

Introduction

Sokrates of Constantinople, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, reports a skirmish that broke out on the streets of his native city one night at the end of the fourth century c.e.¹ For some time, two competing factions of Christians had been gathering for nocturnal vigils. That night, tensions between the groups had finally culminated in one group attacking the other shortly before dawn. The choirmaster of one of the vigils was struck on the forehead with a stone, and participants from both sides were injured or killed. The emperor Arkadios responded swiftly to the incident. Not only had the city's peace and order been disturbed, but the imperial household had been offended, for the man who had been struck was the eunuch of Arkadios's wife, the empress Eudoxia. The offense could not go unpunished. The emperor forbade the guilty party from holding its vigils or singing its hymns in public—indeed, it could no longer be tolerated even to assemble within the city walls.

We know nearly nothing of the demographic composition of the groups involved in this episode. Possibly the participants were neighbors, perhaps even extended families. It is just as likely that these two groups represented different social classes. Also possible is that one vigil consisted primarily of foreigners, for there was a noticeable community of Goths in late fourth-century Constantinople, who practiced their rituals apart from the rest of the city's population.² These were

1. Sokrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.8.

2. For more on the Gothic population in Constantinople in the late fourth century and the conflicts between this population and other groups in the city, see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Barbarians and Bishops: Army, Church, and State in the Age of Arcadius and Chrysostom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 190–91, 277–78; for Chrysostom's interaction with the Goths of Constantinople, see *ibid.*, 169–70; J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom, Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Ithaca, NY:

a foreign people that had moved into Roman territory on the northeastern peripheries of the empire over the fourth and fifth centuries. While regarded as a distinct population legally, culturally, and linguistically, members of the Gothic tribes served in the Roman army, with some rising to high-ranking imperial posts (including in the imperial court).³ In Constantinople, this population was largely associated with “Arian” Christianity, although their separation from the rituals of the predominantly Greek-speaking population of the city was likely more complicated. Whatever the precise demographics, however, the two vigils were in some ways indistinguishable. Both involved public processions with prayers and hymns, and both groups likely carried candles, crosses, and incense. They even occurred within the same space and time. In the jostling cacophony, the night lit only by candles, how easy would it have been to distinguish between the two groups? We can imagine quite a chaotic scene as the two groups mixed and mingled, perhaps joining in song or attempting to shout one another down.

There was, however, one very clear marker that distinguished the two groups: claims to orthodoxy supported by the imperial court. Sokrates identifies one group as “Arianizers,” suggesting that these were individuals who had actively turned to the teaching of Arius that God the Son is not co-eternal with God the Father.⁴ Decades before, their bishops had enjoyed imperial favor and had possession of the most important churches in Constantinople. But that was nearly thirty years past. Now they were considered heterodox—“heretics”—and were forbidden from holding eucharistic sacrifices within the city walls. Even so, the Arianizers had continued to gather in the colonnaded streets near Constantinople’s gates, where they sang hymns and processed to churches located outside the city walls. The other group was composed of Nicene Christians, who held the Son to be co-eternal and of the same substance as God the Father. These were led by their bishop, John Chrysostom. In contrast to the Arianizers, they enjoyed the patronage and support of the imperial household, but they had only recently begun performing vigils of their own. As Sokrates explains, John had organized his vigil processions in direct competition with the Arianizers, out of the fear that “the most simple-minded [τῶν ἀπλουστέρων]” would be lured into the arms of heretics.⁵ The empress had provided him with funds for the acquisition of silver pro-

Cornell University Press, 1995), 142–43; Chris De Wet, “John Chrysostom and the Mission to the Goths: Rhetorical and Ethical Perspectives,” *HTS* 68, no. 1 (2012): 3–6.

3. Averil Cameron, *The Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity: AD 395–700*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 42–44.

4. Sokrates uses the term “Arianizer” rather than Arian (the latter term is how Sokrates’s language is translated by A. C. Zenos in the 1890 Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series), just as he uses “Christianize” elsewhere to signal an active performance of being or becoming a member of a ritual group rather than as a marker of static identity.

5. Sokrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.8.4.

cessional crosses, and a member of the imperial court was appointed to lead the processions. Although the Arianizers, who were already in a vulnerable position, were blamed for the attack, John and his clergy may well have been the instigators here. Sokrates, who clearly held no great love for John, insinuates as much, in fact, commenting that while “John’s objective appeared fitting, he accomplished his goal with unrest and battle.”⁶

The incident recounted by Sokrates points to three key dynamics of the late antique religious environment upon which this study focuses. The first and most obvious is the intensity of the contention surrounding cult practices. Even at the end of the fourth century, at a moment when Christianity is assumed to be the official religion of the empire, the religious environment of late antique Constantinople remained highly competitive. At times this competition led to conflict, even open violence, as in the incident related by Sokrates. John Chrysostom could have held his vigils elsewhere. But he did not. Instead, he chose to combat the supposed Arianizers within the same physical space, with the same ritual actions. He sought to gain sole control of that space, and he succeeded. The violence of the vigil was an opportunity to forcefully distinguish “orthodoxy” from “heresy.” As the anthropologist Neil Whitehead has argued, part of violence’s efficacy as a strategy for social containment is that it defines the “highly unstable border” of cultural order and marks what is deemed acceptable and unacceptable by members of social groups (in this case, those involved in the two processions).⁷ Moreover, the incident was far from a meaningless incident of violence; rather, it was a performative, relational act involving the instigators, their victims, and any witnesses (including those reading about it) in the construction of cultural meaning, namely, the clear demarcation between the two ritual assemblies and imperial support for John Chrysostom and the Nicene church.⁸ Similar dynamics were clearly at work in many instances of violence in late antique Constantinople.

Second, this incident illustrates the importance of communal ritual action in creating a sense of the civic community as a cohesive, well-ordered social unit. Theorists of ritual like Catherine Bell have shown how ritualized actions aid in

6. Ibid. 6.8.5: ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν σκοπὸς Ἰωάννου ἐδόκει εἶναι χρηστός, σὺν ταραχῇ δὲ καὶ κινδύνοις τὸ τέλος ἐδέξατο. For another account of the incident, see Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.8, who does not share Sokrates’s dislike of John Chrysostom. For Sokrates’s negative portrayal of John, see Wendy Mayer, “The Making of a Saint: John Chrysostom in Early Historiography,” in *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters*, ed. Martin Wallraff and Rudolf Brändle, AzK 105 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 40–45. Unless otherwise noted all translations are the author’s.

7. Neil Whitehead, “Introduction: Cultures, Conflicts, and the Poetics of Violent Practice,” in *Violence*, ed. Neil Whitehead (Sante Fe: School of American Research Press, 2004), 9.

8. For more on violence as a social performance that produces meaning, see David Riches, “The Phenomenon of Violence,” in *The Anthropology of Violence*, ed. Riches (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 8–9.

creating seemingly homogeneous social groups, regardless—and often, in spite of—of any diversity or disagreement within those groups.⁹ Additionally, these theorists have argued that the body is not simply something that engages in ritualized action; it is a political field upon which a cultural system's values and social hierarchies are mapped through repeated ritual engagement.¹⁰ In other words, the body participates with its social environment in a process of mutual formation: the environment shapes and is shaped by the body; the body internalizes and replicates the power structures of its environment. For John, like many of his contemporaries, a paramount concern was ensuring that the people of his city were engaging in what he regarded to be the correct rituals, worshipping the true God and adhering to the correct understanding of Christ. Concerned that what he viewed to be a heretical group would exercise undue influence on the weaker members of his flock, not only endangering their souls but also fragmenting the civic community, John devised a new ritual (his own ritual procession) that looked like the old one (the processions of the Arianizers). The form had not changed: the participants would not miss the abandoned practices, because they had not truly been abandoned, only reoriented and replaced by “orthodoxy.” Here it is important to recognize that this was a population deeply accustomed to engaging in ritual actions, not only to demonstrate their relationship with the divine entities who protected their city, but also as forms of entertainment and performances of social inclusion. For many among such a population, it would have been completely natural to engage in the ritual events around them, not because they were associated with one group or another, but because they were ritual events—a possibility that clearly disquieted John, but also made his own vigils such an effective tool. Thus, the pull of ritual habit made it easier for individuals to move between supposedly distinct ritual groups, a phenomenon that adds depth to the potential for conflict, but also points to the need for mechanisms, including speech-acts and violence, to force distinctions between these groups, even while allowing those habits to work to one's own advantage.

