



BRILL

MNEMOSYNE 75 (2022) 996-1020

MNEMOSYNE

A Journal
of
Classical Studies

brill.com/mnem

(Mis)Identifying Teachers in Late Antique Gaul

*Sidonius' Ep. 4.11, Mamertus Claudianus and Classical
vs. Christian Education*

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Received August 2020 | Accepted September 2020

Abstract

Mamertus Claudianus, a priest in Vienne in the mid-fifth century, has been identified by some scholars as a professional teacher of Latin rhetoric. This article contests this classification, arguing that Claudianus was an active member of learned Christian literary circles and leader of philosophical and theological 'literary salons'. It demonstrates the importance of correctly identifying teachers in the prosopography and illustrates the potential of incorrect identifications to produce flawed and distorted historical reconstructions of the cultural transformations of the late antique west. A close reading of the sources for Claudianus, coupled with a firm understanding of the cultural and educational realities of late antique Gaul, sheds light on the evolution of an increasingly Christian intellectual culture among the Gallo-Roman *litterati* of the fifth century, and contributes to a better understanding of the transformation of educational practices in this period and after the 'fall' of Rome.

Keywords

education – teachers – Sidonius Apollinaris – Mamertus Claudianus – fifth-century Gaul – prosopography

1 Introduction

In a letter to Petreius from the early 470s (*Ep.* 4.11),¹ Sidonius Apollinaris, the fifth-century Gallo-Roman aristocrat, bishop, and *litterateur*, mourns the death of his close friend Mamertus Claudianus and encloses the poem he composed for Claudianus' tomb. Sidonius praises Claudianus' dedication to his duties as a priest in Vienne, and marvels at his intellectual virtues, especially his philosophical expertise. Sidonius also reminisces about discussion groups, or 'literary salons', organized by Claudianus, in which Claudianus would share his wisdom and debate philosophical and theological issues with his guests (*Ep.* 4.11.2-3). Based on this scene in Sidonius' letter to Petreius, Claudianus has been identified as a 'secular' teacher of rhetoric, and the discussion group described by Sidonius has been interpreted as a formal classroom.² This article will show that, by considering the terminology Sidonius uses in his description, and by putting this scene in the context of Claudianus' life, work, and the cultural realities of fifth-century Gaul, it is clear that Claudianus should not be identified as a professional teacher. Rather, we should understand Claudianus as an active figure at the centre of learned Christian circles in Gaul and as a promoter of Christian philosophy and spiritual education. Claudianus' case typifies the challenge of identifying teachers in the historical record, and the danger misidentifying teachers poses to our understanding of the transformations of late antique culture and society.

The distinction between teacher of rhetoric and leader of a 'literary salon' or discussion group is an important one. While the former would represent simple continuity of traditional classical elite culture amid the changing political, religious and social landscapes of late antique Gaul, the latter exemplifies the evolution and innovation of literary, religious, and intellectual culture that characterises the late antique west. Understanding Claudianus' exact role and function in fifth-century Gallo-Roman society is important in that it will shed light on the evolving forms of literary culture in this period. We see in

1 Petreius was Claudianus' nephew. The letter dates no earlier than 471 (date of 4.2 and 4.3), but before 477, when books 1-7 of the letters were published. On the problems of dating Sidonius' letters see Kelly 2020; Mathisen 2013b; on the date of *Ep.* 4.11 see Amherdt 2001, 279-280.

2 E.g. Mathisen 1982, 378, in his suggested additions and corrections to the *PLRE* and later Mathisen 2005, 9 and 12, when arguing that 'secular' teaching continued in Gaul into the seventh century. He identifies Claudianus as a professional teacher of rhetoric and interprets the scene in *Ep.* 4.11 as a class in secular philosophy akin to a postgraduate seminar. Likewise, Anderson's Loeb translation suggests that he views this as a classroom setting, since he translates *quibuspiam* in *Ep.* 4.11.3 as 'pupils', rather than, as I have suggested, 'members' (see below). Neither Stevens 1993, 7 nor Harries 1994, 107 believe Claudianus was a professional teacher.

Claudianus' 'salons' the changing interests and intellectual needs of Christian aristocrats, and the increasing importance of informal Christian theological and philosophical instruction for those elite *litterati* whose traditional classical education in grammar and rhetoric did not equip them for the new Christian intellectual horizons of their changing world.

After an introduction to the context of classical education in late antique Gaul, this article illustrates the importance of correctly identifying teachers in the prosopography, emphasizing the potential of incorrect identifications to lead to distorted historical reconstructions. The remainder of the article is devoted to a case study of Mamertus Claudianus, demonstrating the insights we can gain into the transformations of late antiquity if we read the sources critically and are careful when identifying an individual's 'profession'. It first enumerates the reasons why Claudianus could not have been a classical teacher and closes with a discussion of the growth of an increasingly Christian intellectual and literary culture in Gaul, and the gap between this new cultural milieu and the training offered by traditional classical education in grammar and rhetoric.

2 Classical Education in Late Antique Gaul: Identifying Teachers

Before considering why we should not identify Claudianus as a professional teacher, it is important to establish what is meant by a 'teacher' in the context of the late Roman empire. Although Roman education was not institutionalised like modern school systems, it followed a standard pattern across the empire, from Spain to Syria, and its curriculum, aims, and methods had remained largely unchanged for centuries.³ Quintilian's idealised vision of education for young rhetors continued to be at the heart of the school experience of students in the fourth and fifth centuries in Gaul.⁴ Classical education

- 3 Children learned basic literacy at home or with an elementary teacher or grammarian's assistant, before grammar, and rhetoric. Students could also study law, and, in the eastern empire philosophy. For elementary education see Kaster 1983; Booth 1979; Bonner 1977, 34-46, 115-145, 165-188; Marrou 1956, 358-368. For grammar and rhetoric see Kaster 1988; Bloomer 2011, 111-138, 170-191; Morgan 1998, 152-239; Bonner 1977, 189-327; Marrou 1956, 381-387. For rhetoric in the late antique east see Cribiore 2001, 2007, 2013 and Van Hoof 2013. Haarhoff 1920 wrote about education in late antique Gaul, but by now his analysis is outdated, with his conclusions heavily influenced by his experience of the First World War.
- 4 Quintilian's reading advice is mainly found in books 1 and 10 of the *Institutio Oratoria* (1.4.3, 1.8.1-6, 10.1.37-131). The tripartite system of elementary training, grammar, then rhetoric, and the standard canon of authors persisted into late antiquity: Homer, Menander, Valerius Flaccus, Virgil, Terence, and Sallust (Aus. *Protr.* 45-63), Homer, Virgil, and the *dogmata*

in grammar and rhetoric provided a shared experience and created a collective cultural consensus that could unite the elites across the empire.⁵ It is also important to emphasize that classical education was a 'public' institution in the Roman world, in that it was inextricably linked to the imperial bureaucracy, Roman structures of power, and public life.⁶ Learning grammar and rhetoric was seen as a necessary prerequisite to aristocratic status and to governing, providing the training that would lead to office-holding that maintained and conferred elite status, power, and wealth.⁷

Teachers were key components of this system and an important part of Roman society.⁸ The concept of 'teacher' in some ways was fluid, in that teachers of rhetoric (and more rarely teachers of grammar) could move on to hold important offices within the imperial administration, owing to the prestige and fame they earned through their teaching and oratorical performances.⁹ Nevertheless, a teacher is and was an easily definable concept, and Romans would have taken for granted what was meant by a professional teacher of grammar or rhetoric. A teacher was a legally recognized profession in the Roman world: Diocletian's *Edict of Maximum Prices* established standard fees for elementary teachers, grammarians, and rhetors, and immunities and

Socratis (Paul. Pell. *Euch.* 72-80), Menander and Terence (Sid. *Ep.* 4.12), and Naevius, Plautus, Cato, Varro, Gracchus, Chrysippus, Fronto, and Cicero (Claud. Mam. *Ep.* 2, *CSEL* 11, 205.30-206.3). Also see Cassiod. *Inst.* 1.15.7; Sid. *Carm.* 2.182-92.

