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Rome and the transformation of the imperial office in the late fourth–mid-fifth centuries AD[1]

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For many years, the general view of the place of the city of Rome in late antiquity has suggested that, from the era of Constantine down to the deposition of the last western Roman emperor in 476, Rome had lost its pre-eminent position as the seat of the emperors, and the capital of the empire.[2] From the reign of the usurper-emperor Maxentius (306–12) onwards,[3] not a single emperor resided at Rome throughout the whole of the fourth century, with cities such as Trier, Arles, Milan and Ravenna coming to be preferred as imperial seats, often for pragmatic reasons of defence or proximity to the frontiers in this age of barbarian invasions and military emperors.[4]

Yet in recent years the assumption that Rome played no role as a centre of imperial politics from the early fourth century onwards has been challenged,

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[2] For example, R. Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals: Topography and Politics: Rome, Constantinople, Milan* (Berkeley, 1983), 93; also R. Krautheimer, 'The architecture of Sixtus III: a fifth century renascence?', in M. Meiss (ed.), *Essays in Honour of Erwin Panofsky* (*De Artibus Opuscula* XL), 2 vols (New York, 1961), I, 291–301, esp. p. 301; B. Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity: Everyday Life and Urban Change,* AD 312–609 (trans. A. Nevill) (Edinburgh, 2000), 18, 35–6; and, to a lesser extent, J. Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital* (Oxford, 2000), 43–4.

[3] And, indeed, Maxentius's residence in Rome from 306 to 312 has long been noted as extraordinary, even at this early stage: see Curran, *Pagan City* (above, n. 2), 68–9.

[4] As Fergus Millar stated, the use of provincial capitals was already common in the tetrarchic period: F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World (31 BC–AD 337)* (London, 1977), 13–57. Although, as Bertrand Lançon pointed out, members of the imperial family might still be resident in the city even when the emperor himself was not: *Rome in Late Antiquity* (above, n. 2), 36.

and with good reason.[5] Indeed, Andrew Gillett has shown that, far from indicating that Rome was abandoned and neglected by the last western emperors, the records reveal that fifth-century emperors visited Rome far more regularly than any of their fourth-century predecessors had done, and, in some cases, even took up residence there for a period of years.[6]

Across the course of the fourth century, up until 395, only six visits by emperors to the city are attested firmly: that of Diocletian and Maximian in 303; those of Constantine I in 312, 315 and 326; the famous visit of Constantius II in 357; and the victorious visit of Theodosius I in 389.[7] Although, as Mark Humphries has demonstrated, imperial presence continued to be felt at Rome in the form of building projects and the setting up of imperial statues and inscriptions, by the fourth century actual imperial visits to the city already had become rare.[8] In contrast, when the evidence for imperial visits to the city from 395 to 455 is assembled, it is immediately apparent that fifth-century Romans were seeing their emperor far more frequently. As emperor, Honorius may have visited Rome as often as six times,[9] while Valentinian III, following his acclamation at Rome itself in 425, is attested as making regular visits to the city early in his reign and through the 440s, and taking up long-term residency in Rome from 445 to 447, and from 450 until his assassination in 455.[10] This renewal of interest in Rome was accompanied

[5] See especially A. Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna and the last Christian emperors', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 59 (2001), 131–67. Gillett also has pointed out that some scholars have in the past noted fifth-century imperial residence in Rome, but have seldom discussed it (p. 131, n. 2). See also M. Humphries, 'From emperor to pope? Ceremonial, space, and authority at Rome from Constantine to Gregory the Great', in K. Cooper and J. Hillner (eds), *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300–900* (Cambridge, 2007), 21–58.

[6] Gillett helpfully has charted the visits and residences of late Roman emperors in Rome from Honorius (395–423) to Romulus Augustulus (475–6) ('Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 137–55). Humphries's important forthcoming article on the court of Valentinian III at Rome (see n. 1) also deals specifically with this issue.

[7] The well-known catalogue of fourth-century imperial visits by A. Demandt, *Die Spätantike: Römische Geschichte von Diocletian bis Justinian, 284–565, n. Chr.* (*Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* 3.6) (Munich, 1989), 376 and n. 7, presented a rather more generous list, but rightly has been questioned by M. Humphries, 'Roman senators and absent emperors in late antiquity', *Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia* 17 (n.s. 3) (2003), 28. On fourth-century Rome generally, its place in the imperial consciousness, and the relations between emperor, senators and papacy, see R.L. Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi: il governo di Roma al tempo dei Valentiniani* (Bari, 2004), 381–460. Further detailed analysis of this point is a crucial part of Humphries's forthcoming article 'Emperors and usurpers'.

[8] Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5).

[9] Visits of Emperor Honorius to Rome are recorded from October 403 to July 404; January 405; January to March 407; November 407 to March 408; possibly in August 414; and May 416. See Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 137–8, for a summary of the source material. See also, specifically on the visits of Honorius to Rome, with a higher estimate of their number: H. Lejdegård, *Honorius and the City of Rome. Authority and Legitimacy in Late Antiquity* (Uppsala, 2002), 45–59.

[10] Valentinian III's accession occurred at Rome in October 425, and he is thereafter recorded as visiting from January to February 426; possibly in July 437; from January to March 440; August 440; March 443; December 443; and was in residence consistently from January 445 to June 447, and from February 450 to March 455, when he was assassinated. As Gillett has pointed out, the gap in the western legal records of the *Theodosian Code* between 432 and 438 makes it difficult to discover whether or not the young emperor's court also visited Rome during this period, but it is possible there were visits for consular celebrations in 435, and prior to Valentinian III's journey to Constantinople for his marriage in 437: see again Gillett 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 142–5, for the source material.

by building projects, such as repairs to the city walls and the restoration of the Colosseum,[11] and imperial involvement in church decoration and donations at Rome was also on the rise during this period. Perhaps most significant of all, in its potency as a symbol of continuing imperial commitment to Rome, was the foundation of an imperial mausoleum adjacent to the basilica of Saint Peter's, during the reign of Honorius.[12]

This paper will focus on the question of why the governments of these late Roman emperors turned back to Rome at this point. The question becomes all the more perplexing when we remember that the year 410 had seen the sack of Rome by the Goths, and that from 439 the city was under threat of imminent attack from the Vandals of north Africa: it hardly seems the time for late Roman emperors to seek a safe haven in Rome. Scholars have suggested possible reasons for this new trend in imperial attitudes to Rome, such as that western imperial territory was shrinking rapidly by this time, causing a refocus of imperial interests on Italy generally, and Rome in particular,[13] or that emperors of the fifth century were seeking a closer relationship with the most powerful and wealthy of their subjects, the Roman senatorial aristocracy, who were often still to be found at Rome itself.[14] I will return to this point below.[15]

These explanations are undoubtedly part of the picture. But I want to suggest that a further crucial explanation lies in developments that largely have escaped the attention of scholars thus far. For a major transformation was taking place in the overall nature and function of the late Roman emperor at this time, in both the eastern and western Roman empires, and it is here that we should seek reasons for the increasing interest of fifth-century imperial courts in the city of Rome.[16] This transformation involved no less than a revolution in the way in which

11 For example, the restoration of the city wall under Honorius between 401 and 403, undertaken by the prefect Longinianus (*CIL* VI 1188–90). Various repairs to the Colosseum were carried out as a result of earthquake damage during the fifth century — see A. Chastagnol, *Le fin du monde antique* (Paris, 1976), 133–4; also Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity* (above, n. 2), 5–6, 23; Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 42–3; and now also S. Orlandi, *Epigrafia anfiteatrale dell'Occidente Romano* VI. *Roma. Anfiteatri e strutture annesse — iscrizioni del Colosseo* (Rome, 2004), 42–6.

12 On the mausoleum of Honorius and imperial church benefactions at Rome, see further below, pp. 178–87.

13 Humphries, 'Roman senators and absent emperors' (above, n. 7), 43; Humphries 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 40.

14 Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 163–5. Also hinted at by Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 39.

15 See below, pp. 170–5.

16 The period from the reign of Valentinian I down to 476 in the west has, of course, received attention in the past from scholars, for example: O. Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser und Päpste für die Jahre 311 bis 476 n.Chr.* (Stuttgart, 1919); J.B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire: from the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian* (AD 395–565), 2 vols (London, 1923); E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* I. *De l'état romain à l'état Byzantin (284–476)*, 2 vols (trans. J.-R. Palanque) (Paris, 1959); and A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: a Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1964), as well as more recently scholars such as J.F. Matthews, *Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court* AD 364–425 (Oxford, 1975), all of whose seminal work has contributed tremendously to our knowledge and understanding of the period. Nevertheless the child-emperors of the west, from Gratian in 367 down to Valentinian III in 425, and their

imperial rule was presented, and a far greater interchange of political attitudes between eastern and western empires than often has been recognized during this period. Furthermore, this transformation represented a long-term, empire-wide change in the nature of the imperial office, in the west growing slowly out of the reigns of the child-emperors Gratian, Valentinian II, Honorius and Valentinian III, but extending into their adulthoods and the regimes of their adult successors. It is with this transformation, therefore, that I want to begin; I then shall move on to the way in which one of the consequences in the fifth-century western empire of this major change in the nature of imperial rule was a refocus on Rome as a key political stage.

