IMPERIAL PIETY IN ACTION: THE THEODOSIANS IN CHURCH

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Unfinished Business[1]

This paper is about the different ways in which the members of the Theodosian dynasty operated within the Christian spaces of Constantinople during the seventy years that the dynasty endured. The subject has attracted a considerable amount of interest in recent decades; there have been a number of notable contributions, as well as a couple of papers by myself.[2] Nevertheless, there remains more to be said, both in relation to the detailed analysis of specific episodes, and in tracing an overall pattern and in particular an evolution in imperial practice. It should be emphasized that this is not an attempt to consider the theological (or indeed any other) policies of the three emperors, or to treat their involvement in the institutional development of the "imperial church" of Constantinople in relation to the other bishoprics of the East, although these themes

1. Much of what follows derives from a seminar paper on Theodosius II which I first gave in Princeton in 2000, and which has benefited much from responses there and at subsequent airings in Oxford, Sydney, Bamberg and elsewhere. I am most grateful to Sylvain Destephen for prodding me towards participation in the Paris symposium, and subsequent publication.

2. See especially S. Diefenbach, Zwischen Liturgie und Civilitas. Konstantinopel im 5. Jahrhundert und die Etablierung eines städtischen Kaisertums, in R. Warland (ed.), *Bildlichkeit und Bildort von Liturgie. Schauplätze in Spätantike, Byzanz und Mittelalter*, Wiesbaden 2002, pp. 21–49; P. Van Nuffelen, Playing the ritual game in Constantinople under the Theodosian dynasty, in L. Grig and G. Kelly (ed.), *Two Romes: From Rome to Constantinople*, Oxford 2012, pp. 183–200. Also N. B. McLynn, The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing in the Fourth Century, in S. Swain and M. Edwards (ed.), *Approaching Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2004, pp. 235–270; Id., Moments of Truth: Gregory Nazianzen and Theodosius I, in S. McGill, C. Sogno, and E. Watts (ed.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians: later Roman history and culture, 284—450 CE*, Cambridge 2010, pp. 215–240.

Le Prince chrétien de Constantin aux royautés barbares (IV^e^-VIII^e^ siècle),
éd. par S. Destephen, B. Dumézil et H. Inglebert (Travaux et mémoires 22/2), Paris 2018.

too are of great interest, and deserve further exploration.[3] My subject will instead be limited to the emperor's (and to a lesser extent his family's) participation in Christian ceremonies, whether routine liturgy or special celebrations, and the types of religious leadership that emerged from such participation.

The Theodosian Takeover

The dramatic series of events following Theodosius' arrival in Constantinople in November 380, which saw the eviction from the cathedral of the city's bishop and the installation under armed guard of the replacement nominated by the emperor, is almost too well known.[4] Gregory Nazianzen's dramatic autobiographical account (moving from the interview with Theodosius at which he was awarded the see, through the sombre procession through the seething streets to the church, to the sudden ray of sunlight which illuminated the climactic moment of the emperor's arrival in the sanctuary) is neatly complemented by the sober historical narrative of Socrates, who concentrates on the emperor's invitation to the sitting bishop Demophilus, to subscribe to the Nicene creed in return of security of tenure.[5] Historians have nevertheless been too ready to conflate the two accounts, and have thereby created a scenario where the emperor sets out to implement an urgent theologically-driven agenda that establishes ecclesiastical regime change within three days of the court's arrival in Constantinople. Socrates offers only two dates, for the emperor's arrival and for his interview with Demophilus; the dating of the procession to the church to the following days is entirely a figment of modern scholarship, inspired no doubt by Gregory's mention of the dawn.[6] The one ancient source to provide a date suggests a delay of at least a week, and possibly as much as a month, and this should be preferred.[7]

3. For an initial exploration see N. B. McLynn, "Two Romes, Beacons of the Whole World:" Canonizing Constantinople, in Grig and Kelly (ed.), *Two Romes* (cit. n. 2), pp. 345–363.

4. This paragraph summarizes an argument presented in more detail in McLynn, Moments of Truth (cit. n. 2), pp. 217–220.

5. Gregory Nazianzen, *De uita sua* (henceforth *DVS*) 1305–1395; Socrates, *HE* V, 7, 4–5.

6. Socrates, *HE* V, 7, 6 (24 November, entrance of Theodosius; *contra*, *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, a. 380: 15 November); *HE* V, 7, 10 (26 November, departure of Demophilus). The abbreviated chronology for Gregory's installation is assumed in e.g. J. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364—425*, Oxford 2nd ed.,1990, pp. 122–123.

7. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*. a. 380: *eam (*sc. *ecclesiam orthodoxorum)… nostris catholicis orthodoxus restituit imperator mense Decembrio*.

The compressed chronology preferred by modern scholars injects a sense of doctrinal urgency into the emperor's actions which is certainly implicit in Socrates' account, but is probably anachronistic for 380. The longer Theodosius was prepared to leave the cathedral vacant, the more we should look instead to eventual liturgical stability as his priority. Relevant here, especially because there had been no precedent in previous such removals of bishops, a significant proportion of his congregation followed Demophilus, to organize a parallel liturgical routine immediately outside the walls of the city.[8] This no doubt came as more of a surprise to the emperor and his advisers than it was to the ecclesiastical historians who mention it two generations later (when the dissident residue still continued to hold its services);[9] it had the immediate effect of creating the possibility for serious embarrassment, since there was no ready-made congregation to welcome the emperor and his entourage when they first came to participate in divine service in the cathedral. The most significant ecclesiastical achievement of the first Theodosian ruler was arguably to exploit the possibilities that came with this risk.

The situation is well described by Gregory Nazianzen, in a rarely-noted comment he makes in his autobiographical poem. "And this was the talk of my enemies," he complains, "That the people did not even fill the doors — the people, previously divided, when we were in need; So disparaged was I by everyone, to whom the church, and those who fill churches, now belong."[10] These lines have been passed over by commentators due to a double misunderstanding: that the emptiness of the cathedral was a prediction, not a statement of fact; and that by the current owner of the churches, in the last line, Gregory meant himself.[11] But this makes little sense, since at the time of writing he presented himself in search of a desert, leaving to the churches only his tears; and in this section of the poem (a hundred lines after his installation) his critics all belonged to the current establishment, "those now in charge" (*De vita sua*, 1408) and "the envious" (1444).[12] Instead, we should infer that at the very eve of the great council of Constantinople (the next episode to be described in the poem) some of Theodosius' managers were com-

8. There is no suggestion that the earlier imperially-ordered evictions at Constantinople, of Paul and Macedonius in the reign of Constantius II, prompted large-scale walk-outs.

9. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 19, 9–14.

10. Gregory Nazianzen, *De uita sua* 1495–1499: Καὶ τοῦτο δ' ἦν θρύλημα τῶν ἐναντίων, / μηδ' ἂν πυλῶσι τὸν λεὼν ἐξαρκέσαι, / τὸν πρὶν μερισθέν θ', ἡνίκ' ἦμεν ἐνδεεῖς. / τοσοῦτον ἦμεν πᾶσιν εὐτελισμένοι, / ὧν νῦν ναοί τε καὶ ναῶν πληρώματα.