The third element here is memory, specifically, the skillful curation of memory that privileges certain elements in a social group and vilifies others. Our sources for this period carefully craft their narratives about intra-group conflict, highlighting incidents that support their own ideological commitments and often neglecting those that would undermine their claims. Such curation is particularly apparent in the histories that survive from the fifth century, namely, those of Philostorgios, Sokrates, Sozomenos, and Evagrius, among others, who pulled their accounts from earlier sources and arranged them into coherent narratives. From

9. For the role of ritualized action in creating the perception of a homogeneous group, see Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 189–91, 210–11.

10. *Ibid.*, 83–84.

this perspective, the immediate effects of the incident, while important at the time, fade into the background, supplanted by the potential consequences this act of redaction has for a new social context. In this instance, it is important to note not only that Sokrates is our first source for this episode of violence, but also that he is writing about it nearly a half century after the fact. Not once does John Chrysostom allude to the events of that night in his own writings, nor does it appear in the earliest biographical accounts of him, produced shortly after his death.¹¹ Presumably, Sokrates relied on reports of the incident from an archive or from personal recollection (either his own or that of his elders).¹² If so, these sources are lost to time. What Sokrates offers to his readers is in any case a *memory* of past events, redacted to communicate a particular understanding of history. But memory, even when presented as the objective facts of history, is a tricky thing. Between the vigils and the time Sokrates was writing, circumstances had changed considerably. John Chrysostom had fallen out of favor and twice been exiled; his most devoted followers had protested by rioting and then refusing to participate in the rituals of the imperial church until his memory was rehabilitated. This rehabilitation occurred a few decades later, when his name was restored to the diptychs of Constantinople's Great Church in 423 and his remains were translated to the city in 438.¹³ At this point, there was a new emperor, Theodosios II, who had been an infant, or perhaps not even born yet, at the time of the incident. By then Constantinople had been through no fewer than six bishops, and Theodosios's court was now embroiled in conflict between Nicene and Nicene, rather than Christian and pagan or Nicene and non-Nicene. Sokrates's narrative reflects these successive conflicts, and his view of history not only supports the values and structures of his day, but also reflects mid-fifth-century questions and conflicts about episcopal authority and imperial power.¹⁴ But Sokrates also reveals continued opposition to John and the rehabilitation of his memory, insinuating that he was a schismatic and a tyrant.¹⁵

11. In his *Dialogus de vita Joannis* (5), Palladius recounts Chrysostom's institution of vigils in Constantinople, but does not mention this incident. There is allusion to the refrain sung by the Arianizers, however, in John's *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Hebraeos* 1.1.

12. Wendy Mayer suggests that the episode is from an anti-Johannite source that no longer survives. See Mayer, "Making of a Saint," 39–41. It is hard to imagine that Sokrates is fabricating this incident, given that he relies so heavily on earlier literature throughout his history, but I admit my own suspicion that he occasionally invents episodes that support his narrative agenda.

13. Sokrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.25.2; Theophanes, *Chronographia* AM 5912.

14. In fact, Sokrates's narrative of John Chrysostom's episcopate displays parallels to the controversies of the younger Theodosios's court, particularly evident in the actions of his own bishop, Nestorios. See discussion in Teresa Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 22–23.

15. Mayer, "Making of a Saint," 40–44.

This book examines the confluences of these three dynamics—conflict, communal ritual, and memory—as they contributed to changes in Constantinople’s religious structures from the city’s founding until the death of Theodosios II (330–450 C.E.). Constantinople occupies a unique position in the history of late antique religious change during the fourth and early fifth centuries C.E., both as a recent imperial foundation and in its growing influence as an administrative and cultural center. The emperor Constantine had founded the city as his dynastic capital in November 324, but even at the time of his death in May 337, it was not an obviously Christian city. Its public and imperial spaces were still largely traditional (or “pagan”) in their resonances, and Constantine’s building program only included one clearly identifiably Christian cult site.¹⁶ Over the course of the fourth century, however, various individuals asserted their presence in the city’s cultic landscape and attempted to control the interpretation of monuments and rituals. These processes accelerated under the Theodosian dynasty (379–453 C.E.), when the institution of the imperial church that is called “Theodosian Christianity” in this book was advanced. At first glance, Theodosian Christianity aligns with Trinitarian Christianity as defined by the Council of Nicaea, which Nicene bishops regarded as orthodoxy. But in the contestations preceding the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the definitional boundaries of Nicene Christianity were undetermined (or underdetermined), as is evident from the shifting political networks and the continual doctrinal debates among those who claimed Nicene orthodoxy.¹⁷ And even after Chalcedon, the contours of orthodoxy remained contested. In using the term “Theodosian Christianity” to describe the clergy supported by the imperial court after 381, my emphasis is on *imperial patronage*, not doctrinal definition. As I argue in subsequent chapters, doctrinal debates in Constantinople were as much manifestations of political maneuvering as they were about disagreements in theology.¹⁸