The transformation of the imperial office: child-emperors

Child-emperor accessions

According to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, the western emperor Valentinian I called his army together on 24 August 367, and made a speech that marked an extraordinary moment in the history of the later Roman empire. Taking his eight-year-old son by the hand, he declared:

> This son of mine, Gratianus, now become a man, has long lived among your children, and you love him as a tie between you and me; therefore, in order to secure the public peace on all sides, I plan to take him as my associate in the imperial power, if the propitious will of the god of heaven and of your dignity shall support what a father's love suggests.[17]

Raising an eight-year-old boy to the full rank of Augustus was an almost unheard of event in Roman history. There had been young emperors before of course — such as Nero and Alexander

consecutive and lengthy reigns rarely have been viewed as worthy of investigation in their own right, or examined as a part of an overarching development in the nature of imperial rule — not even by the appealingly but inaptly named *Römische Kinderkaiser: eine Strukturanalyse Römischen Denkens und Daseins* (by W. Hartke (Berlin, 1951)), which is concerned primarily with dating the *Historia Augusta*, rather than the nature of imperial rule. It is this gap in modern scholarship that I am seeking to address.

[17] Ammianus Marcellinus [hereafter AM] 27.6.8: *Gratianum hunc meum adultum, quem diu versatum inter liberos vestros, commune diligitis pignus, undique muniendae tranquillitatis publicae causa, in augustum assumere commilitium paro, si propitia caelestis numinis vestraeque maiestatis voluntas parentis amorem iuverit praeeuntem* ... As translated by J.C. Rolfe, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 3 vols (Cambridge (MA), 1935–9). The date is given at *Cons.Const. s.a.* 364; Socrates 4.11.3; *Chronicon Paschale* p. 557. For reports of the accession in other sources, see *PLRE* 1.401.

Severus — but they at least had been teenagers.[18] And although Constantine the Great had made his sons Caesars while they were still boys, it was only upon his death that each had attained the rank of full Augustus.[19] Yet the difference between making a child an Augustus rather than a Caesar was a significant one, which presented a novel precedent for following regimes. In theory at least, in making Gratian an Augustus, Valentinian had made his eight-year-old son a full joint ruler of the entire Roman empire. The sources tell us that Valentinian had taken this action following a serious illness during which the court had been buzzing with talk of potential successors — and the eight-year-old emperor's son had not even been considered as a viable candidate.[20] Valentinian clearly intended to designate the boy as his undisputed successor, and no doubt expected that Gratian would remain a 'sleeping partner' in government for many years to come.[21]

Such was indeed the case for the following eight years, but the prevalence of child-emperors in the later, Byzantine world has tended to obscure the fact that in the late fourth century this was a first — a truly extraordinary event — and the beginning of a transformation in contemporary conceptions of the office of emperor. And while the terms 'child-emperor' and 'boy-emperor' may jar or seem inherently paradoxical, this is precisely the point they are intended to make: that such young children holding such an adult position was indeed paradoxical. Moreover, the term 'boy-emperor' clearly was not unknown to contemporaries, appearing in Sidonius Apollinaris's panegyric on Avitus delivered at Rome in 455, and referring to the recently murdered Valentinian III.[22] Valentinian I's actions had set a new precedent, whether or not he foresaw or intended the consequences, and it was one all the more likely to be heeded due to Gratian's survival after his father's death.[23] Indeed, events in 375 make it clear that the possibilities for extending and exploiting this precedent were grasped rapidly by political and military figures of the time.

18 Augustus himself had been a youth of only eighteen years when Julius Caesar died, while Gaius Caligula and Nero were young men at the time of their accessions, and Elagabalus, Alexander Severus and Gordian III had all been teenage emperors. Yet none of these youthful emperors achieved reigns of anything like the longevity of the child-emperors of the late fourth–mid-fifth centuries AD. And while the Emperor Macrinus (emperor 217–18) may have made his son Diadumenianus co-Augustus during his lifetime, and Philip the Arab (244–9) attempted the same arrangement with his son Philip, both boys were simply murdered along with their fathers when rebellions took place. The third century also had seen a number of youthful Caesars acclaimed, such as Saloninus, the son of Gallienus, and Tetricius II, the son of Tetricius I, but it is noteworthy that these young Caesars rarely survived their fathers, and, in the fourth century, the young Caesar Licinius had a sadly short life. For a general account, see C. Wells, *The Roman Empire* (Glasgow, 1984); and for the period from 180 onwards, D.S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay*, AD *180–395* (London, 2004).

19 See T.D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (Cambridge (MA), 1982), 45.

20 AM 27.6.4; Zosimus 4.12.2.

21 Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 141.

22 Sidonius lamented a cruel fortune that had long harassed the state with many hardships *principe sub puero* ('under a boy-emperor'): *Carmina* 7.533.

23 Unlike the hapless sons of the third-century emperors Philip the Arab and Macrinus: see Potter, *Roman Empire at Bay* (above, n. 18), 236–41, on Philip and the disappearance of his son on his father's death; and pp. 150–1 on Macrinus and his son Diadumenianus.

On 17 November of that year, Valentinian I died suddenly of a massive haemorrhage, the result of one of his famous rages.[24] His adult brother Valens was emperor of the east at the time, and Valentinian I's own son Gratian was now sixteen years old. Yet without reference to either surviving Augustus, a group of powerful individuals at the military camp where Valentinian I had died decided entirely independently to proclaim a new emperor — the dead emperor's younger son — the four-year-old Valentinian II.[25] Gratian accepted his brother as nominal joint ruler of the west, and both brothers were to 'rule' (in name at least) for seventeen years each: Gratian until his assassination at the hands of a usurper in 383 when he was 24, and Valentinian until his suicide at the age of 21, in 392. Yet despite the inauspicious ends of both of these young emperors, what was steadily becoming the child-emperor phenomenon did not end there, nor was it by any means limited to the west. In 383, the eastern emperor Theodosius I created his six-year-old son Arcadius co-emperor,[26] and then in 393 made his younger son Honorius Augustus at the age of eight years, with the boy becoming emperor of the western empire as a ten-year-old in 395.[27] In 402, Arcadius in turn made his son Theodosius II co-Augustus at the extraordinary age of nine months, with the infant becoming sole eastern emperor in 408, at the age of seven, upon the death of his father.[28] After a 30-year reign, the western emperor Honorius's death in 423 saw a brief usurpation in the west: his only heir, Valentinian, the young son of his sister Galla Placidia, was at Constantinople, where the family had sought refuge with the eastern emperor after a disagreement with Honorius. In 424, however, the sole remaining legitimate emperor (Theodosius II) eventually decided, in an extraordinary and expensive show of the continuing unity of eastern and western regimes, to launch a major military expedition that succeeded in establishing his six-year-old cousin as the new western emperor. Valentinian III was Augustus of the west from 425 until his assassination after a 30-year reign in 455.[29] The sheer length of these reigns alone should give pause for thought.

[24] AM 30.6.3; also Socrates 4.31; Zosimus 4.17.1–2.

[25] The accession of Valentinian II, when the sources are examined, looks very much like a political coup, whereby competent generals serving at the time in the western army, such as Sebastianus and Fl. Equitius (and possibly even the elder Theodosius, though the circumstances surrounding his sudden execution around this date are notoriously murky), were carefully put out of the way in order to make way for the four-year-old's accession. For a detailed account of these events and the individuals involved, see AM 30.10.1–6. For discussion of the accession of Valentinian II in secondary sources, see N.B. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, 1994), 84–5; Potter, *Roman Empire at Bay* (above, n. 18), 543. See generally on sources for Valentinian II, *PLRE* 1.934–5.

[26] For sources for Arcadius's life and reign, see *PLRE* 1.99: Arcadius became sole eastern emperor at the age of eighteen in 395, when Theodosius I died; Arcadius himself died in 408 at the age of 31, having held the rank of emperor for 25 years.

[27] For sources on Honorius's life and reign, see *PLRE* 1.442.

[28] Theodosius II was proclaimed Augustus on 10 January 402: see *PLRE* 2.1100. He enjoyed an extraordinarily long reign, from his accession as a nine-month-old in 402 until his death following a horse-riding accident in 450.

[29] For sources on the life and reign of Valentinian III, see *PLRE* 2.1138–9. For a detailed analysis of the regimes of the boy-emperors of the late Roman west, see my D.Phil. thesis: M. McEvoy, *'Spes Rei Publicae': the Hope of the State? Child-emperors and the Late Roman West*, AD 367–455 (Oxford, 2008; forthcoming as *Child-Emperors in the Late Roman West*, AD 367–455 (Oxford). The analysis of the regimes of eastern child-emperors in the late Roman period forms my ongoing research.