11. See most recently A. Tuilier, G. Bady and J. Bernardi, (ed.), *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, *Œuvres poétiques*, I, 1, *Poèmes personnels II*, *1*, *1–11*, Paris 2004, p. 118: « le peuple n'arriverait même… »; « qui possédons maintenant… »

12. Gregory Nazianzen, *DVS* 1408, 1444.

plaining that Gregory had not brought enough worshippers with him to fill the services over which he presided. Nor is this is surprising, since the undoubtedly devoted followers he had won during his two-year preaching mission in the city had been contained within a house-church. By contrast, the fourth-century cathedral of Constantinople, the "Great Church," was an exceptionally large building, with its external dimensions estimated at something like 66 metres by 120 metres, to produce a capacity of considerably over five thousand.[13]

But we should not imagine that during his brief time in charge of the cathedral Gregory was preaching to an empty house. Indeed, a central theme of his great abdication speech is the size of the congregation, and how dramatically it had grown from "not even a flock, but a slight trace and relic of a flock," to "such it is now, so healthy and well grown, and if it be not yet in perfection, it is advancing towards it by constant increase;" the contrast was visible to the observer, who is commanded to "Lift up your eyes round about, and see… the crown which has been platted in return for the hirelings of Ephraim and the crown of insolence," the elements of which ("rulers or ruled, soldiers or nobles, students or men of letters") are duly itemized.[14] The thousands of new congregants necessary to illustrate these claims, however, should be explained not by the appeal of Gregory's rhetoric but by the simple fact of the court's arrival. By 380, Constantinople had not hosted an emperor for more than a few weeks at a time for almost twenty years; Theodosius' ministers and their officials had no pre-existing ties with the churches of the city. Those of the six thousand who staffed the court who were looking to advance their careers will have seen good reason to align their religious observances with those sponsored by the regime;[15] and it will have seemed helpful to the many inhabitants of Constantinople who will have been attracted by the job prospects that the ministries provided (in addition to the regular posts, we should not forget the thousands of unpaid supernumeraries who swelled their ranks: one ministry alone was allocated 610 such posts in addition to its 224 regular positions in 399)[16]

13. R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics*, *Rome*, *Constantinople*, *Milan*, Berkeley 1983, pp. 50–51.

14. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or*. 42. 2, 6, 11. The "soldiers" should be taken to include court officials; the "nobles" members of the city's senate.

15. For the size of the court, see R. Smith, The imperial court of the late Roman empire, c. AD 300—c. AD 450, in A. J. S. Spawforth (ed.), *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 157–232; similar conclusions on numbers are reached in S. Destephen, *Le voyage impérial dans l'Antiquité tardive. Des Balkans au Proche-Orient*, Paris 2016, pp. 112–115, at p. 337.

16. *CTh* VI, 30, 15; P. Eich, The common denominator: late Roman imperial bureaucracy from a comparative perspective, in W. Scheidel (ed.), *State Power in Ancient China and Rome*, Oxford 2015, pp. 90–149, at p. 129, sums this up neatly as the use of "unpaid interns on a massive scale."

to be seen there too. The numbers will have been swollen still further with the definitive transfer of the praetorian prefecture of the East from Antioch to Constantinople in 381.[17]

Any preponderance of courtiers among the congregation makes it much easier to explain the appointment as Gregory's successor, when the latter fell victim to the shifting politics of the church council convened in Constantinople in 381, of the unbaptized senator Nectarius. The appointment of a senator should cause less surprise in Constantinople than elsewhere, for the cathedral had been built directly adjacent to the senate house, and Christian senators such as Nectarius will have been conspicuous in the congregation during the many years between 360 and 380 when the emperor and his court were absent. It is quite probable that Nectarius himself had attended Demophilus' services (Basil of Caesarea had deplored the bishop's bland inclusivity), at least until Theodosius' preferences had been made clear.[18] Theodosius had been paying attention to the city's senate even before he arrived, making a number of appointments and enhancing the body's prestige;[19] it is therefore likely that the city's Christian senators, habituated to the rhythms of the cathedral, provided an important element of continuity in consolidating the new order.[20] Even non-Christian senators might well have found reason to attend.[21] If there any is truth in the story that Theodosius picked Nectarius from a list of candidates supplied to him, we might infer that he had been impressed with his comportment in the cathedral.[22]

Theodosius' most impressive interventions in the sacred sphere might be traced back to a chance sequence of events which occurred only six weeks after his arrival in the city. The unexpected arrival, as a helpless refugee, of the once powerful Gothic chieftain Athanaric, recently the instigator of a brutal repression of Christians in his territory, provided a notable opportunity to demonstrate imperial benevolence; on Athanaric's equally un-

17. Neoterius received his last law as PPO Orientis in January 381 (he had been at Cragus in Lycia in September 380); Florus his first, at Constantinople, on July 30.

18. Basil of Caesarea, *Ep*. 48.

19. Themistius, *Or*. 14, 183d–184a (a total of 2,000 senators by 383), with P. Heather and D. Moncur, *Politics, Philosophy, and Empire in the Fourth Century: Select Orations of Themistius*, Liverpool 2001, pp. 208–211, at pp. 227–228; cf. P. Heather, The Liar in Winter: Themistius and Theodosius, in McGill, Sogno, and Watts (ed.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians* (cit. n. 2), pp. 185–213, at p. 195, on Theodosius' need for "a lot of friends in 379."

20. Nectarius' unbaptized status spared him from the problems that accepting communion from Demophilus might have presented; neither Gregory Nazianzen nor any other source suggests that he had belonged to the dissident Nicene congregation.

21. For senators, see above, n. 19. Gregory Nazianzen mentions bearded philosophers in his congregation at *Or*. 36.12: for the possibility that these included Themistius see McLynn, Moments of Truth (cit. n. 2), p. 230, n. 76.

22. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 8, 4–5.

expected death, a fortnight later, Theodosius organized a funeral so spectacular that its impact distorted many subsequent accounts of his Gothic wars.[23] There is no reason to suppose that Athanaric had embraced Christianity when he died, but it is equally unlikely that Theodosius failed to impose his own preferred religion upon he proceedings. Above all, the emperor seems to have acquired a taste for such occasions, and Athanric's obsequies became the first in a considerable series. Four months later the elderly and influential bishop Meletius of Antioch died at the great council that Theodosius had summoned: the emperor gave instructions, according to the historian Sozomen, that the cortege conducting his remains back to Antioch be received into each city along the great highway through Anatolia; this innovation will have looked very much like a relic translation.[24] Sozomen also presents Theodosius as directly involved in the import of relics, which he dates by implication to almost the same moment: the emperor had the former bishop of Constantinople Paul brought from Ancyra (a key point on the same highway) and installed him in a church that had been built by his enemy Macedonius.[25] In all these cases, the sources emphasize the emperor's role; if the bishop of Constantinople was involved, it was in a subordinate capacity.[26] Theodosius is also give credit for the solemn installation (after a seven year delay) of the body of Valentinian I in Holy Apostles;[27] another imperial funeral was organized the following year for Gratian's wife Constantia, the daughter of Constantius II.[28] Similarly spectacular obsequies can plausibly be surmised for Ulfila,

23. Themistius, *Or*. 15, 190d; Zosimus, IV, 35, 4, with P. Heather, *Goths and Romans 332–489*, Oxford 1990, pp. 335–339.

24. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 10, 5; cf. Socrates, *HE* V, 9, 4.

25. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 10, 4; cf. Socrates, *HE* V, 9.1–2.

26. J. M. McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, New York 1990, pp. 347–348, claims that Gregory Nazianzen "must have" presided over Athanaric's funeral; there are no grounds for this. Gregory Nyssa's eulogy of Meletius, delivered in Holy Apostles as the cortege prepared to set out, mentions the grieving Theodosius but not the bishop.

27. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, a. 382: *Theodosius Aug. corpus Aug. Valentiniani… deposuit*. M. J. Johnson, On the Burial Places of the Valentinian Dynasty, *Historia* 40, 1991, pp. 501–506, at p. 502, suggests that this merely marks the relocation of an existing tomb to create prestigious space for Theodosius' own eventual burial; but there had been little previous possibility for an emperor to preside over the funeral since 376, and any public demotion of Valentinian would make the western court's agreement to send his daughter-in-law Constantia the following year difficult to understand: see following note.