- 5 As Kaster 1988, 14 remarks, education "provide[d] the language and *mores* through which a social and political elite recognized its members". Cf. John 2021.
- 6 Teachers could be paid by public funds, classical education was sought by elites and would-be elites as a step towards public careers, and classical training was expected as a prerequisite for governing by the powerbrokers of the Roman empire. Education had a prominent place in public life; students would perform their rhetorical exercises, *declamationes*, in public, and their teachers also displayed their eloquence publicly. For the link between classical education and Roman power structures see John 2018.
- 7 E.g. *Cod. Theod.* 14.1.1, 14.9.1; *Pan. Lat.* 9(5).5.4, 15.4; *Aus. Grat. act.* 4.16-17, 5.24, *Protr.* 39-44, 98-100; [Aur. Vict.] *Vir. ill.* 20.5. For the link between education, status, and office-holding, see John 2021; Van Hoof 2013; Brown 1992, 35-70; Kaster 1998, 28-31; Jones 1964, 512-513, 527, 990; Criboire 2001, 2009.
- 8 On the concept of teaching as a discrete and recognized 'profession' in late antiquity, see Kaster 1988, 11-50 (esp. 32-35); Criboire 2007, 43.
- 9 E.g. the rhetors Minervius, Alethius, Patera, Delphidius, Nazarius, and Agricinus are commemorated by Ausonius and, except Agricinus, included in Jerome's *Chronicon*. Delphidius (*Aus. Prof.* 5), Exuperius (*Prof.* 17), Arborius (*Prof.* 16), Ausonius, and Nepotianus (*Prof.* 15) held public office after teaching rhetoric. A prime example of a teaching career leading to high office is Ausonius, who was *quaestor*, consul and Praetorian Prefect of Gaul after over thirty years of teaching. It was not uncommon for teachers to become *quaestor*, given their skillset. Also, the distinctions between elementary literacy, grammar, and rhetoric were often blurred, and some teachers taught more than one level. Cf. Kaster, 1983.

privileges were regularly granted to teachers of grammar and rhetoric and codified in the *Theodosian Code*.¹⁰ Teachers made a living from their teaching, usually from private tuition fees, but sometimes from salaries funded by municipal councils or the imperial government. Some cities had specific public buildings for teaching, but throughout the empire, and long before the late antique period, teachers would also regularly teach from their homes. For example, Libanius, who would certainly have defined himself a professional teacher, taught at various points in his career from his home, buildings connected to a bathhouse, and in rooms attached to the Antioch's *bouleuterion* (*Or.* 1.101-104; 5.45-52; 22.31, 155).¹¹

There is a great number and diversity of sources for teachers in late antique Gaul, including the legal codes mentioned above, a school-text called the *Colloquium Celtis*, the collected *Panegyrici Latini*, many of which may have been written by teachers and collected for classroom use, a large body of work by Ausonius, who was himself a teacher for thirty years before entering the imperial service, the letters and poems from the literary circle of Sidonius, and, finally, hagiographies. This is not to mention the comparative evidence for late antique education from elsewhere in the empire, such as the works of Augustine, a teacher of rhetoric in Milan before entering the Church, and the massive body of work of the rhetor Libanius of Antioch. This wide range of material means that we have a good idea of the variety of technical Latin terminology and circumlocutions used to identify or refer to teachers in the late antique world, an understanding of how the teaching profession was conceptualized in late antique society, and a sense of professional teachers' circumstances, backgrounds, prospects, and activities.

Unlike individuals such as consuls or other officeholders, whose names can be connected to edicts, chronicles or other administrative sources, it is sometimes difficult to positively identify teachers in the historical record. Therefore, it is important to err on the side of caution when classifying someone as a teacher, and only positively identify those who could have realistically had a teaching career. Equally we should remember that, since elite and would-be elites had a shared classical education, and since Roman political and intellectual society provided adult Roman males opportunity to show off their poetic and oratorical skills in public, praise for literary abilities is not in itself enough

10 Cf. Diocl. *Edictum de pretiis* 7.70-71; *Cod. Theod.* 13.3.1, 13.3.3, 13.3.10, 13.3.11, 13.3.16, 13.3.17, 6.21.1, 6.26.1, 14.9.3.1.

11 This is to say that teaching from one's home does not necessarily indicate that a person was 'moonlighting' as a teacher. It was a common practice for professional teachers to instruct from their homes. Cf. Cribiore 2007, 43-47; Watts 2012, 471-473.

to classify an individual as a teacher. Useful questions to keep in mind when trying to identify a teacher include: 1) is the individual identified with one or more terms from the wide range of terminology used in late antique sources;¹² 2) is he described in reference to students or closely associated with traditional school texts such as Cicero, Demosthenes, Virgil, or Terence, or Menander;¹³ 3) do the known circumstances of his life allow for the possibility that he had a teaching career, either in the short or long term?

Being precise and methodical about who should be identified as a teacher in the prosopography is important, because false identifications can lead to faulty historical reconstructions, which create unrealistic and skewed impressions of the late antique west. For example, it has been suggested that the system of classical education persisted well beyond the end of the fifth century, and even into the seventh century in Gaul.¹⁴ This conclusion was reached by falsely identifying many individuals as classical teachers who, based on an understanding of the context of Roman education and a critical reading of the sources, cannot have been teachers.¹⁵ When the evidence is re-examined, it is clear that there are very few classical teachers who can be identified beyond the end of the fifth century.¹⁶ This reinforces the idea that classical education's central role in public life sharply declined in this period, going hand in hand

12 Usually grammarians and rhetors are explicitly called *grammaticus* and *rhetor*, and other common terminology includes *praeceptor*, *doctor*, *magister*, and *professor*. Nevertheless, it is important to ascertain if the author or source in question regularly use such a term in a more broad or metaphorical sense.

13 Although, it is important to see if such authors or school texts are merely mentioned rhetorically, for example in lists of literary exemplars (cf. Sidonius). Also, Christian literature could be used to study grammar. In the seventh century, for example, Christian texts were used for grammatical training (i.e., Julian of Toledo, *De dubiis nominibus*). Although by the seventh century such education was most likely taking place within ecclesiastical contexts, it is still possible that Christian texts were already being used for education earlier. Also cf. Didymus the Blind, n. 56, below. I thank Aaron Peltari for pointing me to this material.