DYNASTICISM

Many modern historians have been content to dismiss the accessions of these boy-emperors as a simple triumph of the dynastic principle,[30] but this was in fact a remarkable and unprecedented situation, and I do not believe the explanation is as straightforward as this. Dynasticism certainly had its part to play, and scholars like Noel Lenski and Malcolm Errington rightly have pointed out the careful and concerted efforts of emperors like Valentinian I, Valens and, in particular, Theodosius I to recreate the aura of imperial dynasticism that had proved so successful in assuring the succession earlier in the fourth century under the Constantinian emperors.[31] Nevertheless, although all of these boys were sons of emperors, and four of them had been made emperors during their fathers' lifetimes, only the last of them, Theodosius II and Valentinian III, belonged to an imperial dynasty of long standing.[32] Furthermore, with the premature deaths of their fathers at a stage when these child-emperors were too young personally to assert their own claims to rulership, their true accessions, upon the deaths of their fathers,[33] (as opposed to the sort of 'phantom' or largely ceremonial accessions that took place earlier) surely cannot be considered automatic. By the same token, each of these boys' accessions occurred as a consequence of a specific political crisis, and did depend upon historical accident to some degree — with middle-aged emperors dying unexpectedly. But they also reflected the political opportunism of certain powerful individuals, among the military high command and the senatorial aristocracy, who began to see more advantage in wielding power behind the throne than in claiming the throne itself.[34] And certainly one of those advantages can be seen as having the good of the empire at heart: in avoiding civil war through rival generals competing for the throne (exactly the claim used to justify the coup that elevated four-year-old Valentinian II in 375).[35] The tenuous dynastic claim of a young boy was employed instead as a useful shield for legitimacy, behind which all sorts of political manoeuvring could take place.

[30] For example, S.I. Oost, *Galla Placidia Augusta: a Biographical Essay* (Chicago, 1968), 194; J.F. Drinkwater, 'The usurpers Constantine III (407–411) and Jovinus (411–413)', *Britannia* 29 (1998), 270.

[31] See in general on emperors and dynasty in the late fourth century, R.M. Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy from Julian to Theodosius* (Chapel Hill, 2006), 13–42, and specifically on the efforts of Valentinian I and Valens, pp. 24–5, and Theodosius I, pp. 37–42. On the promotion of Gratian and of Valens's young son Valentinian Galates (who died aged three, having already held a consulship and been named *nobilissimus puer*), see N. Lenski, *Failure of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century* AD (Berkeley, 2002), 30–2.

[32] Gratian and Valentinian II were the sons of Valentinian I; Arcadius and Honorius were the sons of Theodosius I; Theodosius II was the son of Arcadius; and Valentinian III the son of Constantius III (and nephew of Honorius). Of the western emperors, only Gratian and Honorius became emperors during their fathers' lifetimes. And although Gratian, Valentinian II, Arcadius and Honorius were all sons of emperors, only Theodosius II and Valentinian III were the grandsons (and Valentinian III the great-grandson) of emperors.

[33] Or, in the case of Valentinian III, his uncle.

[34] These individuals often can be identified also from the sources, such as the general Merobaudes in the case of Valentinian II, and the general Aetius in the case of Valentinian III.

[35] AM 30.10.3.

It should be recognized from the start that, despite traditional historiography on the era, these regimes by no means need be regarded as inherently weak: this article is not intended as a resurrection of the argument of feeble Theodosian emperors following on from their more illustrious predecessors, and nor is it necessarily about a 'decline' in the nature of the imperial office. The repetition of minority regimes in the late Roman period, their survival and their sheer length, testify against such a view. This is about a transformation of the imperial office, through the repeated accessions of young children over a prolonged period, involving long-term delegation of imperial functions and the changing nature of imperial government as a consequence; and about the adaptation of imperial presentation to deal with such a paradoxical situation — all of which contributed to creating a new, but very strong and enduring, model of far more civilian or ceremonial-style emperorship than had existed previously. This did not mean that the soldier-emperor model ceased to exist — far from it, as emperors like Constantius III, Avitus and Majorian in the fifth-century west demonstrated —, but it did mean that ceremonial-style rule was considered acceptable now, where once it had not been, and that imperial function and presentation were being adapted to deal with this development.

Errington suggested that, upon the death of Theodosius I in 395, the dynastic structures established by Valentinian I and Theodosius I over the last few decades moved smoothly into action without interruption or usurpation, and this is certainly not incorrect.[36] But the particular politics surrounding these child-emperor accessions need to be examined carefully. In the west, the funeral oration of Ambrose of Milan for Theodosius I certainly indicates local anxieties over the accession of ten-year-old Honorius.[37] Furthermore, when Honorius died in 423 and his heir Valentinian was far away in Constantinople, there seems to have been little effort in the west to acclaim the child as emperor in his absence; and in fact the usurper who arose in his stead had a substantial military backing, and no ties to the imperial house — a major eastern military expedition was required to establish the six-year-old Valentinian as emperor.[38] Even pre-existing dynastic structures need individuals to implement them. Whatever Valentinian I and Theodosius I may have intended for their sons, their deaths meant they personally could not see these intentions through, and the survival and accessions of their sons should not be seen as foregone conclusions. The precedent of Valentinian I's promotion of eight-year-old Gratian was seized upon, and spur-of-the-moment decisions like the accession of four-year-old Valentinian II turned out to have long-term ramifications — in the name of dynasticism, but not with dynasticism as the only motivator. Under the longer and more successful regimes of Honorius, Theodosius II and Valentinian III the institutionalization of child-emperor rule really took place — it came to be a norm of the Roman political system where even as late as the 350s it had not been.[39]

36 Errington, *Roman Imperial Policy* (above, n. 31), 29–30.

37 For example, Ambrose, *De Obitu Theodosii* 8, 11, 12.

38 For details on the usurpation of John, see *PLRE* 2.594–6; for analysis of the usurpation, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 379–81.

39 On the death of Jovian in 364, his infant son Varronianus clearly was not considered a viable successor (see AM 25.10.11; also 25.10.17 on Varronianus's consulship), and although Jovian's reign was short and not rooted in an imperial dynasty, similarly when Valentinian I fell ill in 367, as noted above, even his eight-year-old son was not seen by court factions as a suitable successor to his father.

PRACTICAL RULERSHIP: MILITARY AND JUDICIAL

The accession of such young emperors at this time is all the more remarkable when we realize that up until Gratian's accession in 367, every fourth-century emperor so far had been a military emperor, who could claim personally to have led his armies into battle — sometimes through military commands both before and after accession, as in the case of emperors like Valentinian I or Theodosius I[40] — or at the very least, to be of an age to lead his armies upon accession. By 367, every fourth-century emperor thus far had fulfilled this function of military leadership in one of these capacities.[41] But a child could not perform this previously essential imperial function — not for some years at least[42] — and there were many other expectations of an emperor, such as a judicial role, that a child would struggle to perform.

In 368, the renowned pagan aristocrat Symmachus presented a panegyric on the new young emperor Gratian at his father's court at Trier, extravagantly asserting that the whole empire was in the nine-year-old's hands.[43] With both his father and an adult uncle behind him, still ruling as emperors, there was no need for the nine-year-old Gratian to provide practical imperial leadership at this point. But what happened when there was no imperial father present, and only a four-, ten-, or six-year-old emperor? In a sense Gratian's child-emperorship matters most in the precedent it created, since he himself was sixteen when his father died, by which time the years of his minority were largely over. But it was this precedent of his accession as an eight-year-old that created the possibility of the true child-emperors to follow, and the possibility of a minor emperor supposedly ruling — and encompassing all of the traditional imperial virtues and functions — alone.

The traditional functions and expectations of a late Roman emperor, as they can be reconstructed from writings like those of Menander Rhetor, Ammianus Marcellinus and Themistius, included possession of certain cardinal or moral virtues — courage, justice, wisdom and temperance — in addition to the more practical virtues of military prowess and success. It also included assuming judicial and administrative responsibilities, and religious

[40] Though Neil McLynn has suggested that Theodosius I may not even have had a successful military campaign behind him at the time of his accession, and, as Silvan also argued, that Theodosius I may in fact have been a usurper whose illegal bid for power was smoothed over due to military necessities (N.B. McLynn, '*Genere Hispanis:* Theodosius, Spain and Nicene orthodoxy', in K. Bowes and M. Kulikowski (eds), *Hispania in Late Antiquity: Current Perspectives* (Leiden, 2005), 77–120, esp. pp. 88–94; H. Sivan, 'Was Theodosius I a usurper?', *Klio* 78 (1) (1996), 198–211). See also, on the details of Theodosius I's accession, M.R. Errington, 'The accession of Theodosius I', *Klio* 78 (2) (1996), 438–53.

[41] All of the Tetrarchs, as well as Maxentius (306–12), Constantine I (306–37) and all of his reigning sons, Constantine II (337–40), Constantius II (337–61) and Constans (337–50), and also Julian (360–3) and Jovian (363–4), could make justified claims to be military emperors. The emperor Valens died in battle at Adrianople in 378, while the fathers of these late fourth-century western boy-emperors — Valentinian I and Theodosius I — were distinctly military-style emperors.

[42] Although Valentinian I did take his young co-emperor Gratian on his Solicinium campaign in 368, in which the nine-year-old child can have played only a ceremonial role (AM 27.10.6).