28. *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, a. 383; *Chronicon Paschale*, a. 383. For full details, M. McEvoy, Constantia: the last Constantinian, *Antichthon* 50, 2016, pp. 154–179, at pp. 167–171. McEvoy is perhaps unduly casual about the western court's agreement to send Constantia to Constantinople (p. 171: "her burial in Constantinople is not otherwise unexpected"): this was a period of tension between the two courts, following the unilateral proclamation of Arcadius as Augustus in January 383.

the "apostle to the Goths" (and direct opponent, ideologically, to Nectarius), who died in Constantinople at a conference convened by Theodosius that same year.[29] The distribution of Constantinopolitan relics in the cities of northern Italy similarly seems to have been the work of the imperial court rather than the city's church; Theodosius' successive campaigns against Maximus and Eugenius provide plausible contexts for the arrival and installation of relics in Aquileia and Milan, ceremonies recorded in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*.[30]

The first of these campaigns prompted an episode which suggests the significance of the court's presence for the stability of the cathedral establishment. Socrates describes how the "excessive exasperation" of the Arians at the fact the city churches were now in the possession of their enemies, combined with rumours that Maximus had prevailed on the battlefield, emboldened them to set fire to the house of Nectarius.[31] But the choice of target indicates that Socrates was wrong to describe this as an outbreak of "irrational violence."[32] The Arians had their own claims upon the cathedral itself (which many of the arsonists will have remembered as their own); the adjacent residence was associated with Nectarius' suave sociability.[33] The timing was also rational. Theodosius had left Constantinople in November 387, and the attack is to be dated to the summer of 388, when his army closed on Maximus'. The succession of the year's major Christian feasts — Ephiphany, Easter and Pentecost — had therefore already passed. If the absence of the court had caused a significant reduction in the congregation at the cathedral even for these great festivals (and so threatened to damage the credibility of young Arcadius, filling his father's place), there would be a sense of vulnerability among the regime's representatives, which homoean leaders could reasonably hope to exploit. Neither the praetorian prefect nor the city prefect

B. Croke, Reinventing Constantinople: Theodosius I's Imprint on the Imperial City, in McGill, Sogno and Watts (ed.), *From the Tetrarchs to the Theodosians* (cit. n. 2), pp. 241–264, at pp. 253–254, similarly underplays the cumulative creativity of Theodosius' initiatives, reducing them to a programme of dynastic reinforcement.

29. N. B. McLynn, Little Wolf in the Big City: Ulfila and his Interpreters, in J. Drinkwater and B. Salway (ed.), *Wolf Liebeschuetz Reflected*, London 2007, pp. 125–135, at p. 134.

30. *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, 241 (9 May: Milan), 485 (3 September: Aquileia), 623 (27 November: Milan). The suggestion of imperial initiative is made in N. B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan. Church and Court in a Christian Capital*, Berkeley 1994, pp. 231–232. On the Aquileia deposition, R. Bratož, La basilica di Aquileia nelle fonti letterarie dal IV al VII secolo, in G. Cuscito (ed.), *La Basilica di Aquileia. Storia, archeologia ed arte*, Trieste 2010, pp. 19–66, at p. 51.

31. Socrates, *HE* V, 13, 5–6.

32. Socrates, *HE* V, 13.6: τότε δὴ ἀναθαρρήσαντες οἱ Ἀρειανίζοντες εἰς ἄλογον χωροῦσιν ὁρμήν.

33. Nectarius' dining practices would create problems for his successor John Chrysostom, who maintained a sternly ascetic kitchen: J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: the Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*, London 1995, pp. 118–119.

were committed to the Nicene cause.[34] Importantly, Arcadius himself interceded with his absent father to forgo any reprisals:[35] it clearly seemed prudent not to let the confrontation escalate.

Victory over Maximus prompted the most dramatic of Theodosius' interventions in the sacred topography of the city. Eight months after his return, he triumphantly wrested John the Baptist's head from its guardians at Chalcedon and installed it in a new church which he had constructed in the suburban military base of the Hebdomon, seven miles outside the city: Sozomen pays particular attention to the emperor's personal role — his patient acquisition of the relic from its tenacious custodian, and the reverent care with which he carried the casket, wrapped in the imperial purple, to its new home.[36] The church at the Hebdomon must have been planned before the departure of the expedition against Maximus in 387, and may well have had the character of a votive shrine; it would play a central role in the emperor's second great western expedition in 394, both as the site of his prayers before his departure and as the scene for some dramatic news reports from the battlefield, channelled by demons.[37]

The return from Italy also provides the context for Theodosius' sole recorded initiative in relation to the cathedral liturgy, although we can be sure that he was a regular participant in this, and had a conspicuous presence. It was precisely in relation to this that he intervened in 391, by changing his established custom and withdrawing from the sanctuary after the offertory procession, rather than remaining to take communion with the clergy.[38] Theodoret's account plays up the embarrassment created, with Nectarius beckoning the emperor into the sacred enclosure, only to prompt a withering remark about the authentic episcopal authority that Theodosius has experienced in Milan. This is a version romanticized

34. For Tatianus and his son Proculus, see S. Rebenich, Beobachtungen zum Sturz des Tatianus und des Proculus, *ZPE* 76, 1989, pp. 153–165.

35. Ambrose, *Ep*. 74, *PL* 40, col. 13. Theodosius' existing legislation promised stern measures against any *eruptio factiosa* attempted by the heretics (*CTh* XVI, 5, 6, 3).

36. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 21, 4–5, placing the ceremony in the context of the anti-pagan initiatives of 391 (VII, 20); and emphasizing Theodosius' role in the installation: περιλαβὼν τῇ ἀλουργίδι τὴν θήκην ἐν ᾗ ἔκειτο ἔχων ἐπανῆλθε. *Chronicon Paschale*, a. 391, supplies the date, February 18, but evidently has the year wrong (Theodosius was still in Milan in early 391, returning to Cpnstantinople in September); 392 is a reasonable correction, but other solutions are also possible. The church had presumably been planned before the departure of the western expedition in 387; it will have had the character of a votive. H. A. Klein, Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies at the Great Palace of Constantinople, in F. A. Bauer (ed.), *Visualisierung von Herrschaft. Frühmittelalterliche Residenzen, Gestalt und Zeremoniell*, Istanbul 2006, pp. 79–99, at p. 83.

37. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 24, 2, 8–9.

38. Theodoret, *HE* V, 18, 24; Sozomen, *HE* VII, 25, 9; see below, at n. 85.

in retrospect, but it was in Theodosius' interests, after four years away, to stamp his own religious authority on his cathedral. His suite, meanwhile, had shared his experiences abroad and had accustomed themselves to his new liturgical preferences; they probably outnumbered Nectarius and his clergy. No similar ready-made teaching opportunity was available to Theodosius' successors, whose religious horizons did not extend beyond the capital.

Arcadius: the Chrysostom Experiment and Beyond

The unexpected death of Theodosius, in Milan in January 395, presented a number of problems for the ministers left at Constantinople with his eldest son Arcadius.[39] These related mostly to the claims to precedence being presented by the western court, and the provocations engineered by the strongman Stilicho (and gleefully amplified by his mouthpiece Claudian). The appointment of John Chrysostom to succeed Nectarius, an appointment which was most certainly the work of the court, should be seen in this context, above all as an attempt to bolster the prestige of a sedentary emperor who presented himself most conspicuously to his people either in hippodrome or in church.[40] It is likely that their model was Ambrose, who had made the cathedral at Milan the focus for some memorable displays of imperial piety. Those court officials who had accompanied the campaign against Maximus (which involved all the major palatine bureaux) had witnessed the drama of Theodosius' penance; the military commanders who had returned with the army and with Theodosius' body in 395 could attest the impact of the memorial service, where Ambrose had delivered a powerful, and politically loaded, farewell to the emperor.[41]

39. The best account of the regime's character is A. Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius*, Berkeley 1993. New perspectives are promised by M. McEvoy, The jellyfish emperor: the emperor Arcadius and imperial leadership in the late fourth century, 395–408 AD, in D. Slootjes and E. Manders (ed.), *Leadership, Ideology and Crowds in the later Roman Empire*, Leuven, forthcoming.

40. Synesius, *De Regno* 25, 6, offers a telling glimpse of the impact of the sight of Arcadius in church. The ancient sources emphasize the role of the minister Eutropius in Chrysostom's appointment: Socrates, *HE* VI, 2; Sozomen, *HE* VIII, 2; Theodoret, *HE* V, 27; Palladius, *Dialogus*, 5; for an important discussion, suggesting that there were Antiochene interests in play too, see W. Mayer, John Chrysostom as Bishop: the view from Antioch, *JEH* 55, 2004, pp. 455–466, at pp. 455–458.

41. On the political charge of Ambrose's *De obitu Theodosii*, see A. Cameron, Theodosius the Great and the Regency of Stilicho, *HSPh* 73, 1968, pp. 96–102; for its reception in the East, see M. Stoppini, Da Ambrogio a Giovanni Crisostomo: una reinterpretazione di Teodosio il Grande, *AFLPer(filos)* 19, 1997–2000, pp. 271–283.