14 For example, Mathisen 2005, 2013a.

15 See the appendix at the end of this article.

16 The teachers I can identify in Gaul from the mid-fifth to early sixth century are: Johannes (Sid. *Ep.* 8.2; *PLRE* 2, 601, 'Johannes 30'; Kaster 1988 s.v., no. 80), Domitius (Sid. *Ep.* 2.2, *Carm.* 24.10-15; *PLRE* 2, 371, 'Domitius 2'; Kaster 1988 s.v., no. 50), Eusebius (Sid. *Ep.* 4.1; *PLRE* 2, 430, 'Eusebius 13'), Hesperius (Sid. *Ep.* 2.10, 4.22; *Rur. Ep.* 1.3-5; *PLRE* 2, 552, 'Hesperius 2'; Kaster 1988 s.v., no. 229), Hoenius (Sid. *Carm.* 9.312-15; *PLRE* 2, 566; Kaster 1988 s.v., no. 233), Lampridius (Sid. *Ep.* 8.9, 8.11, 9.13; *Carm.* 9.311-315; *PLRE* 2, 656-657, 'Lampridius 2'), Lupus (Sid. *Ep.* 8.11; *Rur. Ep.* 1.10; *PLRE* 2, 994, 'Lupus 1'), Sapaudus (Sid. *Ep.* 5.10, Claud. Mam. *Ep.* 2; *PLRE* 2, 976), at least one member of the family of the Paladii (Sid. *Ep.* 7.9.24, 5.10.3; *PLRE* 2, 821), and Julius Pomerius (Caes. Arel. 1.8-9; *Rur. Ep.* 1.17, 2.10, 2.11, 2.8, 2.9; Ennod. *Ep.* 2.26; *PLRE* 2, 896).

with the disappearance of the superstructure of the Roman empire in Gaul. This is not to say that classical education disappeared overnight, but rather that it took on increasingly personal and private functions, rather than continuing as an institution that was explicitly tied to the political and military power-brokers of late-fifth and early-sixth-century Gaul, and that was seen as a natural step towards gaining political power and office-holding. What we see instead is the increasing dominance of clerical figures in literary and intellectual culture, and the rise of a new form of training: ecclesiastical schools. This is illustrated in the life of Mamertus Claudianus.

3 A 'close reading' of Mamertus Claudianus

By the time that Sidonius wrote his letter to Petreius in the 470s, he had become the bishop of Clermont, having previously held the Urban Prefecture in Rome in 468. Claudianus was part of Sidonius' literary circle of Gallo-Roman lay and clerical aristocrats, who feature prominently throughout Sidonius' nine books of letters and collection of poems. In his youth Claudianus had been a monk at Lérins, an island-monastery off the south coast of Gaul that was popular with the Gallo-Roman elite throughout the fifth century.¹⁷ Claudianus became a priest in Vienne in the early 460s, where his older brother was the bishop, and in ca. 470 Claudianus published a philosophical treatise called *De statu animae* and dedicated it to Sidonius.¹⁸ The *De statu* was a response to the *Quaeris a me*, an excerpt of a letter by the bishop Faustus of Riez that had been circulating anonymously through Gaul in the later 460s. In this letter Faustus argued that the soul was corporeal, since only God can be incorporeal. In the *De statu animae* Claudianus, drawing on Neoplatonic philosophy, and Church Fathers including Augustine, refutes this view and argues that since the soul is in the image of God, it is incorporeal.¹⁹ Gennadius includes Claudianus in his *De viris illustribus*, where he is noted for his *De statu animae*,

17 PCBE 4, 481-484. He was at Lérins when Eucherius of Lyons was there: *De statu animae* 2.9, CSEL 11, 135-136.

18 It would have been published after 468 because in his dedication he calls Sidonius *prae-fectorius* and *patricius*, so it has to be after Sidonius was Urban Prefect in 468. For Sidonius' reaction see Sid. *Ep.* 5.2, 4.3. On the relationship between Sidonius and Claudianus see Peltari 2020.

19 For the controversy over the nature of the soul, and different 'factions' in Gaul at this time, see Mathisen 1989, 235-241. The *Quaeris* is included in most manuscripts of Claudianus' *De statu animae*.

in addition to his eloquence and artful argumentation.²⁰ Two of Claudianus' letters have also survived: one to the rhetor Sapaudus, which has survived in only one manuscript of the *De statu animae*,²¹ and one to Sidonius, in which he rebukes Sidonius for his silence in response to the dedication of the *De statu animae*. This letter to Sidonius is transmitted in Sidonius' fourth book of his letters (*Ep.* 4.2), where Sidonius includes his response to Claudianus (*Ep.* 4.3). Sidonius also mentions Claudianus in a letter to Nymphidius, where he praises the *De statu animae*, and in *Ep.* 4.11, the subject of this article.

Claudianus' intellectual brilliance and philosophical interests are front and centre in *Ep.* 4.11. Sidonius remembers Claudianus as the ideal model of the educated Christian Roman aristocrat and, in Sidonius' signature complimentary style, Claudianus is praised as 'provident and prudent, learned, eloquent, ardent, [and] the most talented among men of his time' (4.11.1). Although devoted to philosophy, he remained true to his religion.²² Sidonius especially admires the fact that Claudianus was not only very knowledgeable, but that he shared his knowledge with his peers, for example at informal discussion groups, or 'literary salons' (4.11.2-3). Since these passages are central to the mistaken identification of Claudianus as a teacher of rhetoric, they are reproduced in full below:

deus bone, quid erat illud, quotiens ad eum *sola consultationis gratia* conueniebamus! Quam ille omnibus statim totum non dubitans, non fastidians aperiebat, uoluptuosissimum reputans, si forte oborta quarumpiam quaestionum insolubilitate labyrinthica scientiae suae thesauri euentilarentur. Iam si frequentes consederamus, officium audiendi omnibus, uni solum quem forsitan elegissemus deputans ius loquendi, uiritim uicissimque, non tumultuatim nec sine schematis cuiuspiam gestu artificioso doctrinae suae opes erogaturus. Dein quaecumque dixisset protinus reluctantium syllogismorum contrarietatibus excipiebamus; sed repellebat omnium nostrum temerarias oppositiones: itaque nihil non perpensum probatumque recipiebatur. Hinc etiam illi apud nos maxima reuerentia fuit, quod non satis ferebat aegre pigram in

20 Gennad. *Vir. ill.* 84.

21 CSEL 11, ed. Engelbrecht, 1885. The letter to Sapaudus is only in a manuscript from the 13th century, MS Paris, Bibliothèque National 2165. On this letter see John 2020; Peltari 2020.