[43] Symmachus, *Oration* 3.

and ceremonial roles that in turn helped promote recognition of an emperor's legitimacy and divine favour.[44] Many adult emperors would not, of course, have fulfilled the full range of imperial expectations, and some came to the throne with less than desirable levels of experience in these matters (such as Valens in 364[45]) but it did at least need to appear possible that they could do so — and this at least was one advantage of age. Yet with this sort of imperial checklist in mind, the acclamation of boy-emperors becomes all the more perplexing — for how could a child possibly fulfil the desired criteria — or even merely be presented plausibly as doing so?

It was not so difficult, perhaps, to assert that a child-emperor possessed cardinal virtues, although the issue of the particular virtues that were chosen for emphasis is one I shall return to a little later. But practical functions, surely, could present a significant stumbling block. Yet, as recent studies have indicated, over the course of the fourth century in particular, certain structures of government, such as the administrative and judicial, had evolved to a point whereby real demands on imperial ability had been diminished. A number of scholars, such as A.H.M. Jones and Christopher Kelly, have written on the massive professionalization of the bureaucracy that had taken place over the course of the fourth century, and its remarkable expansion over this period — Peter Heather estimated that by AD 400, the number of individuals achieving good bureaucratic jobs was well over 6,000 per generation, compared with about 250 individuals only 100 years earlier.[46] The formation of a greatly enlarged and sophisticated bureaucracy meant in some respects a higher degree of control for the central government, but it also meant the delegation of authority and empowering of officials to make decisions in their own right.[47]

Scholars such as John Matthews have observed that centralization of the government made an individual emperor's impact on the running of that government much less obvious, and well-trained civil servants would continue with their duties regardless of changes at the top of the hierarchy.[48] I would take this argument a step further — and suggest that with a virtually self-running bureaucracy by the late fourth century, the demands on the emperor himself in

44 Millar's invaluable book, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (above, n. 4), made a detailed and varied study of the many diverse functions of a Roman emperor (with the exception of his military function), and many of the conclusions drawn there can be carried over also to analyses of the functions still expected of a later Roman emperor. These 'cardinal virtues' of course dated back much earlier than the late Roman empire: even back to Hellenistic concepts of kinship — see F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Philosophy: Origins and Background* (Washington, 1966), 276; also C. Noreña, 'The communication of the Emperor's virtues', *Journal of Roman Studies* 9 (2001), 146–68.

45 See Lenski, *Failure of Empire* (above, n. 31), 86.

46 Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 403–4, 410; C. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge (MA), 2004), 186, 190; P.J. Heather, 'New men for new Constantines? Creating an imperial elite in the eastern Mediterranean', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines* (Aldershot, 1994), 11–33, esp. p. 20.

47 I am grateful to Noel Lenski for pointing out to me that the virtual disappearance of rescripts in the post-Constantinian era, as reflected in the *Codex Justinianus*, also indicates that the emperor himself was making fewer personal responses, presumably because the bureaucracy was now making more of the responses itself.

48 Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 77.

administrative affairs would be reduced greatly. Similarly, with the rise of legal professionals like the quaestor during this period, the judicial role of the emperor changed also: he no longer needed to know the law himself, that was now the job of others around him.[49] Michael McCormick once wrote that 'a child who could not write could not rule'.[50] But surely, in fact, a child who could simply write his name, could rule — at least in some form. The bureaucratic and judicial systems of the late Roman government had moved beyond the requirement of a thorough legal and administrative understanding on the part of their emperor (though the possibility always remained).

In the east, the implications of this high degree of sophistication in imperial bureaucratic and judicial structure for the minority regime of Theodosius II have been recognized by Jill Harries, and more extensively explored in Fergus Millar's recent monograph.[51] Yet again, like the child-emperor phenomenon, this should be viewed as part of an empire-wide development in the nature of imperial rule. And while this professionalization of the late Roman bureaucratic structure did mean that child-emperors could play a figurehead role at the pinnacle of that structure, it need not be assumed that they consequently played no active role in the administrative and judicial workings of the state in later years. Tony Honoré, for example, saw suggestions of personal imperial input in the laws of Valentinian III issued during the 430s and 440s, mainly relating to the inexpert nature of some rulings, and this is entirely possible: inevitably it is difficult to determine how much any emperor might be directly behind 'his' legislation. On the other hand, the continuing involvement of the *magister militum* Aetius in matters of civilian jurisdiction during the 440s and 450s, when Valentinian was well and truly grown up, might indicate that the emperor still was not playing a very active personal role in judicial matters.[52] In either case, the material point is that one of the key results of this professionalization was that it became possible for a child theoretically to fulfil the judicial

[49] On the development of the office of quaestor over this period, see J. Harries, 'The Roman imperial quaestor from Constantine to Theodosius', *Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988), 148–72.

[50] M. McCormick, 'Emperor and court', in A. Cameron, B. Ward-Perkins and M. Whitby (eds), *Cambridge Ancient History* XIV (Cambridge, 2000), 135–63, at p. 143.

[51] J. Harries, *'Pius Princeps*: Theodosius II and fifth-century Constantinople', in Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines* (above, n. 46), 35–44, esp. pp. 35–6; F. Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire: Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408–450)* (Berkeley, 2006) generally, and esp. pp. 1–38.

[52] Honoré suggested Valentinian III emerges from the laws of the period 438–55 in partcular as 'volatile and opinionated': T. Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire, 379–455 AD: the Theodosian Dynasty and its Quaestors* (Oxford, 1999), 259; see also generally pp. 258–74. The extent to which Valentinian III's *magister militum* Aetius may or may not have been involved in legislation is debatable: Aetius was absent on campaign in Gaul throughout much of the 430s, when there is of course a hiatus in the legal records of the *Theodosian Code* for the west, between 432 and its promulgation in 438 — though he was notably present in Rome at the senate meeting for the promulgation of the *Theodosian Code* (*Gesta* 5). Records for Aetius's whereabouts during the 440s are less complete, but as far as we can tell he appears to have been more consistently in Italy at the imperial court during this decade (see G. Zecchini, *Aezio: l'ultima difesa dell'occidente romano* (Rome, 1983), 239), although a law was addressed to him in Gaul in 445 (Valentinian III, *Novellae* [hereafter *NVal.*] 17.1). The legal records at least show Aetius taking action on civilian issues such as the appointment of Gallic bishops, impoverished children and meat supplies to Rome — see *NVal.* 17 (July 445); *NVal.* 33 (January 451); *NVal.* 36 (June 452).

and administrative responsibilities of an emperor, at the head of a seamless and virtually self-sustaining bureaucratic system: and also possible for a child-emperor reaching adulthood to continue to fulfil this judicial and administrative role only nominally.

A NEW IMPERIAL PRESENTATION

It was surely always going to be the expectation of military leadership that would prove the greatest difficulty in making child-emperor rule plausible. And indeed, of the four children who ascended the western imperial throne during this period, and also the two youngsters who became eastern emperors during the same period, it was only Gratian, the first of these child-emperors, who ever led the imperial armies upon reaching adulthood.[53] Although, in the past, the military function of an emperor could be and had been fulfilled in many different ways — such as through planning campaigns, organizing logistics or making rousing speeches — and leadership of the imperial armies had been delegated to other generals frequently throughout Roman history, an emperor so young he could not satisfy any of the possible and varied means of fulfilling his military role — emperors like Valentinian II, Honorius, Theodosius II and Valentinian III upon accession — was a major change.

In order to make child-emperor rule plausible a new imperial presentation needed to be devised — for it was not as if the need for military leadership, or indeed other types of imperial leadership, suddenly disappeared during this time. Although there always would be some differences in the specific politics and circumstances of each reign, particularly between the eastern and western empires, in the west, at least, a certain pattern can be traced in the changes in presentation of these young emperors, in contrast with their adult predecessors, and this has particular relevance to the imperial refocus on the city of Rome in the fifth century. During the reigns of the four child-emperors, dominant generals came to be the power behind the throne — men like Merobaudes, Bauto, Arbogast, Stilicho, Fl. Constantius and Aetius.[54] And as imperial presentation came to be increasingly sophisticated in dealing with the complexities of presenting child-emperors in a plausible manner, we begin to see these generals being built into the imperial presentation, particularly from the accession of Honorius, in 395, onwards.

Honorius's regime was dominated from the start by the young emperor's cousin-by-marriage (and soon to be father-in-law), Fl. Stilicho. Fortunately, the prolific works of the court poet Claudian provide us with one of the most helpful and extensive pictures that we have of how the regime of a child-emperor and his military strong arm could be 'sold'. Claudian's representation of the government of young Honorius and his guardian Stilicho was essentially that of a partnership — a heavy emphasis on the youthful promise and hopeful virtues of the young emperor, coupled with the demonstrated military abilities of his general and utterly

[53] Ammianus provides a valuable account of Gratian's campaign against the Lentienses in 378, while the young emperor was leading the western army to join his uncle Valens prior to Adrianople (AM 31.10.9–20).