Interestingly, however, there is no record of any interaction in the cathedral. No extant cathedral homily of Chrysostom's explicitly acknowledges the emperor's presence. One reason for this is that Arcadius, reverting to the pattern of the Constantinian dynasty, reserved his attendance at the cathedral for the great festivals of the Christian year — Easter, Christmas, Epiphany and Pentecost.[42] But the disengagement went deeper. A telling episode is John's biographer's account of his consecration. He remarks upon the emperor's reaction: "Even the one wearing the purple robe and the diadem around his head (for he happened to be inside confirming the decision) was so overwhelmed by the shouts themselves and the multitude of those shouting that he showed his astonishment by his stance, his expression and his look."[43] The emperor is thus presented as an accidental spectator in a scene at which he must have played a central role.

Chrysostom's most effective contribution to enhancing imperial prestige was through the successive ceremonies to mark the arrival of relics over which he presided, and in which the imperial household participated. The orations he delivered on these occasions clearly convey the excitement generated. He thus acts as a cheerleader for the imperial couple when the relics of Phocas arrived from Pontus;[44] more elaborate (and more carefully choreographed) were the festivities accompanying the reception of an unnamed martyr, when the empress Eudoxia and her ladies attended the installation, and the emperor came the following day. Both occasions generated rhapsodic speeches from the bishop; such was the impact of these exhibitions of imperial piety that the martyr being celebrated went unnamed, and remains unidentified.[45]

But the emperor was a marginal presence in Chrysostom's Constantinople. Developing a rhetoric that he had developed in Antioch, the bishop laid claim to the streets as well as the cathedral. A notable consequence was a collision, early in his episcopate, with the homoeans, who had developed the practice of assembling in the city each week and holding processions to the suburban churches to which they had been consigned

42. See McLynn, The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing (cit. n. 2), p. 265; cf. below, nn. 00–00.

43. *Oratio funebris in laudem Sancti Johanni Chrysostomi*, 16: καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν τὴν ἁλουργίδα φοροῦντα καὶ τὸ διάδημα περικείμενον – καὶ γὰρ ἔτυχεν ἔνδον ὢν καὶ συναινῶν τῇ ψήφῳ – οὕτως αἱ βοαί τε αὐταὶ καὶ τῶν βοώντων τὸ πλῆθος ἐξέπληξεν, ὥστε τὸ θαῦμα μηνύειν καὶ στάσει καὶ χαρακτῆρι καὶ βλέμματι.

44. John Chrysostom, *De s. hieromartyre Phoca*, *PG* 50, col. 699–706: W. Mayer and B. Neil, *The Cult of the Saints: Select Homilies and Letters*, Crestwood 2006, pp. 75–87.

45. John Chrysostom, *Homilia secunda cum imperatrix media nocte...*, *PG* 63, col. 467–472; *Homilia tertia insequente die adueniente imperatore...*, 1, *PG* 63, col. 473–478. The former is usefully translated by W. Mayer and P. Allen, *John Chrysostom*, London 2000, pp. 85–92.

in 380.[46] John's decision to counter these with equivalent parades by his own supporters required resources not straightforwardly available to the cathedral (some of the clergy, we are told, were distinctly unenthusiastic[47]), and a member of the palace household was deputed to provide suitably impressive equipment (silver crosses are mentioned) and organize the choreography. But the emperor was so far removed from proceedings that he was hoodwinked by a classic manoeuvre: when the homoeans were provoked by John's counter-processions into a violent response, the selective evidence that was presented to him prompted Arcadius to ban their long-established parades, but not John's.[48] The continued cycle of such gatherings was instrumental in the eventual development of the "Johnnites," personally loyal to their bishop and prepared to resort to direct action in defence of his cause.[49]

John had a blankly uncompromising view of legitimate Christian territory: this embraced the streets and the squares of the city, but the all-important imperial ceremonial spaces, the hippodrome and the theatre, remained absolutely excluded.[50] He played no part in Arcadius' creation of an innovative, Christianized, victory monument in the emperor's new forum, despite his conspicuous role in the conflict with Gainas that we celebrated there;[51] and a decisive turning-point in his relations with the palace was his ill-tempered reaction to a new statue of the empress Eudoxia that was being dedicated in the Augusteum, outside the senate-house.[52]

It lies beyond the scope of this paper to examine the sharp deterioration in relations between John and the court, or the circumstances of his deposition and exile.[53] But one

46. Socrates, *HE* VI, 8; Sozomen, *HE* VIII, 8, 4–5. N. Andrade, The Processions of John Chrysostom and the Contested Spaces of Constantinople, *JECS* 18, 2010, pp. 161–189.

47. Palladius, *Dialogus* V, 146–150.

48. Both Socrates and Sozomen mention the imperial eunuch's wound and the anger that informed the emperor's response: Sozomen, *HE* VIII, 8, 5: κινηθεὶς δὲ πρὸς ὀργὴν ὁ βασιλεὺς.

49. John's supporters would include those whose natural allegiance was to the court: one imperial law aiming to curb disturbances after his exile is aimed at government bureaucrats (*CTh* XVI, 4, 4).

50. Andrade, The Processions of John Chrysostom (cit. n. 46), pp. 164–167.

51. J. F. Matthews, Viewing the Column of Arcadius at Constantinople, in D. Brakke, D. Deliyannis, and E. Watts (ed.), *Shifting Cultural Frontiers in Late Antiquity*, Farnham 2012, pp. 211–223; B. Kiilerich, *Late Fourth-Century Classicism in the Plastic Arts: Studies in the so-called Theodosian Renaissance*, Odense 1993, pp. 51–63.

52. Socrates, *HE* VI, 18, 1–6; Sozomen, *HE* VIII, 20, 1–3. For the issues at stake, see K. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley 1982, pp. 65–67.

53. Fundamental are J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, Friends and Enemies of John Chrysostom, in A. Moffatt (ed.) *Maistor: Classical, Byzantine and Renaissance Studies for Robert Browning*, Canberra 1984 (Byzantina Australiensia, 5), pp. 85–111; Id., The Fall of John Chrysostom, *NMS* 29, 1985, pp. 1–31;

aspect of the last phase has received insufficient commentary — the extent to which the rhythm was governed by the emperor's infrequent visits to the cathedral. A decisive point was a message relayed from Arcadius that he would not receive communion from him at the Christmas service; this was a signal for John's enemies to gather.[54] The crisis came with the approach of Easter, as John's enemies worried (according to his biographer) that the emperor would see for himself the weakness of their cause in the emptiness of the cathedral.[55] And the last act came five days after Pentecost, when again the question of hosting the emperor will have arisen: at this point the anti-John faction combined forces to lobby the emperor, and secured his definitive removal.[56]

The damage inflicted on the emperor's reputation for piety by the disastrous conclusion to the Chrysostom experiment was perhaps limited by the burning of the cathedral, which spared the emperor the need to appear at festivals with the "persecutors." The elaborate procession which conducted the remains of the prophet Samuel into Constantinople in 406, which featured Arcadius himself, his praetorian prefect (and John's determined enemy) Aurelian, the city prefect "and all the senate," nevertheless looks like an attempt to reassert the regime's ecumenical credentials;[57] the installation of the relics in the Great Church likewise suggests an attempt to claim the still-damaged cathedral for its core government congregation.[58] No churchmen are reported as participants; a contemporary comment from Jerome shows that this was perceived as Arcadius' own personal initiative, and it was a telling display of the emperor's reach.[59]

Arcadius' last recorded act of Christian piety is instructive. Socrates explains how he wanted to inspect the small shrine commemorating the alleged site of the execution of Acacius, one of Constantinople's few native martyrs, which was secluded in the courtyard of a large apartment-block. The emperor's brief visit attracted a massive crowd of spectators, including all the residents of the complex; after he departed the building suddenly collapsed,

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Id., *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford 1990, pp. 217–222. For a comprehensive account, incorporating recently available material, see C. Tiersch, *Johannes Chrysostomus in Konstantinopel (398-404). Weltsicht und Wirken eines Bischofs in der Hauptstadt des Oströmischen Reiches*, Tübingen 2002.