22 He was 'one who ceaselessly devoted himself to philosophy without detriment to religion.... it was only in his dress and in his religion that he parted company with the Platonic brotherhood' (*Ep.* 4.11.1). Unless otherwise indicated, text of Sidonius throughout is from Loven 1960-1970 and translation adapted from Anderson 1965.

quibuspiam sequacitatem. Haec apud eum culpa ueniabilis erat; quo fiebat esset ut nobis patientia eiusdem sine imitatione laudabilis. *Quis enim uirum super abditis consuleret inuitus, a cuius disputationis communione ne idiotarum quidem imperitorumque sciscitatio repudiabatur?*²³

Gracious heaven! What an experience it was when we gathered to him *for the sole purpose of holding discussions!* How he would straightway expound everything to us all without hesitation and without arrogance, deeming it a great delight if some questions presented a labyrinthine intricacy which required him to ransack the treasure-houses of his wisdom! Again, if there was a large assembly of us, he would assign to all but one the function of listeners and to one man, perhaps chosen by ourselves, the duty of speaking, his object being to dispense the wealth of his teaching to us individually and in turn, not in hasty disorder or with neglect of some artistic manipulation which forms a rhetorical figure. Thereupon we would immediately encounter all his observations with a battery of opposing syllogisms, but he always routed his opponents' rash objections; the upshot was that no idea was accepted without being thoroughly weighed and tested. Another thing which made us respect him most deeply was that he showed little trace of annoyance at the slow apprehension of certain members,²⁴ this was a fault that in his opinion was pardonable: hence, for us, tolerance of the same fault seemed admirable and beyond the reach of imitation. *Who indeed could have felt reluctant to consult on obscure problems a man who did not debar even amateurish and ignorant questioners from participation in his discussion?*

After this, Sidonius applauds Claudianus' devotion to his pastoral duties and his relationship with his brother (4.11.4-5). Sidonius also encloses the epitaph he composed for Claudianus, in which he celebrates Claudianus' varied literary expertise (4.11.6 vv. 4-12), and his clerical work alongside his brother (vv. 13-24).²⁵

By interrogating the precise usage of language in *Ep.* 4.11, and keeping in mind the context of late Roman education, it becomes clear that while Claudianus was certainly well-educated and actively engaged in philosophical and literary culture, there is nothing to suggest that Claudianus was a classical teacher of rhetoric or any other subject. Rather, as I will suggest below, these sources give

23 Sid. *Ep.* 4.11.2-3. Text and translation: Anderson 1965. Emphases are my own.

24 I changed Anderson's translation of *quibuspiam* as 'pupils' to 'members'.

25 For more on the epitaph and the primarily religious dimension of its praise, see below.

us a glimpse of an evolving form of Christian intellectual culture and education, and may help to explain why the classical schools of grammar and rhetoric largely disappeared from the public sphere and the historical record by the end of the fifth century in Gaul.

3.1 *The 'profession' of Claudianus*

First, as discussed above, we know from both Claudianus himself and Sidonius that Claudianus was a monk before being ordained as a priest in Vienne, where he assisted his brother in his pastoral duties. It would be a strange and unparalleled career trajectory if Claudianus were a professional teacher of classical subjects at the same time as holding these religious roles.²⁶ In daily life, the lines between Christian and 'pagan' were very much blurred by this time. The Church in Gaul never actively forbade lay people from pursuing classical education and literary studies, and, since most people in Gaul were Christian, most teachers of classical subjects were themselves Christian.²⁷ At the same time, there was a general understanding that clerics, especially bishops, should abstain from reading 'secular' literature once they were ordained.²⁸ Such prohibitions originated in ascetic communities in the east²⁹ and were formalized in the later fifth century in Gaul in the *Statuta ecclesiae antiquae*, which

26 Julius Pomerius had been a teacher of rhetoric in North Africa and Gaul before abandoning his secular career in favour of an ascetic lifestyle and writing *De vita contemplativa*. But I am aware of no example of a person holding a professional teaching position while also being a member of the clergy. Mathisen 2005 includes Desiderius and Pantagathus, both sixth-century bishops of Vienne, in his list of secular teachers. Desiderius had been chastised by Gregory the Great for teaching secular literature (*Reg.* 11.340), and Pantagathus is called *orator magnus* (*MGH AA* 6.2, 187 no. 9). First, *orator magnus* is simply an epithet indicating that he was a good speaker, which is an understandable way to praise a bishop who gave sermons. The story about Desiderius does not suggest that he was a teacher, but rather that he was teaching young clerics 'pagan' literature in addition to the scriptures. I would argue that a cleric who includes classical literature in an otherwise largely scriptural 'curriculum' is not a professional classical teacher as late antique Romans would have understood it, but rather someone interested in classical learning. For more on ecclesiastical education, see below.

27 By the later fifth century it was long established that there could be no strict divide between Christians and classical learning. Julian's school edict banning Christians from teaching 'pagan' literature was both short-lived and opposed by his contemporaries (*Soc.* 3.16; *Soz.* 5.18, *Amm.* 22.10.7, 25.4.20). There has been a huge amount of scholarship on the topic of Christianity vs. classical culture. Cf. Gemeinhardt, Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen 2016; Watts 2012; Gemeinhardt 2007; Chin 2008; Momigliano 1963.

28 Cf. *Sid. Ep.* 9.12.1, 3; 9.13.2.

29 E.g. the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, which originated in either Syria or Palestine in the third century and ordered Christians to avoid all pagan literature (cf. *DA* 1.6).

encouraged bishops to avoid worldly practices, including reading pagan literature.³⁰ It should be acknowledged that the need for such prohibitions indicates that there must have been clerics and bishops continuing to engage with classical literary culture. And, indeed, it cannot have been otherwise. Many priests and bishops, especially in Gaul in the fifth century, were aristocrats, and had been educated at classical schools of grammar and rhetoric.³¹ And, since by this time there was no real struggle between ‘paganism’ and Christianity, of course such classically educated bishops would continue to be shaped by their classical literary heritage. But, while such prohibitions would not generally affect bishops who had grown up in the classical schools from continuing to engage with classical literary culture in their writing and preaching, teaching such subjects in a professional sense would have been quite a different thing. It is not impossible that some bishops or abbots would include classical texts alongside the Psalms and scripture in their training of young monks and clerics in ecclesiastical schools, but the reality of clerical and educational life in fifth century Gaul, and the lack of any comparable examples from the late empire, makes it very difficult to see Claudianus as both a priest and a professional teacher of classical subjects.

Moreover, the best estimates allow for approximately a five-year age difference between Sidonius and Claudianus, which strongly suggests that Sidonius is reminiscing about an informal gathering among adults in *Ep.* 4.11.2-3, rather than a school room interaction between a teacher and student.³² If we compare *Ep.* 4.11.2-3 with an instance where Sidonius does describe his own school days, the difference between formal school and informal ‘literary salon’ is clear. In a letter to his friend Probus, Sidonius recalls how Probus had always been a

30 *Ut episcopus gentilium libros non legat, haereticorum autem pro necessitate temporis*, can. 5, *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, ed. Morin.

31 For the tendency in late antique Gaul for bishoprics to be held by aristocrats, see Mathisen 1993, 89-104; Van Dam 1985, 115-176; Harries 1994, 185-186; Heinzelmänn 1976; Diefenbach 2013; van Waarden 2010, 25; Amherdt 2001, 17-21; Hildebrandt, 1992, 38-39; Beck 1950, 57-62 discusses the social background of the clergy in sixth-century Gaul and says that while we know some priests and bishops were from elite classes, it is difficult to get a full picture of all the levels of the clergy, given our available evidence.