[54] For details on all of these generals, see *PLRE*: Merobaudes (*PLRE* 1.598–9); Bauto (*PLRE* 1.159–60); Arbogast (*PLRE* 1.95–7); Stilicho (*PLRE* 1.853–8); Fl. Constantius (*PLRE* 2.321–5); Aetius (*PLRE* 2.21–9).

loyal guardian, Stilicho, who led the imperial armies in the field on the emperor's behalf.[55] The imperial ideals of virtue and leadership were still being met — but no longer by the emperor alone. And again, the military successes of such generals who were coming to be part of the imperial presentation under Honorius and Valentinian III especially — men like Stilicho, and also Fl. Constantius and Fl. Aetius — testify to the strength of this system, and its smooth-running. As Hugh Elton pointed out, the constant campaigning, mobility and success of the Gallic army under Aetius (in the 430s especially) makes a striking argument for the continuing strength and effectiveness of the Roman military establishment, and hence the Roman imperial government, under a capable commander well into the fifth century.[56]

Stilicho's claims to guardianship of both Honorius and Arcadius, and his ambitions of eastern as well as western domination, have been much discussed and were certainly part of the picture: as relations between the eastern and western courts deteriorated in the period 395–400 it became ever more important to Stilicho's position to claim he himself fulfilled an indispensable role in Honorius's government.[57] But the presentation of the child-emperor himself should not be overlooked — the emphasis on his youthful promise and the hope of great deeds to come. And alongside this approach of presenting a partnership of youthful promise in the young emperor, and proven military ability in his general, was another interesting innovation in imperial presentation: a change in emphasis in the emperor's ceremonial and Christian role, a change particularly exploiting the appeal of a boy-emperor's age and vulnerability.

THE CHANGING EMPHASIS IN THE CHRISTIAN ROLE OF AN EMPEROR

Religious function generally had long been an important role of the emperor, and since the conversion of Constantine the emphasis on Christian piety in particular, and indeed the Christianization of the imperial office, inevitably had grown. Emperors might be seen to fulfil this Christian role in a variety of different ways: through issuing anti-pagan laws, as Theodosius I most famously did in

[55] Numerous examples of this presentation pervade the works of Claudian — as particularly in the panegyric for Honorius's fourth consulship, delivered in 398, when Honorius was thirteen years old. For the emphasis on Honorius's youthful promise, see, for example, Claudian, *De Quarto Consulatu Honorii Augusti* [hereafter *IV Cons.*] 353–68, 523–9; and for Stilicho's proven ability and their partnership, see *IV Cons.* 430–44, 453–9. This approach was somewhat fore-shadowed by the dominance of generals like Merobaudes, Bauto and Arbogast at the courts of Gratian and Valentinian II, but nowhere near to the same extent, and these past generals lacked Stilicho's ability to claim kinship with the young emperor and his father. J.M. O'Flynn, *Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire* (Alberta, 1983), made a collective study of these dominant generals in the fourth- and fifth-century west, but with little attention to the causes of their rise.

[56] H. Elton, 'Defence in fifth-century Gaul', in J.F. Drinkwater and H. Elton (eds), *Fifth Century Gaul: a Crisis of Identity?* (Cambridge, 1992), 167–76, at p. 170.

[57] On Stilicho's claims to the 'regency' of both imperial brothers, and the antagonism of the eastern court, see A. Cameron, 'Theodosius the Great and the regency of Stilicho', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 73 (1969), 247–80, and also A. Cameron, *Claudian: Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius* (Oxford, 1970), 65–155; also Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 106–26; Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* I (above, n. 16), 228–37.

391;[58] through benefactions such as the building or decoration of churches, in which the Constantinian dynasty was involved on a large scale in many cities of the empire;[59] through staging church councils to debate and determine matters of doctrine and thereby promote religious unity, as did emperors like Constantine I, Constantius II and Theodosius I;[60] and of course through displays of personal piety, such as Theodosius I's public penance at Milan after the Thessalonike massacre.[61] Conspicuously active military emperors, like Constantine I and Theodosius I, were also notorious for their piety — and their military successes were seen as inextricably bound up in this.[62] And, indeed, members of the imperial family, as well as the emperor himself, might contribute to the fulfilling of this religious function — such as through the contribution of Serena, cousin of Honorius and wife of Stilicho, of a magnificent benefaction of Libyan marble for a new shrine to the martyr Nazarius at Milan in 395.[63] By the late fourth century, the Christian role of an emperor was undeniably already an integral function of his office.

Therefore, what I am arguing for is certainly not that the Christian element of the imperial office only became important with the rise of child-emperor regimes. The young emperors of the fourth and fifth centuries would continue these Christian efforts — as we see through Gratian's removal of the pagan altar of victory from the senate house in Rome, and Valentinian II's later confirmation of that decision;[64] and church councils such as that at Aquileia called by Gratian in 382, the council at Carthage called by Honorius in 411 to attempt to resolve the

58 *Codex Theodosianus* [hereafter *CTh*] 16.10.10 banned all pagan sacrifices, both public and private, and prohibited all access to pagan temples, probably in part aiming to protect the sites from attack for the sake of their artistic heritage, as well as forbidding pagan worship.

59 See Potter, *Roman Empire at Bay* (above, n. 18), 435–9.

60 For Constantine I's convening of the Council of Nicaea in 325, see Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3.5.3–6.1; also A.H.M. Jones, *The Decline of the Ancient World* (London, 1966), 43. Constantius II hosted more councils than any other emperor — see generally T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge (MA), 1993)); also Lenski, *Failure of Empire* (above, n. 31), 234–6. On Theodosius I's calling of the council of Constantinople in 381, see *CTh* 16.5.5; also McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 124.

61 For discussion of this famous incident, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 235; and especially McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 323–30; J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches* (Liverpool, 2005), 19; and H. Leppin, *Theodosius der Grosse* (Darmstadt, 2004), 153–67.

62 As, for example, in the case of Theodosius I's victory at Frigidus: see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 246; also McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 352–5.

63 *ILCV* 1801; see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 363–4; and for Serena, *PLRE* 1.824. The women of the Theodosian house in particular had an important role in creating the pious persona of the emperors of the period, a role much celebrated in modern scholarship — see, for example, K.G. Holum, *Theodosian Empresses: Women and Imperial Dominion in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1982).

64 Gratian's anti-pagan laws directed at the Roman cults have not survived, but are referred to by Ambrose in 384 (*Epistle* 72[17].10). For discussion, see A. Cameron, 'Gratian's repudiation of the pontifical robe', *Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1964), 96–102, and, more recently, A. Cameron, 'The imperial pontifex', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 103 (2007), 341–84, and R.L. Testa, 'Christian emperor, vestal virgins and priestly colleges: reconsidering the end of Roman paganism', *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007), 251–62. Under Valentinian II, the famous debate between Symmachus, the urban prefect, and Ambrose of Milan took place over the plea for the restoration of the altar: see Symmachus, *Relatio* 3; Ambrose, *Epistles* 72[17], 73[18]. For discussion, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 151–2, 166–8.

Donatist controversy in Africa, and of course those at Ephesus in 431 and 449 called by Theodosius II.[65] Imperial benefaction of churches also continued — even intensified —, and I shall return to the issue of these efforts at Rome in particular below.[66] But I am suggesting that, in addition to these efforts, the Christian image of the emperor did undergo some changes in emphasis as a result of these minority accessions, and that this did at times bring to the forefront of imperial presentation some virtues that we might not otherwise expect in a Roman emperor.

Ambrose of Milan, for example, described Gratian after his assassination as a figure of Christ-like betrayed innocence, and praised the ostentatious fasting habits of the young Valentinian II.[67] In the case of Honorius, the emphasis on the child-emperor's peculiar piety becomes even more explicit. At the very beginning of Honorius's reign in early 395, when Bishop Ambrose gave a funeral oration for the ten-year-old emperor's dead father, Theodosius I, he explicitly employed the piety of the boy-emperor as a justification for his position, and a reassurance of the security of the state. Ambrose declared that the young emperor's age was augmented by his faith, and speaking of Honorius and his brother, the young eastern emperor, Ambrose announced: 'Their age should not trouble us! The loyal support of his soldiers makes the emperor's age fully grown. For age is fully grown when strength is'.[68]

According to Ambrose, Honorius had been made emperor by his father, but he had been confirmed in his office by God.[69] And the bishop of Ravenna in the 430s, Peter Chrysologos, went so far as to recommend the innocence of members of the imperial family who were present at his sermon (possibly including the young Valentinian III) as an imperial virtue.[70] As far back as Eusebius writing on the sons of Constantine I, the piety of young princes had been lauded as an important imperial quality.[71] But this quality came to be given renewed significance when the pious imperial child had no adult emperor behind him at the helm.

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65 On the Council of Aquileia called by Gratian, see N.B. McLynn, 'The 'Apology' of Palladius: nature and purpose', *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991), 56–72; also D.H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene-Arian Conflicts* (Oxford, 1995), 169–84. On the Council of Carthage, which ruled against the Donatists in north Africa and prompted further penal laws against them, see Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire* (above, n. 52), 228. On the First and Second Councils of Ephesus, see Millar, *A Greek Roman Empire* (above, n. 51), 157–60, 189–90.

66 See below, pp. 185–7.

67 On the betrayal of Gratian, see Ambrose, *De Obitu Valentiniani* 3; on Valentinian II's fasting habits, see Ambrose, *De Obitu Valentiniani* 16.