54. Socrates, *HE* VI, 18.

55. Palladius, *Dialogus* IX, 218–219; cf. *Oratio funebris* 87–89; Socrates, *HE* VI, 18.

56. Palladius, *Dialogus* X, 19–28.

57. *Chronicon Paschale*, a. 406.

58. J. Bardill, *Brickstamps of Constantinople*, 1, Oxford 2004 p. 55; Klein, Sacred Relics and Imperial Ceremonies (cit. n. 36), p. 84. The remains would be moved to a new church at the Hebdomon just four years later, in 410.

59. Jerome, *Contra Vigilantius* 5.

but casualties were minimized because of this providential exodus.[60] The episode indicates a continued imperial concern with processional outreach, projecting imperial piety into the residential suburbs of the city; it is striking, however, that the crowds are presented as spectators, eager to see the emperor's face and admire his bodyguard, rather than as fellow-devotees.[61] The emperor's prayers were credited with averting catastrophe, at least in the official version (one wonders about the reactions of those made suddenly homeless; the emperor's visit may well have seemed more curse than blessing). But particularly striking is the ephemeral character of the emperor's intervention. Imperial endorsement did not establish Acacius' walnut tree in the sacred topography of Constantinople, nor was the space providentially by the collapse appropriated for a major new basilica.[62] The episode encapsulates neatly the tentative, half-hearted quality of Arcadius' initiatives.

Theodosius II: From Piety to Power

Nearly fifty years after the rupture between Arcadius and Chrysostom, the emperor's son broke off relations with another bishop of Constantinople. But comparison between the two episodes reveals a massive change. According to the account presented by the exiled Nestorius, a keen observer of proceedings at the capital, Bishop Flavian was taking the Easter service in 449, when the emperor, who had already had a series of quarrels with him, entered the church with his entourage. There are almost certainly exaggerations: but what matter are the assumptions at work. "Flavian looked not upon him as a enemy and he took the Holy Gospel, to have mercy upon them... while all the bishops and clergy were assembled with him, and the [newly] baptized in their attire, while the people were crying aloud with him. And he fell upon his face and prostrated himself in the church, beseeching them to accept him making his defence... But the emperor dismissed him with scorn, menacing him as having insulted him [in prostrating himself], while the bishops and the clergy besought the emperor with Flavian, and the newly baptised prostrated themselves on the ground amidst the voices of the people; and they persecuted them as if [they were] acting insultingly towards [the Emperor], and he withheld himself from that time from entering into the church."[63]

60. Socrates, *HE* VI, 23, 2–6.

61. Socrates, *HE* VI, 23, 5: ἀφ' ὧν φανερώτερον τότε τοῦ βασιλέως τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ τὴν περὶ αὐτὸν δορυφορίαν ἠγοῦντο θεάσασθαι.

62. J. Wortley, The Byzantine Component of the Relic Hoard of Constantinople, *GRBS* 40, 1999, pp. 353–378, at pp. 358–363.

63. Nestorius, *The Bazaar of Heracleides*, trans. G. R. Driver and L. Hodgson, Oxford 1925, pp. 341–342.

Scholarship during the last two decades has done much to rescue Theodosius II from the pusillanimous image, summed up in Gibbon's sneer about his "perpetual infancy," that had endured until the very end of the twentieth century.[64] But modern studies have not yet done justice to the position which Theodosius achieved by the end of his reign, the longest since Augustus. As the previous sections have shown, Christian emperors tended not to flex their religious muscles inside cathedrals, where they were only very occasionally in a position to determine the liturgy. Yet here we see an emperor bearding a bishop in his den, as no Christian ruler had done before: and the nervous deference paid to Theodosius by the thousands of people present in the church suggests that he had made himself master in the cathedral in a way utterly unlike his predecessors. The purpose of this section is to help understand how he was able to achieve this.

Theodosius certainly had little to do with his first recorded ecclesiastical intervention, which occurred when he was just one year old. His mother Eudoxia, distressed at the quarrel between John Chrysostom and the rival preacher Severian of Gabala, took her infant son to the church of Holy Apostles, where John was sitting, placed the child on the bishop's knees, and "made him swear many oaths by baby Theodosius" until finally he agreed to a reconciliation.[65] This apparently minor incident (John's truce with Severian soon disintegrated) is important for two reasons. It is the very first encounter recorded by Socrates between an emperor and a bishop in a church, and although a number of previous encounters are recorded by the other fifth-century ecclesiastical historians, Rufinus, Sozomen and Theodoret, there are not many such references.[66] We hear considerably more of Theodosius' churchgoing career from the historians than of any previous emperor's; his is also the first traceable back to infancy. No previous emperor had been nurtured in the same way by the churches of Constantinople. The episode is also significant in that Theodosius, in the early summer of 402, was already an Augustus, having been raised to the purple that January, at the ripe age of eight months — younger than any of

64. The key studies for the purposes of this paper are: F. G. B. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief Under Theodosius II (408–450)*, Berkeley 2007; Diefenbach, Zwischen Liturgie und Civilitas (cit. n. 2); Van Nuffelen, Playing the ritual game in Constantinople (cit. n. 2); and C. Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2013, especially Kelly's introduction, pp. 3–64, and his own contribution, Stooping to conquer: the power of imperial humility, pp. 221–243. An important pioneering study is J. Harries, "Pius princeps:" Theodosius II and fifth-century Constantinople, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines*, Aldershot 1994, pp. 35–44. For Gibbon's characterization, see *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. 32.

65. Socrates, *HE* VI, 11, 20.

66. For discussion, see McLynn, The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing (cit. n. 2), pp. 267–270.

his predecessors, even among the notably precocious Theodosian Augusti.[67] His mother, too, was an Augusta.[68] It is also significant that the imperial party ambushed the bishop at Holy Apostles, which with the burial there of Theodosius in 395 had become more definitively a dynastic citadel; the three kilometres that the imperial party had to travel there from the palace will also have added much to the visibility of the intervention. Even before he could talk, Theodosius thus became the centre of attention in a church ceremony.[69] He was conspicuously a child of the church of Constantinople, and belonged to the Christian community there, in a way that neither his father nor his grandfather had. Even though Arcadius was probably also baptized in Constantinople, perhaps as a prelude to taking the purple in 383 aged five, he had been born in Spain; and the knees on which he was most famously dandled were not the bishop's but those of the philosopher Themistius.[70]

The next we hear of Theodosius is about his training, after his father's death when he was seven, in the arts of kingship. The details, given by Sozomen, include riding, drill in weapons and in letters; Theodosius is also taught to be decorous and kingly in processions, learns what clothes to wear and how to wear them, how to sit, how to walk, how to control his laughter and to be gentle and stern as occasion demanded. And he is also led into piety, becoming accustomed to pray constantly and to attend the churches regularly, to load the churches with dedications and heirlooms, and to prize priests and Christian philosophers.[71] Sozomen gives the credit for this education (apart from the riding, writing and weapons-training) to Theodosius' sister Pulcheria. The historian thereby laid the foundation for an enduring exaggeration of Pulcheria's political role which, despite some salutary correctives in recent years, continues to distort much modern scholarship.[72]

67. *Consularia Constantinopolitana*, a. 402; Arcadius had been six on his promotion, Honorius eight. Gratian had also been proclaimed Augustus at eight, and Valentinian II at four.

68. Eudoxia was created Augusta in January 400; the western government was still complaining several years later (*Collectio Avellana*, 38, 1, from 404).

69. Regrettably, the wonderful story of the infant Theodosius' granting of a petition when being carried home from his baptism ceremony in January 402, as recounted in Mark the Deacon's *Life of Porphyry*, must be dismissed as a sixth-century fabrication: T. D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History*, Tübingen 2010 (Tria Corda, 5), pp. 260–283; Id., The baptism of Theodosius II, *Studia Patristica* 19, 1989, pp. 8–12.

70. Themistius, *Or*. 16, 213a.

71. Sozomen, *HE* IX, 1, 6–8.

72. Pulcheria's apotheosis came with Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (cit. n. 52), pp. 79–228; summing up her achievements he compares her to her grandfather Theodosius I (p. 213); more measured judgements are presented by R. W. Burgess, The Accession of Marcian in the Light of Chalcedonian Apologetic and Monophysite Polemic, *BZ* 86–87, 1993–1994, pp. 47–68; Cameron and Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (cit. n. 39), pp. 399–403; J. Harries, Men without Women: Theodosius' consistory and the business of government, in Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II* (cit. n. 64), pp. 67–89.