32 The best guesses in the prosopography and *ODLA* for Claudianus’ birth is ca. 425, and Claudianus died in the 470s, either in 471 (Loyen 1968, 88-89; 1970, 218; Mathisen 1989, 241) or the end of 473 (*PCBE Gaule* 1, 484). Based on the newly discovered version of Sidonius’ epitaph, Sidonius died on 21 August, 479 (Furbetta 2015). The best estimate for Sidonius’ birth is ca. 430/431, based on his comment in *Ep.* 8.6.5 that he was at the beginning of his adolescence in 449. Claudianus became a priest in Vienne no later than 463, at least six to seven years before Sidonius was made bishop of Clermont, during the time that Sidonius was pursuing his aristocratic *otium* and writing panegyrics.

star pupil and remembers how proud both their fathers were at their progress in school.³³ Although Sidonius and Probus had an actual teacher, Eusebius,³⁴ Probus was so clever that he acted like a tutor to Sidonius (*te mihi magistrum fuisse proprium, cum videremur habere commune*, *Ep.* 4.1.2). The two boys studied many things together (epic, comedy, lyric poetry, oratory, history, satire, grammar, panegyric, sophistry, epigram, commentaries, and juristic writing, *Ep.* 4.1.2), and while Probus excelled in all of them, his favourite was philosophy. Under the instruction of Eusebius (*intra Eusebianos lares*) Probus was ‘forged on a philosophic anvil’ (*philosophica incude formatus*), becoming knowledgeable in dialectic and the Aristotelian categories, explaining the principals of Plato and Aristotle, and even starting to speak like an Athenian (*atticisabas*). In fact, it was as if Probus was Plato, and their teacher Eusebius was Socrates (*nunc ut Platon discipulus iam prope potior sub Socrate, sic iam tu sub Eusebio*, *Ep.* 4.1.3). Unlike Sidonius’ description of his discussions with Claudianus, this scene in 4.1.2-3 clearly points to a formal school experience from Sidonius’ youth: he mentions proud parents, specifies literary genres that correspond to standard school texts, and clearly identifies a teacher, both in the comparison between Plato and Socrates, and more explicitly.³⁵ Sidonius is similarly explicit when he mentions another of his own teachers, Hoenius.³⁶

Furthermore, the vocabulary Sidonius uses to describe Claudianus’ gatherings, and the way Sidonius praises Claudianus’ intellectual achievements in general, do not evoke a formal school setting. At the beginning of the passage Sidonius remarks how often he and others used to gather together with Claudianus ‘for the sole purpose of holding discussions’ (*sola consultationis gratia*, *Ep.* 4.11.2). A similar word is used later in the description, when Sidonius says, ‘who indeed could have felt reluctant to consult on obscure problems a man who did not debar even amateurish and ignorant questioners from participating in his discussion?’ (*quis enim virum super abditis consuleret invitus, a cuius disputationis communione ne idiotarum quidem imperitorumque sciscitatio*

33 Sid. *Ep.* 4.1.2: *Quam sibi hinc patres nostri gloriabantur, cum uiderunt sub ope Christi te docere posse, me discere* (‘How proud our fathers were to see that with Christ’s help you had the power to teach and I to learn’).

34 *PLRE* 2, 430, Eusebius 13. He can perhaps be identified with the Eusebius who was a famous author and is mentioned in the *Vita Hilarii* 14.

35 See quotation in n. 33. Browning 2000, 866 does not see this scene as representing an actual school experience, perhaps because of the mention of philosophy, which was not, strictly speaking, included in the three-part system of education in the Latin west.

36 *PLRE* 2, 566; Kaster 1988, s.v. no. 233; Sid. *Carm.* 9.309-315: *uel quem municipalibus poetis | praeponit bene uilicum senatus, | nostrum aut quos retinet solum disertos, | dulcem Anthedion et mihi magistri | Musas sat uenerabiles Hoeni, | acrem Lampridium, catum Leonem | praestantemque tuba Seuerianum.*

repudiabatur, *Ep.* 4.11.3). *Consultatio*, meaning ‘deliberation’, ‘consultation’, or ‘inquiry’, is not used in reference to formal education in any period of Roman literature.³⁷ Rather, it is used in contexts of advice or inquiries on points of law or refers to discussions about a principal or a general topic.³⁸ Therefore, we should understand Sidonius’ use of it in this letter as referring to a learned discussion among educated and inquiring adults, not an interaction between a young student and a teacher of rhetoric.³⁹ The word appears frequently in Macrobius’ *Saturnalia*, and in each case it refers to a question or subject raised by one of the characters who had gathered together to discuss learned matters during the holiday of the Saturnalia.⁴⁰ The only other time that Sidonius uses *consultatio* is in *Ep.* 4.17.3, in which Sidonius declines Arbogastes’ request to write an exegesis of part of the bible, advising that it would be better for Arbogastes to ask such a thing from the bishops Lupus of Troyes or Auspicius of Toul, ‘whose *learning* is so abundant that not even your *questioning* could sift it to the bottom’ (*quorum doctrinae abundanti eventilandae nec consultatio tua sufficit*, *Sid. Ep.* 4.17.3). It is significant that both uses of *consultatio* in Sidonius’ oeuvre refer to questioning a learned clerical figure about theological issues.

This passage from *Ep.* 4.17 also highlights how we should understand another word from *Ep.* 4.11.2 that, if taken at face value, has the potential to lead to a false identification of Claudianus as a teacher, namely *doctrina*. In 4.11.2 Sidonius describes how Claudianus would ‘dispense the wealth of his *teaching*’ (*doctrinae suae opes erogaturus*) in a methodical way to all in attendance. Although *doctrina* can be used to refer to a professional teacher’s knowledge and activities, it was never limited to such a narrow definition, and we can see from *Ep.* 4.17 that Sidonius uses it in its broader sense to mean a person’s learning and expertise, including Christian learning.⁴¹ Likewise, the use of *magister*

37 Cf. *OLD* and *TLL* s.v. *consultatio*.

38 Examples from the *TLL* of *consultatio* in the sense of *interrogatio* or *percontatio*, similar to Sidonius’ sense here include *Plin. Ep.* 7.18.1; 8.23.6; *Hier. Ep.* 123.10; *Claud. Mam. Anim.* 3.4; *Aug. Retract.* 2.44.

39 Other verbal indicators that Sidonius is describing a group of interested adults include: *convenio* (4.11.2), *non dubitans*, *non fastidiens aperiebat* (4.11.2), *non perpensum probatumque recipiebatur* (4.11.3), and the final lines of the passage, *quis enim uirum ...* (4.11.3).

40 *Macr. Sat.* 1.3.1; 1.7.5; 1.16.1; 7.6.14; 7.9.27; 7.12.1; 7.12.38; and *Somn.* 1.10.5 in reference to the question of the immortality of the soul: *in hac ... interrogatione de animae immortalitate tractatur. ipsius enim consultationis hic sensus est*.