68 Ambrose, *De Obitu Theodosii* 6: *Nec moveat aetas! Fides militum imperatoris perfecta aetas est; est enim perfecta aetas, ubi perfecta est virtus.* For detailed analyses of the speech and its themes, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 357–60; Liebeschuetz, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 61), 174–203; and also S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1981), 145–50.

69 Ambrose, *De Obitu Theodosii* 55. For a similar contemporary view on the particular divine blessing of the Christian God upon the youthful Honorius, see Orosius 7.36, writing of the crisis in north Africa in 397 upon the rebellion of Gildo. Some 30 years later, the historian Sozomen would invoke similar claims of divine blessing for the realm of the eastern emperor Theodosius II in his youth (Sozomen 9.16.3–4).

70 Peter Chrsyologos, *Sermon* 130.3; also *Sermon* 85B.3.

71 Eusebius declared that Constantine had planted seeds of godliness in his sons and carefully appointed men of approved piety as their teachers (*Vita Constantini* 4.51.2).

Emphasizing a certain special divine protection for a child-emperor and bringing his function as a Christian leader increasingly to the forefront of his presentation seems to have been a key to the 'selling' of child-emperor regimes in the late Roman period. It was an emphasis that specifically linked the victories of his armies to the emperor, by claiming they were a direct result of his piety, despite his absence from the battlefield. And the effort to make this link explicit should serve to remind us of just how important the soldier-emperor model was, and how conscious child-emperor regimes were of claiming — through spokespeople like Ambrose and Claudian — that this model was still operating in some form, thereby strengthening the image of child-emperor regimes by forging that link.

The eastern child-emperor Theodosius II of course provides the most famous, extensive and remarkable picture of how the extraordinary piety of a child-emperor might become his most conspicuous virtue — indeed the virtue from which all other imperial virtues sprang. The contemporary, court-patronized historians Sozomen and Socrates provide us with considerable information about Theodosius's education and the extraordinary virtues he exhibited during both childhood and adulthood. According to Sozomen, the young Theodosius II's mind was imbued with piety and love of prayer,[72] while Socrates reported that his palace was so regulated that it differed little from a monastery, with the young emperor and his sisters rising early in the morning to sing hymns, fasting frequently, learning scriptures by heart, and engaging in learned discussions with bishops.[73] Most notably of all, Socrates declared that Theodosius was a model for all prelates, and in 'meekness' (πραΰς) surpassed all who had ever borne the sacerdotal office.[74] Now meekness is not an attribute normally associated with a successful emperor, and I would suggest that, whereas in the past piety had been one of many laudable imperial functions, as child-emperor rule and the means of making it plausible developed, piety was coming to be the first and foremost of the imperial virtues, the virtue from which other imperial virtues sprang. And when ascribing these virtues to a child, I think this approach gave rise to claims of other virtues that we might not otherwise expect to be desirable in an emperor — such as, indeed, meekness and innocence.

It is of tremendous significance to this presentation that this conspicuous emphasis on imperial piety above other imperial virtues continued during the adult years of these emperors who had come to the throne as children. The diptych of Probus, dating to 406, is a helpful visual depiction of this approach: it displayed the emperor Honorius, who was then aged 21, dressed in military attire, though he had never yet been near a battlefield, and beside him a banner topped with a Chi-Rho and declaring IN NOMINE XPI (=Christi) VINCAS SEMPER — 'may you always conquer in the name of Christ'.[75] Alan Cameron recently has

[72] Sozomen 9.1.

[73] Socrates 7.22.

[74] Socrates 7.42.

[75] See MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony* (above, n. 68), 221. On his coinage, too, Honorius frequently was depicted in military attire, and for his *tricennalia* issue in 422 is shown wearing a helmet, carrying a spear and with a small shield displaying a Chi-Rho: J. Kent, *Roman Imperial Coinage* 10. *The Divided Empire and the Fall of the Western Parts*, AD 395–491 (London, 1994), 48, 133.

highlighted the Christian victory imagery of the Probus diptych as entirely unique for its time, in an era when the iconography of consular diptychs remained solidly secular.[76] The young emperor's piety was credited with his armies' successes even without his presence on the battlefield, and even when he was in fact old enough to take up such a role. Socrates's report on the eastern army's campaign to establish Valentinian III as western emperor in 425 depicts a similar pious influence for the child-turned-adult emperor Theodosius II: when one of the emperor's generals was captured, according to Socrates, Theodosius II had recourse to God like King David, and achieved victory for his armies simply through prayer.[77] Claims of divine favour for an emperor — whether from a Christian or a pagan god — were hardly new. But an emperor achieving victories simply through prayer and not personal action is a new idea of the powers of a Roman emperor. And a further confirmation of the more ceremonial and symbolic position that these child-turned-adult emperors were playing well into their adult years is evident in the fragments of the panegyrics of Merobaudes, court poet to Valentinian III, writing in the 440s. Like Stilicho before him, the general Aetius was presented as the emperor's military strong arm, while Valentinian (then in his 20s), with his family around him, occupied a purely ceremonial position.[78]

The idea of emphasizing the Christian piety of a young emperor as his most conspicuous virtue, indeed the virtue from which other important qualities flowed, also suggests the possibility of a link with another recognized trend of late antiquity: the ceremonialization of the imperial office. An increase in ceremonial has long been seen as a particular feature of the imperial office during this period, usually dated from the reign of Diocletian onwards, but again, it has not yet been linked with the child-emperors of the time. Over the course of the fourth century, major ceremonial occasions such as the visit of Constantius II to Rome in 357, famously described by Ammianus Marcellinus, depict the emperor as so rigid in preserving his imperial dignity during his *adventus* that he never turned his head, looking straight forward at all times, and did not even wipe his nose, confirming that a highly ceremonialized imperial image was continuing to develop during his period.[79] I would suggest that this growing ceremonial suited the aims of the courts of these child-emperors of the late fourth–mid-fifth centuries very well. The ceremonial and religious function of an emperor was one that a child plausibly could be

[76] Cameron also has written that the diptych is unique for its double representation of Honorius as soldier-emperor rather than the conventional representation of the consul himself (Probus) presiding at consular games, and has suggested that the diptych was a special issue commemorating a specific victory — over Radagaisus in the late summer of 406, which was presented as a Christian victory over pagan hordes (A. Cameron, 'The Probus diptych and Christian apologetic', in H. Amirav and B. ter Haar Romeny (eds), *From Rome to Constantinople: Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron* (Leuven, 2007), 191–202). The emphasis on linking such a military victory specifically to the piety of the civilian emperor Honorius should be considered also.

[77] Socrates 7.22.

[78] According to Merobaudes (a different individual than the general of the 370s/380s), in their splendour the emperor and his wife were like the bright stars of heaven, the salvation of the land (*Carmina* 1.5–10), and Valentinian III shone with a youthful light (*Carmina* 2.1–4).

[79] AM 16.10.9–11; for discussion, see J.F. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (London, 1989), 231–4.

seen to fulfil: the accessions of child-emperors from the late fourth century onwards coincided with significant pre-existing and ongoing developments of Christianization and ceremonialization of the imperial office, taking them in a novel direction.

Overall, the change in emphasis of the Christian image of the emperor, coupled with the scenario of his traditionally most important function — that of military leadership — being delegated on a long-term basis to his general or guardian, was a major innovation in the way that imperial rule was portrayed in the late Roman west. What made it a transformation of the imperial office itself was the fact that this presentation continued throughout the boys' reigns, long after they had reached adulthood, and this approach outlived the individuals for whom it originally was devised — it had become part of the system. For while these emperors who came to the throne as children naturally did not remain children, as we have already seen, the emphasis on their Christian and ceremonial function above other functions endured throughout their reigns. And indeed it would surely always be difficult for a child-emperor reaching adulthood to make a successful transition from essentially figurehead or dependent rule to a more genuinely active or independent form of rule, the clearest and most irrefutable manifestation of which would always be some form of military leadership.[80] For this reason, the changes in the nature, practice and presentation of the imperial office resulting from the accessions of these child-emperors need to be looked for throughout their reigns — not merely during childhood, but during adulthood as well.

Between 367 and 455, therefore, rule by child-emperors — essentially ceremonial or dependent rule — had become an accepted model of imperial rulership where once it had not been. What might be called an 'infantilization' of the imperial office had taken place — a process whereby child-emperors who reached adulthood in the imperial office continued to be presented essentially as minors, whose predominant function lay in their ceremonial and religious role, while the more active imperial function of military leadership, in particular, was delegated to a single dominant general. This need not mean that a child-turned-adult emperor might never exercise active imperial functions, such as judicial responsibilities, nor did it mean that each child-emperor court that was established across this period functioned in precisely the same way. But it did mean that ceremonial or child-emperor rule came to be viewed as a 'norm' of the late Roman political system, and this had inevitable implications for the function and perception of the imperial office during this period. And if a child-turned-adult emperor could continue to be treated effectively as a minor in terms of imperial responsibilities throughout their reign, it also raised the possibility that even an adult emperor coming to the throne also might be treated as a largely ceremonial figure. This transformation of the imperial office did not mean that soldier-emperors were no longer a possibility — as

[80] Of the four boy-emperors of the west who ruled between 375 and 455, only Honorius died a natural death, and he alone among them seems to have made little attempt to take on independent rulership upon reaching adulthood. An argument can be made for Gratian, Valentinian II and Valentinian III all attempting to take on a greater active role in 'their' governments, with little obvious success, and not surviving long after these attempts. See further McEvoy, '*Spes Rei Publicae*' (above, n. 29).

indeed the later fifth-century accessions of emperors like Avitus and Majorian in the west, and Marcian and Leo in the east, attest. It did not even mean that non-military/civilian emperors like Honorius would not continue to be depicted in a military guise — as on the Probus diptych — or take part in victory celebrations — such as the humiliation of Priscus Attalus at Rome in 415 —, and such associations remained key to the imperial presentation.[81] But it did mean that alongside the soldier-emperor model, there was now a new and acceptable exemplar of a more predominantly ceremonial model of imperial rule, as a role that could in fact be fulfilled by a child or an adult.