For the present purposes, it suffices to set Sozomen's account of Theodosius' upbringing — the fullest statement anywhere of Pulcheria's political role — in context. The passage concerns her proclamation as Augusta: but Sozomen only arrived in Constantinople some ten years after the event, and was writing over twenty-five years after it, a relative outsider eager to please the dynasty. In this context the best interpretation of this passage is a lawyer's ingenious attempt to make sense of Pulcheria's proclamation, the first time in some three centuries years that an emperor's sister had been raised to the purple.[73] Sozomen's tidy mind makes him exaggerate the age difference (in fact only two years) to make his Theodosius still an infant when Pulcheria is fifteen — which gives her the chance to perform the respectable female task of child care, while simultaneously holding the dynastic fort. Sozomen's is therefore a purely schematic reconstruction, but repays attention not only for the attributes for which he gives Pulcheria credit, which must have meant something to his readers — and indeed Theodosius' processions, his dress sense and his severe looks are all relevant to his religious authority. More important, Sozomen presents an image of the imperial family as an interdependent whole, playing complementary roles in the projection of dynastic power. And the key to any understanding of the early fifth-century power-game at Constantinople is to see Theodosius and Pulcheria as members of the same team, under the same management: a dynastic "firm."

Pulcheria's promotion in 414 is to be explained from the viewpoint of the "Theodosian establishment," by this time (a full generation after Theodosius I's arrival in Constantinople) a substantial group of civilian officials and ex-officials whose careers and fortunes were linked to the dynasty.[74] To these people, the dangers presented by their counterparts in Ravenna would be at least as pressing as those of the barbarians on the frontiers, and in 414 the western government was again beginning to flex its muscles after six years of paralysis induced by Goths, usurpers and other distractions. In 413 Stilicho's former officer (and self-appointed avenger) Constantius celebrated a lavish consulship at Ravenna, stretching the resources of the government to the utmost:[75] this will have worried eastern minds, especially with the disappearance (presumably through death) of their own preternaturally long-serving prefect Anthemius at the same time. The eastern regime needed reinvigoration: and since a royal wedding for Pulcheria would have given too much power to her husband, it was a very politic stroke to devise the package of dedicating

73. For Ulpia Marciana, created Augusta by her brother in 105, see H. Temporini, *Die Frauen am Hofe Trajans. Ein Beitrag zur Stellung der Augustae im Prinzipat*, Berlin 1978, pp. 187–194.

74. Cf. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops* (cit. n. 53), pp. 132–145, for the "Arcadian establishment."

75. Olympiodorus, fr. 23 Blockley.

her to virginity (the first imperial woman to be subjected to this discipline) and following this with investiture with the imperial diadem.

At the same time, and probably accidentally, through Pulcheria the Theodosians created a link between the palace and cathedral which had not previously existed: the lack of such a connection had made possible the misunderstandings that destroyed John Chrysostom. The year after Pulcheria's accession the cathedral, which had been burnt down in the disturbances over John's exile in 404, was rededicated.[76] The connection was advertised by the altar of gold and precious stones which (as Sozomen describes) Pulcheria set up inside the cathedral to mark her vow of virginity: on the altar was an inscription dedicating it on behalf of both Pulcheria's own virginity, and her brother's rule.[77] This illustrates vividly the public face of the "Theodosian Firm."[78]

Above all, the altar dedication brings home Pulcheria's most conspicuous function as Augusta: she was present in the cathedral, among the people, every Sunday; Theodosius himself will only have attended regular cathedral services on the major feasts of the year: Easter, Christmas, Epiphany, Pentecost. The evidence for these respective rhythms of churchgoing, although indirect, is fairly conclusive. For the emperor the key evidence is Theodoret's account of the excommunication of Theodosius I by Ambrose, where the emperor languishes in the palace for eight months, until the approach of Christmas impels him to bring matters to a head. The eight months have no bearing on events in 390, but they indicate the maximum period that (in Theodoret's mid-fifth-century world-view) could elapse without the question of the emperor's admission to church becoming an issue, that is, the time from May to December, between Pentecost and Christmas.[79]

For Pulcheria, on the other hand, we have the information from a Syriac Nestorian source (the *Letter to Cosmas*) that the bishop of Constantinople would invite her and her ladies to dine with him each Sunday after communion.[80] This must imply that they attended his service in the cathedral. And the point is confirmed by a further, well-known, passage in the same *Letter to Cosmas*:

76. *Chronicon Paschale*, a. 415.

77. Pulcheria's Altar: Sozomen, *HE* IX, 1, 4.

78. Still more vivid would be the illustration provided by the Trier Ivory (cf. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (cit. n. 52), pp. 107–109); but controversy continues over the date and subject-matter J. Wortley, The Trier Ivory Reconsidered, *GRBS* 21, 1980, pp. 381–394; S. Spain, The Translations of Relics Ivory, Trier, *DOP* 32, 1977, pp. 281–304; recently S. Malmberg, Triumphal Arches and Gates of Piety at Constantinople, Ravenna, and Rome, in T. M. S. Birk, T. M. Kristensen, and B. Poulsen (ed.), *Using Images in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2014, pp. 168–170.

79. Eight Months: Theodoret, *HE* V, 18, 5. McLynn, The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing (cit. n. 2), pp. 268–270.

80. *Letter to Cosmas* 5, *PO* 9, p. 278.

> "On the Great Feast of Easter, the emperor had the custom to receive communion inside the Holy of Holies; Pulcheria desired the same; she convinced Bishop Sisinnius and she received the communion with the emperor inside the Holy of Holies. Nestorius would not allow this, but one day she approached according to her custom towards the Holy of Holies. Nestorius saw her and asked what this meant; the archdeacon Peter explained to him; Nestorius ran to the door of the Holy of Holies and stopped her and would not let her enter."[81]

There followed a brief, and celebrated, exchange;[82] then (to continue the letter's account): "she departed enraged, went to find the emperor and told him what had happened." The story clearly presupposes that Theodosius was not in the church when the incident occurred, and implies that they would be in church together at Easter, but that otherwise Pulcheria would be in church when he was not.[83] Although the words put into the protagonists' mouths have no doubt been coloured, the account gives a plausible picture of a princess testing the ground with the new bishop, in order to extend to ordinary services, and for herself in her own right, a privilege previously allowed only at Easter and through her brother.[84]

The incident also creates a minor problem for liturgical history. The issue of the imperial presence inside the sanctuary is mentioned by both Sozomen and Theodoret, but they both credit Theodosius I with the abolition of the custom of taking communion with the clergy, following one of his clashes with Ambrose of Milan, some forty years previously.[85] Another text, however, suggests that Pulcheria's gambit led to further adjustments. Following a bloody scuffle in the cathedral involving a group of armed asylum-seekers, a law was introduced in March 431 confirming the rights of fugitives to take asylum in churches, but only on condition that they stayed outside the sanctuary, and were without weapons.[86] But in the full text of the law, preserved in one of the document collections associated with the Council of Ephesus, the emperor invokes his own example as a reason why the sanctuary should be kept inviolate:[87]

81. *Letter to Cosmas* 8, *PO* 9, p. 279.

82. K. Cooper, Contesting the Nativity: Wives, Virgins, and Pulcheria's *imitatio Mariae*, *SJRS* 19, 1998, pp. 31–43.

83. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (cit. n. 52), pp. 153–154, assumes that the confrontation took place at Easter; the text indicates otherwise.

84. G. Bevan, *The New Judas: The Case of Nestorius in Ecclesiastical Politics*, Leiden 2016, pp. 89–90, considers Theodosius' reaction "adulterated or even fabricated;" but the incident itself is plausible.

85. Sozomen, *HE* VII, 25, 9; Theodoret, *HE* V, 18, 20. See above, at n. 38.

86. The Asylum Law: *CTh* IX, 45, 3; the context: Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, a. 431; Socrates, *HE* VII, 33.