However, my aim here is not so much to provide a history of Constantinople’s physical and institutional development in the fourth century C.E., which has been extensively studied, particularly in the foundational surveys of Raymond Janin,

16. See my arguments below in chapter 2.

17. The heated debates about Christology were as much disagreements over doctrine as manifestations of political networks attempting to position themselves against each other and draw concrete boundaries in the face of fluid social relations.

18. We should also allow that the visions of Christian orthodoxy taking shape elsewhere, especially in the Western Empire, might be inflected in different ways than those emerging from Constantinople, even when these visions intersect, overlap, and resonate with the Theodosian Christianity centered on Constantinople. In other words, while Christian “orthodoxy” in Rome and elsewhere may seem consistent with Theodosian Christianity, referring to it as Theodosian Christianity might obscure important contestations that were occurring between agents in various locations.

Gilbert Dagron, Cyril Mango, and others.¹⁹ Rather, I am interested in the opportunity the processes occurring in Constantinople offer to consider the factors, contingent circumstances, and social interactions that contributed to large-scale social change. The city's accelerated development and ties to the imperial court refracted related contestations and redefinitions, not only of Christianity, but also of religion per se that were occurring elsewhere in the empire. The heightened nature of these debates in Constantinople consequently illustrates a civic and ritual environment changing over time as people interacted with, negotiated, and interpreted it. These interactions were messy and complex, often contentious, and occasionally violent. Change in religious structures sometimes resulted from calculated alterations of authority or practice, but it was often the accidental by-product of political or social maneuvering.

Additionally, an examination of the development of late antique Constantinople allows us to consider what happens when individuals with strong commitments to

19. Gilbert Dagron, "Les moines et la ville: Le monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcédoine (451)," *T&MByz* 4 (1970): 229–76; Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1974); and Dagron, "Constantinople. Les sanctuaires et l'organisation de la vie religieuse. Topographie chrétienne," *Actes du XIe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne: Lyon, Vienne, Genève et Aoste (21–28 septembre 1986)*, ed. Noël Duval, François Baritel, and Philippe Pergoa (Vatican City: Pontificio instituto de archeologia cristiana; Rome: École française de Rome, 1989), 1069–84; Raymon Janin, *Constantinople byzantine: Développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1964) and Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin*, pt. 1, *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, vol. 3: *Les églises et les monastères* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1969); and Cyril Mango, "The Development of Constantinople as an Urban Centre," in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers*, ed. Aristide D. Caratzas (New Rochelle, NY: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986), 177–36; and Mango, *Le développement urbain de Constantinople, IVe–VIIe siècles* (Paris: De Boccard, 2004). Other significant studies include Sarah Bassett, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Franz Alto Bauer, *Stadt, Platz und Denkmal in der Spätantike: Untersuchungen zur Ausstattung des öffentlichen Raums in den spätantiken Städten Rom, Konstantinopel und Ephesos* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1996); and Bauer, "Urban Space and Ritual: Constantinople in Late Antiquity," *AAAH* 15, n.s., 1 (2001): 27–61; Albrecht Berger, "Streets and Public Spaces in Constantinople," *DOP* 54 (2000): 161–72; and Berger, *Konstantinopel: Geschichte, Topographie, Religion* (Stuttgart, Anton Hiersemann, 2011); Peter Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople, ca. 350–850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London: Routledge, 1994); Marlia Mundell Mango, "The Commercial Map of Constantinople," *DOP* 54 (2000): 189–207; Thomas Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople: Architecture and Liturgy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971); and Wolfgang Müller-Wiever, *Bildlexikon zur Topographie Istanbul: Byzantion–Konstantinupolis–Istanbul bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, 1977). The modern study of the city's topography begins with Pierre Gilles's four-volume *De topographia Constantinopoleos, et de illius antiquitatibus libri quator* (Lyon: Guillaume Rouillé, 1561), a study of the city's mythical foundations, history, and topography, using Greek sources to reconstruct the monuments that had been lost to the Ottoman city he encountered. Gilles's work was followed by that of Charles Du Fresne Du Cange's *Historia Byzantina duplici commentario illustrata* (Paris: Billaine, 1680), based on Gilles and literary sources.