It is against this background of transformation of the imperial office itself that we need to set the imperial refocus on the city of Rome over the course of the fifth century. As the territory of the western Roman empire — and thus also its revenues — shrank during this period, imperial consciousness of the symbolic importance of Rome and the need for the support of its wealthy aristocracy certainly grew. But as the repeated accessions of child-emperors also wrought significant changes in the imperial office, the need to demonstrate the ceremonial and Christian functions of these young emperors must have made Rome an increasingly attractive venue for such displays. With the emperor himself no longer leading his armies — even in adulthood —, his link with their victories, and moreover his role in the security of the state, needed to be made explicit to his subjects; and this could be achieved most effectively (and could reach its largest influential audience) by imperial ceremonial events and benefactions at Rome itself.

In the east, the city of Constantinople had become the principal imperial residence from the time of Theodosius I onwards,[82] and, as a strong military emperor himself, Theodosius's practice of focusing imperial presence primarily on one major city and developing the ceremonial potential of that city clearly need not be seen as a symptom of a weak government. But the accessions of the boy-emperors Arcadius and Honorius, staged by their father at the Hebdomon (a suburb of Constantinople), and also Theodosius I's presentation of the child Honorius to the Roman senate during his triumphal visit of 389 (having brought the child all the way from Constantinople specifically for the purpose) indicate that this astute emperor recognized the value of staging imperial ceremonial in an appropriately spectacular urban venue — and was perhaps even more conscious of this when the focus of that ceremonial was a child.[83] Although the development of child-emperor rule over this period was an empire-wide phenomenon, for the purposes of this paper, it is the western empire and imperial attitudes to Rome that are the focus, though the comparable situation in the east still needs to be kept in mind.

[81] On the humiliation of Priscus Attalus (the puppet-usurper of Alaric following the sack of 410), see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 354; and specifically on its ideological significance and staging at Rome, see Lejdegård, *Honorius and the City of Rome* (above, n. 9), 137–58.

[82] See generally on the development of Constantinople as the principal imperial residence in the east, G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale: Constantinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451* (Paris, 1974).

[83] On Theodosius bringing Honorius to Rome in 389, see Cameron, 'Theodosius the Great' (above, n. 57); also Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 227; Oost, *Galla Placidia* (above, n. 30), 51.

Late Roman emperors had long recognized the importance of Rome as a major political stage, and a particularly valuable one for displays of imperial might and victory.[84] Yet the steady increase in imperial visits to Rome from *c.* 400 onwards, culminating finally in long-term imperial residency from the late 440s, does suggest that a change in imperial attitudes to Rome was taking place. I would attribute this change largely to the transformation of the imperial office itself over this period, but point out that long-term change is, by its very nature, a slow process. The accessions of the first child-emperors, Gratian and Valentinian II, therefore, did not see an immediate increase in imperial visits to the city, and, indeed, neither of these boy-emperors ever found their way to Rome.[85] But over time, as the presentation of child-emperor rule became increasingly sophisticated, particularly during the reigns of Honorius and Valentinian III, recognition of the city's value as a key political stage grew, and so too did imperial presence in the city. And the enduring nature of the presentation of these emperors as largely ceremonial and Christian figures, even through their years as adult emperors, meant that this refocus on Rome would only continue — or even grow increasingly important — as their more ceremonial positions persisted into adulthood. That this trend continued on into the reigns of the 'shadow emperors' in the twenty years remaining for the western empire confirms the long-term impact of this change, and the continuing interest of imperial regimes — for child- or adult emperors — in staging important ceremonial occasions in the city, thereby reinforcing concepts of the emperors' personal link to the activities of the imperial armies, and his bringing of divine blessing for the state.

The importance of good relations with the senatorial élite of Rome

The success of the transformation of the imperial office over this period, from what had been in the fourth century first and foremost a military command, to an increasingly ceremonialized and Christianized position, had many repercussions, and always must have depended for its success upon the acceptance of this arrangement by powerful groups like the senatorial aristocracy and the military. And, indeed, one of the many repercussions of this transformation was a change in the dynamics of the relationship between the imperial court and the senatorial aristocracy. This élite group was the most important audience to this change in imperial presentation, and would be most exposed to it; and its particular emphasis on Christian piety may not, of course, have

[84] I am grateful to Mark Humphries for discussion on this point, and for the chance to read his forthcoming 'Emperors and usurpers', which deals directly with this issue.

[85] T.D. Barnes, 'Constans and Gratian in Rome', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 79 (1975), 325–30, suggested Gratian had visited the city in 376: there is little reliable contemporary evidence for such a visit and Barnes has since revised his opinion on this: T.D. Barnes, 'Ambrose and Gratian', *Antiquité Tardive* 7 (1999), 165–74, esp. pp. 168–9, n. 17.

appealed to all.[86] As more territories of the western empire came under threat of barbarian invasions or local rebellions, and more and more revenue was lost to the imperial administration, the senatorial aristocracy at Rome became ever more important as a remaining source of revenue and support, particularly for financing military expeditions.[87] The fact that emperors were no longer leading such expeditions personally made efforts to demonstrate imperial goodwill to the senate all the more vital, as well as efforts to demonstrate that the emperor was still associated with the victories of his armies.

Senatorial goodwill was always important in the regime-building activities of emperors, and when the emperor was a child the need for senatorial support was all the greater: a child could not be certain of commanding the military backing of a Valentinian I or a Theodosius I, after all. Like previous imperial regimes, child-emperor regimes of the west made concerted efforts to win and maintain the support of the old senatorial aristocracy of Rome. And, indeed, concerted efforts such as, for example, those of the court of Gratian in 375 after the death of his father, whose relations with the Roman senatorial élite towards the end of his reign had been notoriously bad, show the particular consciousness of the value of this influential group for a new young emperor. The months immediately following the death of Valentinian I saw a flurry of laws issued by young Gratian confirming senatorial rights and privileges.[88] In 395, when Theodosius I died shortly after suppressing a western usurpation that had involved at least

86 Recent debates over the numbers of pagan Roman aristocrats during this period have suggested that they were few in number by the fifth century and unlikely to be disgruntled by Christian imperial display (see, for example, M.R. Salzmann, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Harvard, 2002), esp. pp. 178–200; also T.D. Barnes, 'Statistics and the conversion of the Roman aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 65 (1995), 135–47). There are still hints, however, that pagan aristocrats should not be discounted entirely as a political force in the late fourth and early fifth centuries — in 394 the prominent pagan Flaviani family was involved in the usurpation of Eugenius in the west. On the usurpation of Eugenius and the involvement of pagan aristocrats, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 238–50; and specifically on Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, see *PLRE* 1.347–9; McLynn also commented on the 'paganism' of the regime of Eugenius (*Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 350–3). Other prominent Roman aristocrats remained staunchly pagan, such as Quintus Aurelius Symmachus, whose famous *Relatio* 3 of 382, written in his capacity as urban prefect, asserted that a majority vote of the senate had ruled to retain the pagan altar of victory in the senate house (Symmachus, *Relationes* 3.1–2; see again Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 205–11, on the famous report). In general on senatorial conversion to Christianity, see P. Brown, 'Aspects of the Christianization of the Roman aristocracy', *Journal of Roman Studies* 51 (1961), 1–11.

87 Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 40; Humphries, 'Roman senators and absent emperors' (above, n. 7), 43; Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 163–5.