41 We might think of *doctrina*, along with *disciplina*, to be comparable to the Greek concept of *paideia*, which certainly included formal learning and teaching, but meant much more. *Doctrina* is used seventeen times by Sidonius, primarily in a general sense of a person’s education or learning. Only on two occasions is *doctrina* used specifically in the

in the epitaph (*Ep.* 4.11.6, v. 4) also seems to have caused some scholars to label Claudianus as a teacher. However, given the context of the epitaph and the rest of Sidonius' praise of Claudianus, we should interpret the use of *magister* here not as referring to professional teaching, but rather as a mastery of a subject or in the broader sense of the 'teaching' of clerical or spiritual leaders.⁴² In fact, Sidonius uses *magister* in exactly this way in *Ep.* 9.9.15 in reference to the bishop Faustus of Riez's use of philosophical reasoning and theological arguments to combat false beliefs.⁴³

3.2 *Claudianus as the Ideal Christian Aristocrat*

Far from describing a professional classical teacher, the emphasis throughout *Ep.* 4.11 and in all Sidonius' references to Claudianus, is on Claudianus' Christian activities, which he is able to blend seamlessly with his classical training. Sidonius presents Claudianus as the ideal educated Christian aristocrat, and in this way provides a model for his readers on how to use their classical training for Christian literary and intellectual purposes.⁴⁴ Sidonius opens *Ep.* 4.11 by praising Claudianus' intellect, but stresses that while devoted to philosophy, Claudianus was true to his Christian faith.⁴⁵ Similarly, in a letter

context of formal teaching, once in reference to the teacher Johannes (*Ep.* 8.2.3) and once in describing Pythagoras' practice of instructing his pupils first to be silent and listen, and then to speak (*tacendi patientiam ... doctrinam*, *Ep.* 7.9.5). Sidonius also regularly uses *doctrina* in reference to Christian learning (4.11.2; 4.17.3; 6.3.1; 8.14.6; 9.2.2; 9.3.6; 9.9.16), and Claudianus, in his letter to Sidonius, uses *doctrina* in the same sense as Sidonius is using it in 4.11.2: *cum scripturarum caelestium mysteria rimaris, quo te studiosius imbuīs, eo doctrinam ceteris copiosius infundis* ('When you search the mysteries of the heavenly scriptures, the more diligently you steep yourself in them, the more plentifully do you shower instruction in others'; Sid. *Ep.* 4.2.3).

42 Anderson/Semple translates this passage as 'Under his teaching, three literatures were illumined', and Mathisen 1982, 378 understands this passage as referring to an actual school. Loyen, however, translates it as 'En ce maître brilla une triple culture'.

43 Sid. *Ep.* 9.9.15: *quin potius experietur, quisque conflixerit, Stoicos Cynicos Peripateticos haeresiarchas propriis armis, propriis quoque concuti machinamentis. nam sectatores eorum, Christiano dogmati ac sensui si repugnauerint, mox te magistro ligati vernaculis implicaturis in retia sua praecipites implagabuntur ...* ('Far otherwise: whoever disputes with you will find those protagonists of heresy, the Stoics, Cynics, and Peripatetics, shattered with their own arms and their own engines; for their followers, if they resist the doctrine and spirit of Christianity, will *under your teaching* be caught in their own familiar entanglements and fall headlong into their own toils').

44 All of Sidonius' comments about Claudianus date from the time when Sidonius was bishop of Clermont, and therefore was more actively interested in aligning classical learning with the Christian message. Cf. Amherdt 2001, 39–43, 281.

45 Sid. *Ep.* 4.11.1: *indesinenter salua religione philosopharetur ... a collegio tamen complatoniorum solo habitu ac fide dissociabatur.*

to Nymphidius, Sidonius calls Claudianus ‘the most expert philosopher among the Christians and the first of all savants Christian or otherwise’ (*Mamertus Claudianus peritissimus Christianorum philosophus et quorumlibet primus eruditorum totius sectatae philosophiae*, Sid. Ep. 5.2.1). Claudianus was actively devoted to charity and care for his community⁴⁶ and indispensable to his brother, bishop Mamertus.⁴⁷ These interests and activities are also highlighted in Sidonius’ epitaph for Claudianus. Claudianus had mastered the three cultures of the Greek, Roman, and Christian literary worlds, with a wide expertise in prose, poetry, philosophy, geometry, music, and preaching:

triplex bybliothea quo magistro,
 Romana, Attica, Christiana, fulsit; 5
 quam totam monachus uirente in aeuo
 secreta bibit institutione,
 orator, dialecticus, poeta,
 tractator, geometra, musicusque.⁴⁸

Under his mastery a triple culture shone forth:
 Roman, Greek, and Christian.⁴⁹
 All of them as a monk in his prime
 He absorbed in his unobtrusive studies.
 He was prose-writer, philosopher, poet, preacher,
 Geometer, and musician.

Claudianus’ knowledge of the *triplex bybliothea* highlights not only his deep knowledge of classical literature, but also his active engagement with Christian intellectual culture.⁵⁰ Gerth notes that the three-part division of literatures does not reflect reality, since Christian authors wrote in either Greek or Latin,⁵¹ but I think that this misses the point that Sidonius is trying to make:

46 *Ibid.* 4.11.4: *quis competenti praeconio extollat, quod condicionis humanae per omnia memor clericos opere sermone populares, exhortatione maerentes destitutos solacio, captiuos pretio ieiunos cibo nudos operimento consolabatur?*

47 *Ibid.* 4.11.5: *consiliarium in iudiciis uicarium in ecclesiis, procuratorem in negotiis uilicium in praediis, tabularium in tributis in lectionibus comitem, in expositionibus interpretem in itineribus contubernalem.*

48 *Ibid.* 4.11.6, vv. 4–9.

49 I have adapted the first two lines from Sempke’s Loeb translation to more accurately reflect the use of *magister* in this context.

50 For Claudianus’ knowledge of Greek, see John, 2020; Brittain 2001; Courcelle 1969, 238–258.

51 Gerth 2013, 173–176.

Claudianus personifies the ideal blending of the ancient literary heritage (traditionally divided into the *utraque lingua* of Greek and Latin) along with the Christian intellectual past and present. And, by giving an equal platform for Christian literature, Sidonius is emphasizing Claudianus' devotion to his clerical duties and theological and philosophical expertise. This tri-partite structure is reminiscent of Sidonius' praise of Claudianus in *Ep.* 4.3, where he compares him to a host of mythical and historical Greek and Roman authors, orators, philosophers, scientists, and politicians (4.3.1, 5, 6), while giving equal emphasis to Christian patristic authors (4.3.7). The list of expertise in the epitaph for Claudianus is a signature feature of Sidonius' hyperbolic style of praise,⁵² and recalls Sidonius' description of Claudianus' *De statu animae* in a letter to Nymphidius. He praises the work, and says that in it, the nine Muses find their true identities as intellectual disciplines, or liberal arts: *illic enim et grammatica diuidit et oratoria declamat et arithmetica numerat et geometrica metitur et musica ponderat et dialectica disputat et astrologia praeoscit et architectonica struit et metrica modulatur* (*Ep.* 5.2.1).⁵³ Mathisen argues that "this enumeration of the liberal arts establishes Claudianus' credentials as an educator,"⁵⁴ but we should not take Sidonius' over-the-top praise at face value. As mentioned above, Sidonius had a habit of praising his friends by means of elaborate lists that, while certainly indicating that the person in question was talented, should be understood within their rhetorical context.