a rather exclusive system gain a certain degree of legitimacy and backing from those in power. In this case, such individuals presented themselves as representatives of particular social groups (doctrinal factions, Christians, Hellenes, Jews, etc.), and it is easy to rely on these identifications when describing Constantinople's social landscape. However, as political scientists and sociologists remind us, social categories of this sort are rarely—if ever—accurate descriptions of social configurations. Rather, they are “imagined communities” (to use Benedict Anderson's term) or the products of “groupist rhetoric” (as Rogers Brubaker puts it).²⁰ Brubaker argues that individuals invested in the existence of an imagined group develop already-existing social categories (e.g., ethnicity, religion) in order to distinguish members of these categories from those of other categories. This type of activity facilitates the establishment of a recognizable group identity as seen from both inside and outside that group, even when the group itself is not a bounded entity, and supposed members identify themselves in any number of ways, depending on social situation or circumstances.²¹ In our case, the individuals developing the social categories were frequently Christian bishops and rhetors, particularly those who had the support of the imperial court. Their efforts to establish and enforce group commitments depended on rhetoric about violence and civic memory, attempts to control ritual space, and the legislative censure of particular groups. By taking these considerations into account, we can analyze more fully the range of strategies utilized by influential persons in the city (e.g., Christian bishops, traditionalist rhetors, emperors) to produce new interpretive frames for those interactions and reshape habits. Ultimately, the combination of these factors allowed these individuals to present Constantinople as a thoroughly Christian city where orthodoxy reigned under the protection of the emperor.

Unfortunately, the material culture of late antique Constantinople is barely recognizable in the modern city, a fact that makes the literary evidence all the more important. By far the most immediate evidence for Constantinopolitan public cults is to be found in the literary records of public speech-acts of Christian bishops (i.e., orations, homilies, and lectures) that survive from the period, especially those of Gregory of Nazianzos, John Chrysostom, Nestorios, and Proklos, as well as orations by elite non-Christians such as the rhetorician Libanios and the emperor Julian. Important, too, are the histories produced by both Christians and non-Christians during the fourth and fifth centuries and the legislation of the Theodosian Code. Of course, these sources are far from neutral. As productions of the educated elite, they direct our attention to the activities and social positioning of

20. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 2016), 5–7; Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 19.

21. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 7–10, 68–69.

that social class, and even more so to the positions of the individuals and groups later generations considered to be compatible with Theodosian Christianity. Moreover, these texts are embedded in ideological programs that often present prescriptions as though they were descriptions of actual events, hindering our access to how people engaged with public ritual practice and understood the relationship between those events and imperial patronage. Nonetheless, these sources are still useful in exploring the Christianization of Constantinople, because they demonstrate a shared fear of competitors and anxiety over the potential influence of competitors in gaining control over the city's religious frameworks. Consequently, we can approach these texts as the artifacts or residue of the contestations and competitions among the city's cultural elite and as evidence of the various strategies used to advance different visions of normative imperial identities.

While my analysis here often focuses on larger patterns of thought and social mechanisms, my ultimate goal is to produce a more nuanced analysis of public ritual activity in late antique Constantinople, and by extension, a model for analyzing similar activity in other late antique Roman cities. Insofar as it examines how a civic community and imperial court came to be closely identified with Christianity, this book might appear to be a study of conversion. Fundamentally, however, it is not about conversion, which is an act or process undertaken by the individual and, at least within modern discourse, implies not only active, free choice between available religious options, but also a relatively high degree of autonomy and individuality. Although the average late antique Constantinopolitan may often have had the agency to make such choices about cultic affiliations, a more complex set of dynamics was involved in late antique society, where individual, familial, and social ties dictated participation in particular cult practices, including those that appear to us to be clearly Christian. I would even venture to say that the confluence of factors necessary for the reconfiguration of religious frameworks during this period was often a matter of chance. Saying this, however, does not deny the quite conscious efforts of some individuals to organize these frameworks in their favor.

