

## Kingship in theory and practice: Julian, Themistius, and Constantius

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Julian and Themistius have often been studied for their open hostility towards one another in their lopsided correspondence: Julian's extant *Letter to Themistius*, a reply to Themistius' now-lost *Letter to Julian*. The central point of disagreement between these two Hellenised pagans in their letters (which take the form of philosophical treatises) was the nature of kingship as applied to an emperor (in this case, Julian). Around the same time, they both composed a series of epideictic speeches for Constantius II: Julian as Caesar in Gaul between 355 and 360 (*Orr.* 1&3), and Themistius as a budding philosopher politician (*Or.* 1) and then new senator in Constantinople from 355 (*Orr.* 2-4). Although the exact chronology of the letters compared to the speeches is not clear, all these texts were written within a shared political context of Constantius' recapture of and stay in the West after the usurpation of Maxentius in 350-353.

This paper will read Julian's *Letter to Themistius* in dialogue with both authors' panegyrics, and consider to what extent the ideals of kingship debated in the *Letter* match up with the example of kingship that both authors praise in Constantius. In so doing, I will argue that Julian's vehement rejection of Themistius' advice is connected to his careful management of his relationship as Caesar to Constantius' Augustus; thus some of Julian's early philosophical ideals of kingship (that were later expounded in works dating from his sole emperorship) have their roots in politics of the mid 350s.