If Claudianus was involved in any kind of teaching, it was training of clerics within his brother's episcopal see. In his epitaph Sidonius says Claudianus marshalled his intellect into scriptural exegesis, becoming actively involved in theological controversies, and was central in the liturgical activities in his brother's congregation. He taught members of the clerical community to chant the psalms and was in charge of selecting appropriate readings for each part of the Christian calendar:

doctus soluere uincla quaestionum	10
et uerbi gladio secare sectas,	
si quae catholicam fidem lacessunt.	
Psalmorum hic modulator et phonascus	
ante altaria fratre gratulante	
instructas docuit sonare classes.	15

52 Pelttari 2020; Amherdt 2001, 282, 297.

53 Sidonius adds two liberal arts to the normal 7, namely architecture and poetry.

54 Mathisen 2005, 12.

Hic sollemnibus annuis parauit
quae quo tempore lecta conuenirent.⁵⁵

skilled in disentangling knotty problems,
and with the sword of the word to hew down the sectaries
who assail the Catholic faith.
Precentor and choirmaster,
he taught well-trained companies to chant before the altar,
winning his brother's admiration.
For the yearly festivals he selected readings
suitable to each season.

This description of his duties aligns exactly with the training provided at the burgeoning ecclesiastical schools of late antique Gaul. These schools were distinct from classical schools of grammar and rhetoric in their curriculum, aims, and character, and should perhaps be better understood as 'on the job' training that was tailored to the needs of clerical and monastic communities.⁵⁶ They were centred around a bishop in his *domus ecclesiae* or at a monastery. New clerical or monastic recruits, often young men or children, would be expected to be literate so that they could sing the Psalms during Mass, perform liturgical duties, and understand the scriptures and teachings of the Church Fathers.⁵⁷ Ecclesiastical schools were first organized informally, but were later formalized at Church councils.⁵⁸ From their inception until the Carolingian period the training provided at these schools was meant to be primarily for those young men and women entering monastic or clerical service, though no doubt there were occasions when parents would send their children to learn Latin at such schools, without intending that they enter the Church.⁵⁹ Sidonius'

55 Sid. *Ep.* 4.11.6, vv. 10-16.

56 Cf. John 2018; Leyser 2000; Riché 1976, 100-135; Beck 1950, 9-14, 31, 43-8, 52-53, 59-62. For a different type of Christian grammatical training, cf. Didymus the Blind, who taught at a kind of 'school' in Alexandria in the fourth century. Cf. Stefaniw 2019; Layton 2004; Nelson 1995.

57 For example, Florianus was taught to read by Caesarius of Arles, *MGH Epp.* I (*Epistolae Austrasiacae*) 5, 116.35-117.4, Caesarius directed the reading of other young members of his household (*VCaesarii* 1.45, 62, 2.31), Nicetius oversaw the education of those in his household (Greg. Tur. *VP* 8.2), and at the female monastery in Arles nuns were taught to read the psalms and other scriptures (*VCaesarii* 1.35, 58). Also cf. *Reg. Magist.* 24, *Regula Sancti Benedicti* 8, 47, 58.20; Caes. Arel. *Reg. virg.* 18.8, 19.

58 Council of Vaison 3 (529), c. 1, Council of Toledo 2 (527), c. 1.

59 Cf. Caesarius of Arles, who specifies that it is only young girls destined to be nuns who should be educated at monasteries: *Reg. virg.* 5. Naturally, if Caesarius felt the need to

description, in addition to Claudianus' proximity to and integration into his brother's episcopal household, his own expertise in theology, and experience at the monastery of Lérins, strongly suggests that he would have been involved in some way in the training or supervision of new clerical recruits in Vienne. We should be clear, however, that such teaching was not the same as the teaching that grammarians and rhetors provided, which imbued young men in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome in preparation for public office-holding careers as advocates or bureaucrats, and socialized them as members of the Roman governing elite.

Given the abundance of evidence and with a proper understanding of the context of education, both classical and Christian, during this period, it is clear that Claudianus was not a professional teacher of classical subjects, but rather a well-educated cleric who was actively interested in sharing his theological and philosophical knowledge among the Christian community in Vienne.

4 Claudianus' Christian Philosophical Literary 'salons'

We have established that Claudianus was not a teacher, and that the scene described by Sidonius in *Ep.* 4.11.2-3 was a 'literary salon' attended by educated and interested adults. I would like to go one step further and argue that Claudianus' discussion groups were focused primarily on *Christian* philosophical and theological issues.⁶⁰ We know that Claudianus was actively involved in current theological debates in Gaul and was a vocal proponent of the view that the soul was incorporeal. It would make sense that someone who engaged publicly in such thorny questions would enjoy informal discussions of a similar kind with his educated and interested peers, and that he would relish the opportunity to promote his viewpoints. This kind of informal interest in intellectual culture is well-established among the Roman *litterati*, and

reiterate this prohibition, it suggests that there were some ecclesiastical schools taking on lay children. Cf. Riché 1976, 122-129. For the opening up of ecclesiastical schools to lay children in the Carolingian period see the *Admonitio Generalis* c. 72, *MGH Cap.* I, No. 22, 60; *MGH Cap.* 1, No. 170, c. 45, 346. Cf. McKitterick 1989, 216-223; Hildebrandt 1992.

60 It is important not to over-emphasize a difference or separation between classical and Christian literary culture. As mentioned above, by this time in Gaul there was no struggle or tension between Christianity and 'paganism', and most, if not all, students and teachers at the classical schools were themselves Christian. At the same time, we start to see at this time an evolution of the central focus of such intellectual culture, which diverged from the canonical authors and curriculum of the classical schools, which had remained unchanged since the first century AD, and which had been one of the defining cultural markers of elite Roman society and politics.

literary circles were central to the ancient world of *paideia*.⁶¹ Moreover, in his youth Claudianus had frequented the Christian discussion groups led by bishop Eucherius of Lyon, and would have been surrounded by such theological interest and debate at Lérins.⁶² It would be natural for Claudianus to be interested in continuing such a tradition with his educated and interested peers in Vienne. It is equally easy to believe that intelligent Gallo-Roman aristocrats such as Sidonius would have been eager to take part in such groups, since philosophy itself, and certainly not theology, was never part of the traditional classical school curriculum in Gaul, and therefore these individuals did not necessarily have any prior knowledge or formal training in these topics.⁶³

Late antique society in the mid-fifth century was brimming with new ideas about theology and philosophy, as orthodoxies and Church practice and belief were continually being debated, updated, and codified across the empire. At this same time Gallo-Romans were becoming increasingly involved personally in Christian institutions, as monastic centres flourished, and Gallo-Roman aristocrats began to dominate episcopal sees across Gaul.⁶⁴ The traditional Roman education, based on a set canon of Greek and Roman classical texts, did not fully equip these Gallo-Romans to engage meaningfully in these Christian intellectual debates; while they could certainly rely on their skills in argumentation and analysis of texts, classical students were immersed in the antique worlds of Cicero and Virgil, not in the traditions of Christian thought of the Church Fathers. Theological and philosophical debates, opinions on doctrinal controversies, orthodoxies, and heresies, were not only in vogue in intellectual circles, but were relevant issues for Christian Gallo-Romans, especially those

61 Notable precedents are the friendship of Cicero and Atticus, the circle of literary patronage of Maecenas in first century Rome, and the educated community represented in Pliny the Younger's letters. Examples of reading communities from Roman literature are those portrayed in Tacitus' *Dialogus*, Aulus Gellius' *Attic Nights*, Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, and Augustine in his Cassiciacum dialogues.