> "We touch the most holy altar solely through the offering of gifts. As soon as we enter inside the enclosure which is surrounded by the circle of the holy things we step out again, and we assign nothing to ourselves from the divinity which is near."[88]

This is three years after Nestorius became bishop, and (presumably) his clash with Pulcheria. And in the clear statement that the emperor does not take communion in the sanctuary, but only leaves his offerings there, we probably see Theodosius' response to that clash: between 428 and 431 (probably towards the beginning of the period, since the law advertises an established practice) he had eliminated the grounds for the conflict by renouncing his own privileges.[89] Unless Sozomen and Theodoret, writing over a decade later, are simply confused, the discrepancy can best be explained if Theodosius I's gesture had not applied to the high feast of Easter, or else had fallen into abeyance.

But Theodosius introduces his account of his own restraint with a statement that identifies two further aspects of his churchgoing behaviour which are, to say the least, somewhat startling: "For we emperors, whom weapons always hedge by the right of our rulership, and who should not properly be without bodyguards, when we approach the temple of God we leave our weapons outside, putting aside the diadem, and the reverence of kingship glories in the image of royal humility."

The first change indicated in the passage is that the emperor has no armed bodyguards in church. This is a fifth-century innovation, and a startling one. In a sermon preached in Antioch (so before 397) John had described a scene of an emperor in church which (although merely an evocation of a legendary third-century episode) must reflect the imperial church parades which the congregation had witnessed under Valens, and began his account of the emperor's entrance by inviting the audience to "picture the spear-bearers and the armour bearers."[90] Gregory Nazianzen's famous account of the confrontation between Basil and Valens at Epiphany 372 likewise begins with the emperor entering Basil's church, "with all his spear-bearers around him."[91] And when Gregory recalls his own installation in Holy Apostles in Constantinople, he describes how he walked between Theodosius and

87. T. Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire 379–455 AD: The Theodosian Dynasty and its Quaestors*, Oxford 1998, p. 118, raises the possibility that Antiochus Chuzon, the praetorian prefect, might have drafted the law.

88. *ACO* I, 1, 4, pp. 61–65.

89. The Syriac of the *Letter to Cosmas*, apparently derived from material from the mid-430s, uses the past tense of the imperial custom.

90. John Chrysostom, *Sermo de Babyla* 32. For Valens as the model, McLynn, The Transformation of Imperial Churchgoing (cit. n. 2), pp. 253–255.

91. Gregory Nazianzen, *Or*. 43, 52.

his army; he then relates how at one point in the following service one of the soldiers drew his sword.[92] And in John Chrysostom's sermon about Arcadius at the ceremony for the martyrs, he describes how when the emperor and his bodyguard entered the shrine, some of the soldiers had laid down their shields, some of them their spears.[93] The language implies a semi-spontaneous gesture on a special occasion, not the usual procedure for entering a church — and it shows the emperor still attended by his pious praetorians.

Hardly less surprising is the fact that Theodosius does not wear the imperial diadem in church. This too is a fifth-century development. When Theodosius I performed his famous penance in Milan in 390, one of the things that amazed contemporaries was that he removed the insignia of imperial rule. The surprise still registered by Ambrose at this in 395 indicates that it had not yet become a regular part of the repertoire.[94] Again, in the period 400–404, during the installation of the martyr relics at Drypia, John Chrysostom enthuses about how the empress Eudoxia had shed her diadem during the procession; and the next day he makes still more of the fact that when Arcadius himself attended, he too removed his diadem as a sign of respect for the martyrs.[95] John's language emphasizes the exceptional character of these gestures, implying that the imperial couple the traditional headgear when attending church for the regular festivals.[96] In the West, too, Honorius did bare-headed obeisance to St.Peter in 404 — the date, just when the Chrysostom crisis was escalating, suggests an element of competition — and the gesture was recorded by Augustine in three separate texts.[97] John's biographer meanwhile speaks casually of Arcadius in the cathedral as "the wearer of the diadem," implying that there was no perceived contradiction between church and crown.[98] To help gauge the significance of the imperial regalia, John Chrysostom's evocation of the imperial church parade culminates in the dignity added by the purple robe "and the gems scattered all over his right hand, over the buckle of his tunic, and over his head, where they gleamed from the diadem."[99]

92. Gregory Nazianzen, *DVS* 1339; 1394.

93. John Chrysostom, *Hom. tertia insequente die adueniente imperatore*..., 1.

94. Ambrose, *De obitu Theodosii* 34.

95. Eudoxia: John Chrysostom, *Homilia secunda cum imperatrix media nocte*..., 2, *PG* 63, col. 470; Arcadius: John Chrysostom, *Homilia tertia insequente die adveniente imperatore*..., 1, *PG* 63, col. 473.

96. Note that when John advertises the prospect of the couple's attendance at the installation of Phocas (*De s. hieromartyre Phoca* 2), he refers to them as "those who wear the diadems;" there is no expectation that they will be bare-headed.

97. Augustine, *Sermo cum pagani ingrederentur* (Dolbeau 25), 26: *Posito diademate*, *pectus tundit*; cf. *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 65, 4: *deposito diademate*; *Ep*., 232, 3: *submisso diademate*.

98. *Oratio funebris in laudem Sancti Johanni Chrysostomi* 16: καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν τὴν ἁλουργίδα φοροῦντα καὶ τὸ διάδημα περικείμενον: above, at n. 43.

99. John Chrysostom, *Sermo de Babyla* 32.

This passage suggests the shock that the sight of the emperor appearing without it must have caused when the new style was first introduced; Chrysostom elsewhere shows the extent to which emperors were defined by their jewelled headdress.[100] Theodosius II was apparently a rather unprepossessing figure, of shorter than average height; it says much that he felt able to renounce so potent an element of the imperial mystique.[101]

There are thus two major changes in ritual between 400 and 431, with the evidence pointing strongly to the reign of Theodosius as the context for their introduction. And given the risks to the imperial person involved in both, the decision to implement them was most probably the emperor's own. Royal households are usually resistant to dramatic decisions, and the risks in stripping away the trappings that usually hedged a king had been illustrated all too dramatically in 419, when the city prefect Aetius, leaving the cathedral one Sunday, was approached by an old man in the guise of a petitioner, who suddenly pulled out a concealed weapon.[102] That the prefect escaped with nothing worse than a torn robe would not have alleviated the fears of those responsible for the emperor's security. Theodosius' potential vulnerability was exposed the same year that he passed his asylum law, when he had stones thrown at him during a procession to the public granary to inspect the grain supply, in a period of shortage.[103]

We can in fact point, cautiously, to a possible basis for these bold initiatives. The sermon attributed to Chrysostom after his return from his first exile includes one particularly striking jibe against his enemies, who had not hesitated to dye the baptistery with blood although it was a place where "the emperor enters, and throws down his diadem and his shield."[104] Controversy over the authenticity of the sermon continues, but it has been shown that a blood-stained baptistery makes perfect sense in the context of the struggles accompanying John's first exile; the doubts raised on lexical grounds, that Chrysostom does not elsewhere use the rare word cited here for baptistery, are over-scrupulous given how rarely he or any other author refers to such buildings at all.[105] An established custom of imperial humility at baptism ceremonies would help explain the innovations being

100. John Chrysostom, *De perfecta caritate* 6, itemzing the purple, the diadem, the throne, the brooch and the footwear as the ingredients of the imperial mystique.

101. John of Antioch, fr. 193.

102. *Chronicon Paschale*, a. 419.

103. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, a. 431.

104. John Chrysostom, *Post reditum a priore exsilio* (sermo 2) 2: Βασιλεὺς εἰσέρχεται καὶ ῥίπτει ἀσπίδα καὶ διάδημα.

105. Kelly, *Golden Mouth* (cit. n. 33), p. 234, for the historical context; G. Bevan and T. D. Barnes (ed. and trans.), *The Funerary Speech for John Chrysostom*, Liverpool 2013, pp. 17–18, for scepticism.

discussed here. Theodosius' first daughter Licinia Eudoxia was born in 422 and presumably baptized soon afterwards; the experience could have provided a template.

