upbringing, and stimulus given during the practice of daily routines integrated children into their families and into the culturally preferred gendered social roles.

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[93] Evans Grubbs, "Promoting *pietas*"; for the earlier empire, Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death,* 105–114; for the hope and other "functions" of children, see Vuolanto, *Family and Asceticism,* 194–206, with Shaw, "Family in Late Antiquity", 20.

[94] See also Joye, "Filles et pères".

[95] Leyerle, "Appealing to Children", 254.

[96] See also de Wet, "Preaching Bondage", esp. 135–148, on nurses and pedagogues.

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[97] Leyerle, "Appealing to Children", 255.

[98] *Ibid.*

[99] The issue of the Christian influence on the parent–child relations (both on attitudes and on social practices) would deserve an in-depth study, with a comparison between the patristic writings, the non-Christian texts of late antiquity, and the second and third century material. It needs to be kept in mind that to find differences in time, like between such writers as Cicero, Quintilian, or Fronto, and the late antique Christian writers, does not need *a priori* to denote any influence of Christianity. More generally on the caveats of identifying change for Roman family, see Susan Dixon, "Continuity and Change in Roman Social History: Retrieving 'Family Feeling(s)' from Roman Law and Literature", in: M. Golden & P. Toohey (eds.), *Inventing Ancient Culture: Historicism, Periodization and the Ancient World*, Routledge: London and New York, 79–90.