AN OUTLINE OF THIS STUDY

The following chapters explore the mechanisms of social change and the performance of civic cult in Constantinople as they developed during the fourth and early fifth centuries. Chapter 1 outlines the broad habits of thought and practice that guided cultic expression into the mid-fourth century C.E. There was considerably more continuity in these habits than often assumed in studies of the religious changes that occurred during late antiquity. Assumptions about religion and expectations about cult practice were communicated through multiple modes of cultural production, from public rhetorical performance and literary production

to visual displays and even the technologies of cult practice. So, too, did the literature and techniques of rhetoric taught in the classrooms that trained the boys who would become priests, local magistrates, and imperial officials—that is, the members of the civic community who bore the greatest responsibility for ensuring that the demands of cult practice were fulfilled. This training formed a deep cultural memory that guided expectations about obligation to the gods and elite responsibility for civic cult observances. Consequently, it is not surprising that traditional paradigms continued to guide civic religion after the accession of Constantine, even as Christian bishops, who now frequently came from elite families and had received traditional educations, gained control of civic priesthoods and attempted to impose new discourses about the nature of the divine.

This discussion provides a foundation for analyzing the changes of the following century, both in considering how the religious structures of early Constantinople fit within existing patterns and for seeing the distance between those patterns and the developments that occurred by the middle of the fifth century. Chapter 2 turns to the manifestation of these cultic patterns in Constantinople during the reign of Constantine the Great, who refounded Byzantium in 324 with a decidedly imperial armature. While the emperor granted Christian cult sites a place within this rapidly developing landscape, we should not imagine that Christianity had supplanted traditional cults. Rather, traditional paradigms of imperial religion, including the centrality of the emperor as both an agent and object of cult, continued to govern the frameworks of civic cults. Christian leaders sought to recast the traditional landscape they encountered into one that could solidify their new, but still insecure, position within imperial religious structures. The chapter concludes by exploring one instance of this type of reinterpretation, namely, Eusebios of Caesarea's *ekphrasis* of the Apostoleion, Constantine's mausoleum, in which he dictates that the viewer should experience the monument as a Christian temple, stripped of any traditional resonances of emperor cult. Eusebios's reinterpretation of the mausoleum elided Christian and imperial practices in a prominent, highly charged physical location and thus provided a focal point for normative understandings of Christianity as a cult with close imperial ties.

During the reign of Constantine's successor, Constantius, Christian bishops gained firm control over the cultic structures of Constantinople. However, the boundaries between social groups and their associated practices and cult sites remained remarkably fluid. In order to strengthen these boundaries, Christian bishops took advantage of moments that provided the illusion of a group's existence and in doing so redefined the contours of civic religion more broadly. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the ways in which these imagined communities were articulated and their boundaries enforced, first through moments of conflict and physical violence and then through ritual engagement. Chapter 3 examines the physical violence that arose between the supporters of two prominent Christian bishops, Makedonios (identi-

fied as a “Pneumatomachos,” someone who taught that the Spirit is not God) and Paul (a proponent of Nicene Christianity). Within their initial political context, these confrontations strengthened the imagined boundaries between social groups by performatively marking the limits of sanctioned religious configurations. At the same time, they enforced existing social hierarchies, especially in the public exercise of imperial authority. But this violence also had an afterlife. The second half of the chapter examines the politics of transmitting the historical memory of these confrontations in the writings of the fifth-century historians Sokrates and Sozomenos. These authors drew on narratives of earlier violence, both weaving them together into larger narratives that accentuated accounts of mutilation and trauma and plotting crucial events in Constantinople. This curation of history had a double effect: it subverted and vilified the previous regime, while situating Constantinople firmly at the center of ecclesiastical politics.