But the real importance of these innovations, and their relevance to the scene with which this section began, is that they are part of a process whereby Theodosius, as he grew to manhood, succeeded in making himself much more the master of the cathedral than any of his predecessors had been. However infrequent his visits, he was the first emperor to make them on his own terms rather than in obedience to prescribed forms. Six years before the asylum law, when he was 25, he was even able to organize an entirely impromptu church service, following the arrival of news of the defeat of a western usurper. Socrates describes how he was presiding over games in the Hippodrome when the news arrived: he invites the spectators to go with him to church to give thanks. And they followed, "all passing out of the circus singing praises together with him, as with one heart and with one voice... and once in the church they passed the remainder of the day in these devotional exercises."[106] Notable here is the emperor's readiness to take the liturgical initiative. The threat that Ambrose had once made, that an emperor might arrive at church and find no bishop there, has no possible purchase here: there is no sign of the bishop of Constantinople in Socrates' account.[107] Instead, Theodosius himself plays a role which is almost priestly.[108] It is worth considering the risks implied by an initiative like this: even if the summons to church was not completely spontaneous, much that could go wrong, in terms of crowd control at both hippodrome and cathedral, and of liaison with stadium officials and with clergy.[109] To explain the incident we must see it as an extension of the repertoire of interactions which Theodosius was developing with the people, in the circus as well as in church; the close relations that he developed wit the Green faction will probably have made the choreography more manageable.[110]

It is especially significant in this respect that Socrates reports another, undated, episode at the circus, where during a sudden snow-storm the emperor ordered that the races be

106. Socrates, *HE* VII, 23, 11–12.

107. The elderly bishop Atticus would die the following year.

108. Theodosius as priest: T. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State*, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 174–176.

109. The potential dangers of ritual innovation are sketched by Van Nuffelen, Playing the ritual game in Constantinople (cit. n. 2), pp. 185–186; Kelly, Stooping to conquer (cit. n. 64), pp. 240–243.

110. Theodosius' involvement with faction leaders led eventually to a reorganization of seating arrangements in the Hippodrome: Malalas, a. 400, with L. M. Whitby, The Violence of the Circus Factions, in K. Hopwood (ed.), *Organised Crime in Antiquity*, London 1999, pp. 229–251.

stopped, and instead invited the spectators to begin a prayer-meeting.[111] The two episodes can be combined into another example of how ceremonial development could occur, by building on previous initiatives; this second episode, where Theodosius led the hymns by parading inside the hippodrome, but without his regalia, can in turn be seen as an extension of the temporary discarding of the diadem at cathedral services (as well as an expression of his confidence in his ability to signal effectively to the faction leaders).[112]

Crucially, Theodosius' confidence in managing the people was matched by the ease with which he handled his churchmen. He was the first emperor to be able to compete with bishops on their own territory. He knew the scriptures well enough to be able to quote them by heart; and he had a formidable library of patristic authors to check his references. Socrates, who reports this, adds that bishops who met him found him to be like "a priest long since ordained:"[113] not all bishops will necessarily have been pleased to find him so. And Theodosius was able to play off the bishops against the holy men. The most telling example is a little-discussed incident recoded by Theodoret. A holy man visited the palace to present a petition. Theodosius rejected it, at which the holy man brusquely declared him excommunicated, and stomped off. Theodosius asked the bishop of Constantinople, who was present, what this meant, and was told not to worry, that the sanction had no validity. But Theodosius expressed disagreement, and accepted the penalty, setting in motion a manhunt for the monk so that he could restore him to communion himself.[114] The episode was from one point of view a demonstration of imperial power, with the truculent monk duly tracked down and a happy conclusion obtained; but at the same time the emperor demonstrated his right to set his own standards of piety while also showing up, like his grandfather with Nectarius over the eucharist, his bishop's laxity. The episode makes more intelligible the emperor's readiness to appropriate the cathedral for a day of mass prayer. And it also shows us the distance travelled since Ambrose and Theodosius I over the massacre of Thessalonica. No bishop could keep pace with a self-excommunicating emperor.

111. Socrates, *HE* VII, 22, 16–17. Discussion in Van Nuffelen, Playing the ritual game in Constantinople (cit. n. 2), p. 190; Kelly, Stooping to conquer (cit. n. 64), pp. 230–231; L. Gardiner, The imperial subject: Theodosius II and panegyric in Socrates' Church History, in Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II* (cit. n. 64), pp. 244–268, at pp. 262–263; it might also be noted that the call to prayer was a pragmatic deflection of the crowd's disappointment at a cancellation made necessary for health and safety reasons.

112. Socrates describes the emperor as leading the hymns ἐν ἰδιωτικῷ σχήματι, the same expression he uses for Vetranio when he was stripped of his diadem and purple robe (*HE* II, 28, 18). The meaning is more straightforward than is suggested by Kelly, Stooping to conquer (cit. n. 64), p. 231, n. 34.

113. Socrates, *HE* VII, 22, 5

114. Theodoret, *HE* V, 37, 1–2.

Conclusion: Theodosian Legacies

The developments in the style of imperial churchgoing that were the main theme of the previous section belong to the immediate prelude of Theodosius II's first significant intervention in ecclesiastical politics, his summons of the council of Ephesus in 431 (he was thirty years old; his grandfather had been 35 when his council of Constantinople convened in 381). It is unlikely that the correspondence between ritual change and conciliar initiative is entirely coincidental. Moreover, the approach to Theodosius adopted here might allow a more nuanced, and positive, understanding of his role at the council, where he continues to be presented a sorcerer's apprentice, unable to contain the forces he had summoned up.[115] There has yet to be an appraisal of his success in earning and (very largely) retaining the trust of the contending parties, and establishing himself as the referee to whom both sought to appeal. The physical distance that Theodosius kept from Ephesus (very different from his gradfather at Constantinople, or Constantine at Nicaea) might have served to reinforce the confidence that both Nestorius and Cyril, and their respective supporters, continued to place in him.

Theodosius would enjoy two further decades after 431, to refine and extend his repertoire of pious activities, and to consolidate his religious authority. The episode discussed at the beginning of the previous section, which belongs towards the very end of the preternaturally long reign, should be understood as the culmination of this protracted, patient process of devotional creativity. The hapless Flavian was the eighth bishop of Constantinople to minister to the emperor; the bishop was, moreover, himself a product of the cathedral establishment, so would have been schooled in habits of deference. And the two previous decades had seen further initiatives in the expression of imperial piety, which for considerations of space cannot be discussed in the present paper, but which had further strengthened Theodosius' religious authority.[116]

115. The main failing of the excellent study of Bevan, *The New Judas* (cit. n. 84), is the one-dimensional presentation of imperial concerns and initiatives. T. Graumann, Theodosius II and the politics of the first Council of Ephesus, in Kelly (ed.), *Theodosius II* (cit. n. 64), pp. 109–129, is shrewd but more limited in scope than the title implies.

116. The procession to the Hebdomon after the earthquake of January 447 is nicely covered by Kelly, Stooping to conquer (cit. n. 64), pp. 221–223; for the vexed question of relating religious initiatives and specific disasters, see B. Croke, Two Early Byzantine Earthquakes and their Liturgical Commemoration, *Byzantion* 51, 1981, pp. 122–147. Another significant event, where Theodosius again upstaged the cathedral clergy, was the installation in Holy Apostles of the remains of John Chrysostom, in 438: Socrates, *HE* VII, 45, 4.

The emperor's descent on the cathedral in 449, and his ability to impose his will on bishop, clergy, and a full contingent of the newly baptized, should therefore be seen as the product of many years of hard work and patient application. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to explore in the political consequences of the shift in the style of imperial self-presentation, the sustained investment in an image of applied piety, that has been identified as a distinctive feature of Theodosius' preternaturally long reign. But the browbeating of Flavian was the prelude to the second council of Ephesus, where the imperial will was much more explicitly in evidence, and much more forcibly deployed against dissenters, than in 431 — or indeed at any previous imperially-summoned church council. Second Ephesus in turn provided a template for Chalcedon, and subsequent imperially-endorsed initiatives. It might therefore be asked to what extent Theodosius' hard-earned dominance of the cathedral of Constantinople might have misled him and his ministers to expect that this mastery could be extended across the churches of his empire, and whether his successors inherited similar expectations. If so, the consequences of changes in churchgoing habits would prove momentous indeed.

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