62 *De statu animae* 2.9; CSEL 11, 135-136. For the influence Eucherius of Lyon may have had on Sidonius' upbringing as a Christian layman in Lyon, see Harries 1994, 36-47.

63 Nowhere in the work of Ausonius is there mention of any teacher of philosophy, among the 37 teachers of Latin grammar, Greek grammar, and Latin rhetoric he names. Only in the final poem in the collection of the *Professores* does Ausonius even mention the subject of philosophy, when he wishes all teachers well, regardless of what they taught, including *medicae vel artis dogma vel Platonicum | dedit perenni gloriae* (*Prof.* 26.5-6). The consensus among modern scholars is that Sidonius and most other fifth-century Gallo-Romans cared little for philosophy, with Claudianus the only exception to this rule. Cf. Brittain 2001, 243, Riché 1976, 45-55; Haarhoff 1920, 81; Courcelle 1969, 257.

64 On ideas of Christian asceticism as a new form of elite identity, see Gray 2019.

in clerical or monastic professions. This crucial knowledge would have to be acquired outside the confines of the classical schools of grammar and rhetoric, which was perhaps a contributing factor in the eventual disappearance of traditional classical schools in this period in Gaul.⁶⁵ Individuals such as Mamertus Claudianus, who had learned from Eucherius of Lyons, been formed spiritually at the monastery of Lérins, had taken a public stance against bishop Faustus of Riez on the issue of the state of the soul, and was now was at the centre of the Christian community in Vienne, would be the ideal person to lead such an informal Christian literary circle.

5 Conclusion

Classical education was an integral part of Roman politics and society. Therefore, understanding how classical education in grammar and rhetoric evolved in the late Roman west is key to our interpretation of the political, religious, and cultural transformations of the final centuries of the Roman empire in the West. Tracing how teachers are represented and visible in the historical record can help us to understand the changing nature of educational and intellectual culture in late antiquity.

It is sometimes difficult to identify teachers of grammar and rhetoric, but by keeping in mind the realities of late antique education and working closely with the sources, we can arrive at more accurate conclusions of the number of classical teachers from late antique Gaul, which in turns allows us to have a better understanding of the transformations of education, literary culture, and society of the late antique West. This article has demonstrated one text-based approach to identifying teachers, and not only shown that Mamertus Claudianus was not a classical teacher, but that his actual 'professional' roles illustrate the evolution of an increasingly Christian intellectual culture, the inadequacy of classical education to meet the needs of the changing cultural and religious horizons of the late antique west, and the emergence of ecclesiastical schools, which would dominate clerical and monastic life long past the end of Roman antiquity in Gaul.

65 On the religious knowledge and education of lay Christians in late antique Gaul, see Bailey 2016, 139-157.

Appendix: Falsely Identified Teachers

In addition to Mamertus Claudianus, the following individuals have been falsely identified as professional teachers,⁶⁶ contributing to a view that the classical schools continued to flourish in Gaul well past the end of the fifth century. The available evidence and historical context do not support such identifications.

- 1) **Aedesius:** The *Vita Hilarii* 2.14 simply refers to him as *rhetoricae facundiae et metricae artis peritissimus vir*. Learning and literary skill is not evidence by itself of a teaching career.
- 2) **Agroecius:** He wrote *De orthographia* and dedicated it to Eucherius of Lyon. There is no evidence that Agroecius taught grammar or rhetoric and the fact that he wrote about the Latin language is not enough to identify him as a teacher.⁶⁷
- 3) **Anthedius:** He is praised as *disertus* and *dulcis* (Sid. *Carm.* 9.311-312), was *uir praefectus* of a *collegium* (*Carm.* 22 ep. 2-3), and is said to have surpassed musicians, geometers, arithmeticians, and astrologers *disserendi arte* (*Carm.* 22 ep. 2-3). *Disserendi arte* could be translated as 'in the art of lecturing', which is how Mathisen understands it, but it could also simply mean, 'discussing'.
- 4) **Consentius:** He wrote works on the Latin language, namely the *De duabus partibus orationis nomine et verbo* and the *De barbarismis et metaplasmis*. Literary interest and output are not reliable indications of a teaching career, even when that work is on a grammatical or rhetorical subject.⁶⁸
- 5) **Desiderius of Vienne:** Discussed in n. 26.
- 6) **Leo:** He has been identified as a teacher of law, based on Sidonius' praise of Leo in *Carm.* 23.446-449: ... *siue ad doctiloqui Leonis aedes | quo bis sex tabulas docente iuris | ultro Claudius Appius lateret | claro obscurior in decemuiratu*. Though the use of *doceo* is suggestive, there is little evidence that there were any formal law schools in Gaul at any point, and, as we saw in the case of Claudianus, Sidonius is comfortable using words like *doceo* and *doctrina* in their broader, metaphorical sense.
- 7) **Severianus:** He is simply praised for his poetry (Sid. *Carm.* 9.315, *Ep.* 9.13.3) and oratory (*Ep.* 9.15.1, v. 37). Severianus was at the party in Arles during Majorian's reign when Sidonius and other dinner guests composed

66 Mathisen, 2005.

67 Cf. Kaster 1988, 381-382.

68 Cf. Kaster 1988, 396.

poems extempore. Among those present were Lampridius, Domnulus, and Severianus (*Ep.* 9.13.3-4). The association with Lampridius, who was a teacher, is not enough to suggest that Severianus was also a teacher. Sidonius was also at the party in Arles and also composed poetry, but he was not a teacher.

- 8) **Viventiolus:** He is the recipient of *Ep.* 57 of Avitus of Vienne. Avitus wrote other letters to a Viventiolus (*Ep.* 19, 59, 67, 68, 69, 73) who was priest and later bishop of Lyon. Shanzer and Wood argue that it was the same Viventiolus, but that the title *rhetor* in *Ep.* 57 is ironic, and this letter is Avitus' angry response to hearing that Viventiolus was spreading rumours about Avitus making a grammatical mistake in a sermon.⁶⁹ In this way, the tag *rhetor* is a passive-aggressive response to pedantic criticism of Avitus.

Acknowledgment

This article was written during my Leverhulme Abroad Fellowship at Ghent University. I would like to especially thank Aaron Pelttari for his feedback on the first draft of this article. I also owe many thanks to my PhD supervisors, Gavin Kelly and Lucy Grig, and my viva examiners, Roger Rees, and Zubin Mistry, for their comments on earlier versions of my arguments about late antique teachers, Claudianus, and ecclesiastical schools. Feedback from the anonymous reviewer was helpful in expressing aspects of my argument more clearly. My thoughts about Mamertus Claudianus and Sidonius' *Ep.* 4.11 were also shaped by discussions at the AMPAL and CA conferences in Edinburgh, and the ISLALS conference in Bryn Mawr/Haverford College. Any remaining errors are my own.

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