Chapter 4 approaches the formation of imagined communities in terms of ritual performance. Two dynamics are crucial here: the highly performative nature of ritual action and the relationship between the various ritualized actions found in the late antique city. The chapter focuses on John Chrysostom’s understanding of the effects of habit, especially habits of ritual, on the soul and his anxiety over the disastrous consequences of engaging in the wrong types of practice. For John, individuals were never simply passive witnesses to ritualized behaviors. Their mere presence at a public communal ritual brought them into a drama of scripted behavior and marked their implied consent to the meanings, hierarchies, and commitments communicated within that drama. Moreover, as argued in the second half of the chapter, despite the fact that our sources construct and seek to impose clear distinctions between the rituals of different groups, they also reveal that the communal rituals of late antique Constantinople cited each other. That is, these events loosely followed and improvised on a script or shared vocabulary of action in ways that created, reinforced, and shifted meanings. Consequently, public rituals were critical spaces for John and others interested in shaping understandings about the composition of the civic community. By exploiting habits of ritual and imposing his own formulations on the ritual action through homilies and hymns, John could actively reshape perceptions of the ritual group and social identifications.

Chapter 5 explores the continued development of Constantinople’s religious structures under Theodosios II (408–50 C.E.). It is during this period that we see Theodosian Christianity come to fruition as the imperial administration orchestrated a series of legislative and ecclesiastical moves aimed at homogenizing civic and imperial cult under the formulations of Nicaea as represented through communion with the bishop supported by the emperor. While such moves were no doubt welcomed by clergy who received imperial support, they were likely not motivated (or at least not entirely motivated) by court concern for advancing the

dominance of Nicene Christianity. Theodosios II became the sole Augustus in the East at the young age of seven, and when he attained his majority, he faced the challenge of asserting his authority within the structures of imperial administration, a challenge quite similar to those of earlier “child emperors” (and one that had only rarely been navigated successfully). Consolidating imperial religion was one way for the young emperor to address this challenge, and supporting Nicene bishops helped bolster Theodosios’s legitimacy by drawing on the legacy of his father and grandfather. Indeed, the increasing monopoly of Theodosian Christianity over the cult structures of Constantinople coincided with key points in the young emperor’s maturation, namely, the attainment of his legal majority in 415/16, his marriage and the birth of his first child in 421/22, and his “full adulthood” from 428 on. These moves also coincided with the development of a rhetoric about Christian orthodoxy that tied the authority of Theodosios II and the bishop of Constantinople to their perceived affirmation of the Council of Nicaea. As it pertains to Constantinople, this rhetoric is perhaps seen most clearly in three histories written by authors living in the city during Theodosios’s reign: Philostorgios, Sokrates, and Sozomenos.

To make sense of complicated phenomena, scholarly analysis often reduces complex social interactions to uncomplicated narratives, and my analysis here risks doing the same.²² But we should always keep in mind that these interactions were extremely messy and rife with conflict and competing interests. The various strategies examined—rhetorical reshaping of landscape and memory, emphasis on violent incidents, and ritual engagement—defined legitimate expressions of religion, eliminating deviant groups from the city. None of these strategies on their own accomplished the remarkable changes that occurred in Constantinople. Ultimately, the transformation of the city’s cultic landscape was due to the successful, if haphazard, efforts of individuals—some known, others forgotten—to gain control of discourses about ritualized communal action, violence, and institutional memory.

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Finally, a quick note is in order regarding the conventions I have adopted for Greek names and toponyms. In general, I have chosen to transliterate Greek names rather than use their Latin (or English) variants. Hence, I refer to the Apostoleion rather than the Church of the Holy Apostles and transliterate the names of Theodosios, Sokrates, Nestorios, and so forth. In some important instances, this practice has

22. Jaś Elsner has discussed the imperative for scholarly narratives to synthesize complex social phenomena as they relate to late antique pilgrimage. His comments on methodology serve as a caution to scholars more broadly. See Elsner, “Piety and Passion: Contest and Consensus in the Audiences for Early Christian Pilgrimage,” in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods*, ed. Elsner and Ian Rutherford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 411–34.

the benefit of defamiliarizing certain agents or locations in a way that allows for a greater conceptual range to appear. For example, when we refer to the edifice in which the bodies of Constantine and subsequent emperors were entombed as the Apostoleion, its simultaneous resonances as an imperial mausoleum, a Christian cult site, and a locus of traditional imperial cult emerge in tension with each other. However, perfect consistency is not possible. The English renderings of latinized toponyms like Constantinople, Chalcedon, Constantine, Nicaea, and Thessalonica, for example, are so familiar that transliteration would be distracting, so I have retained them. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.