88 Gratian's legislation in favour of senatorial privileges came after a period of particularly poor emperor–senate relations under Valentinian I, whose reign had seen a series of senatorial trials for magic and misconduct (see A. Alföldi, *A Conflict of Ideas in the Late Roman Empire* (trans. H. Mattingly) (Oxford, 1952), 50–1; Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 56–63; and most recently Testa, *Senatori, popolo, papi* (above, n. 7), 209–323). Upon his father's death Gratian's administration swiftly removed the officials seen as the principal agents of this 'terror', recalled certain senators accused during the trials, and passed a series of laws favourable to senators during 376–7 (for example, *CTh* 1.1.13, 9.6.1–2, 9.35.3). Symmachus hailed Gratian's full accession in 375 as the dawn of a 'new era' (Symmachus, *Epistulae* 1.13).

one very high ranking Roman aristocrat — the noted pagan Virius Nicomachus Flavianus —, the regime of young Honorius and Stilicho was cautious in its immediate appointments, particularly with the urban prefecture,[89] but nevertheless rapidly conferred pardons on those who had been involved.[90] Those who had held administrative or honorary posts under Eugenius were permitted to retain the rank they had held prior to the usurpation,[91] while the younger Nicomachus Flavianus was even excused from repaying the salary he had earned under the usurper, and in time did go on to become urban prefect, in 399.[92] Senators were given new and expanded privileges, their opposition disarmed by tax remissions and appointments to influential offices.[93] Indeed, throughout the thirteen-year dominance by Stilicho of Honorius's government, consistent respect was shown towards the senate: they were famously deferred to in the matter of formally declaring war on the African rebel Gildo in 397,[94] and engaged in lengthy negotiations over senatorial payments of supporting funds in the form of recruits or cash in the military campaign.[95] Similarly, in 408 Stilicho also pointedly (if rather forcefully) consulted the senate over the payment of funds owed to Alaric the Visigoth.[96] Honorius's position as emperor was most under threat following the death of Stilicho in 408, when the emperor's relations with the senatorial aristocracy took a sharp plunge,[97] and recovered only when the new general,

89 This issue is explored by Humphries's forthcoming 'Emperors and usurpers'.

90 General pardons were issued in April and May 395 (*CTh* 15.14.9, 15.14.11, 15.14.12).

91 *CTh* 15.14.11.

92 On his being allowed to retain the salary, see Symmachus, *Epistulae* 4.19.51; on the prefecture, see *CTh* 14.10.3. The younger Nicomachus Flavianus was the son of the pagan senator who committed suicide after Eugenius's defeat at Frigidus: see *PLRE* 1.345–7.

93 The influential aristocrat Manlius Theodorus was made prefect of Italy from 397 to 399 and consul in 399; and his son Theodorus and brother Lampadius shared in similar honours. For a detailed study of the individuals found in office during this period, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 258–64.

94 Claudian, *De Consulatu Stilichonis* 1.325–52.

95 *CTh* 7.13.12, 7.13.13, 7.13.14.

96 Zosimus 5.29.5–9; also Olympiodorus, *Fragments* 5.2.1–2. See, generally, Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 252–70, on court and senate under Stilicho's regime. Stilicho's relations with the senate sometimes have been seen as cajoling or threatening, but it should be remembered that he did nevertheless choose to consult them, though it may not have been absolutely necessary, and he clearly hoped this would be seen as evidence of his respect for their role.

97 Stilicho's execution as the result of a palace coup in August 408 saw a complete breakdown of negotiations with Alaric and the Goths, who had previously come to an agreement with Stilicho to invade eastern Illyricum on behalf of Honorius's government, and now that those plans had fallen through they were on Italian territory demanding reparations. In desperation, as the rapidly changing political cliques at Honorius's court refused to come to terms, the Goths marched on Rome, besieging the city three times between 408 and 410. Forced to attempt an arrangement themselves, as the imperial government at Ravenna showed no interest in their plight, the Roman senators entered into negotiations with Alaric, and undertook a number of embassies to the emperor's court to seek ratification of the terms they had established. In 409, after these attempts proved fruitless, Alaric had even induced the senators to choose a new emperor from among their own ranks — Priscus Attalus. When even this plan failed and Alaric finally sacked Rome in August 410, senatorial goodwill towards an imperial government too embroiled in its own political intrigues to save the ancient capital must have sunk to an all-time low. See, generally, Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 284–306; P. Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (London, 2005), 224–9.

Fl. Constantius, alongside his military victories, took steps to try to repair relations with the Roman aristocracy in the mid-410s.[98]

These policies of the conferral of privileges and high office-holding for the senatorial élite were adopted similarly under the regime of Valentinian III.[99] Valentinian's return to Rome when the city was under grave threat of attack from the Vandals in 440 may have been an attempt to show solidarity with the senate that had felt so abandoned by Honorius during the three Visigothic sieges between 408 and 410.[100] Valentinian's government certainly wanted Rome to feel the emperor's concern for the city at this time: a law of March 440 described his constant care for the city, which was justly venerated as the head of his empire.[101] And, indeed, the long absences of emperors from Rome over the course of the fourth century and into the early fifth had seen a series of usurpations gaining senatorial support at Rome (those of Magnentius, Magnus Maximus, Eugenius, Priscus Attalus and John, among others), of which the government will have been anxious to avoid a repeat in a time of crisis.[102]

Although, as mentioned above, concern for good relations with the senate was certainly not unique to child-emperor regimes, the increased imperial presence in the city from *c.* 400 onwards must have changed the dynamic. While in the fourth century distinguished senators had at times travelled to the imperial court at Trier or Milan to convey senatorial goodwill or requests,[103] the more frequent imperial visits to Rome itself in the fifth century might allow the development of a more prolonged connection, perhaps even a direct role in imperial policy.[104] In addition, spectacular ceremonial displays — such as Honorius's visit to the city of Rome to mark his

98 The extraordinary appointment of the nineteen-year-old aristocrat Petronius Maximus as *comes sacrarum largitionum* from 415 to 418 and then urban prefect in 420 suggests such a case of attempting reconciliation with the senatorial élite. On Petronius Maximus, see *PLRE* 2.749–51.

99 One of the earliest pieces of legislation from Valentinian III's new regime, in January 426, assured senators of the respect with which their rights and privileges were regarded by the new government (*CTh* 10.10.33), and a further constitution issued in February 426 graciously remitted to the Senate part of the *aurum oblaticium* (*CTh* 6.2.25). Members of major Roman aristocratic families often were found holding high rank also under Valentinian III — such as Anicius Auchenius Bassus, praetorian prefect in 426 (*CTh* 10.26.1, 4.10.3, 16.7.7, 16.8.28), and Nicomachus Flavianus in 431/432 (*CTh* 11.1.36, 6.23.3; *ILS* 2948). Again, for analysis of early office-holders under Valentinian III's regime, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 358–60. Also for the aristocratic family connections linking some of Valentinian III's prefects, see R.J. Weber, 'Albinus: the living memory of a 5th-century personality', *Historia* 38 (1989), 476–82. Humphries's important forthcoming article, 'The city of Rome and Valentinian III (425–455)' explores this issue thoroughly.

100 In October 439, King Geiseric and the Vandals had taken Carthage, and soon took to the seas after this, raiding Sicily in early 440 (Marcellinus comes s.a. 439(3); Hydatius 115, 119, 120; Prosper 1339; *Chronicon Paschale* 583.5–7; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 5941; Cassiodorus, *Variae* 1.4.14). By January 440, Valentinian III (who had been in Ravenna in August 439 — *NVal.* 3.1) was back in Rome (*NVal.* 4.1), and in March 440 the city walls of Rome were repaired hastily (*NVal* 5.3). See also Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 164.

101 *NVal.* 5.1 (given at Rome, 3 March 440): ... *urbis Romae, quam merito caput nostri veneramur imperii.*

102 Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 39.

103 Humphries, 'Roman senators and absent emperors' (above, n. 7), 34–6.

104 As scholars have suggested may have taken place in the 440s; see, for example, B.L. Twyman, 'Aetius and the aristocracy', *Historia* 19 (1970), 480–503; Weber, 'Albinus' (above, n. 99), 472–92; also Humphries, 'Roman senators and absent emperors' (above, n. 7), 44.

sixth consulship in 404 — were extremely important for the regimes of these figurehead child-emperors, and even more so as the child-emperor reached adulthood.[105] Claudian's account of Honorius's visit in 404 stressed the young emperor's majesty and splendour, his approachability and deference to the senators, and the reverence with which the young emperor regarded the ancient city.[106] Even so, Claudian's account of the 404 visit may indicate that a greater degree of distance was being introduced into the ceremonial image of the young emperor, even at Rome, where he traditionally was expected to be more of a citizen-prince than a distant ruler.[107] Though Claudian's account cannot be taken too literally, he did claim that the young emperor, when delivering his speech to the senate, remained majestically seated on his ivory throne, in contrast to the depiction of Constantine I on the Arch of Constantine a century earlier, standing to deliver his speech.[108] And while expectations of imperial behaviour at Rome were rather different to those in other cities, it is worth noting Claudian's description of Honorius's *adventus* to Milan in 398, when he claims that the boy-emperor was borne aloft in the style of an Egyptian sun-god.[109]

Further important visits to Rome during Honorius's reign occurred in a similar vein, though unfortunately the 404 visit is the only one for which we have a description of the ceremonial detail of the occasion.[110] Following his acclamation, although the evidence is sparse, further visits to Rome of the young emperor Valentinian III have been suggested plausibly by both Gillett and Humphries for the 430s, particularly in connection with the young emperor's consulships, which would have provided another chance for impressive ceremonial display.[111] I would suggest

105 Claudian devoted his poem *Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti* [hereafter *VI Cons.*] to a detailed description of Honorius's *adventus* into Rome to take up his sixth consulship in 404. For the most detailed commentary on the poem, see *Claudian, Panegyricus de Sexto Consulatu Honorii Augusti*, edited with an introduction, translation and literary commentary by M. Dewar (Oxford, 1996). The poem was analysed also by Cameron, *Claudian* (above, n. 57), 382–9, and MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony* (above, n. 68), 52–5.

106 For Honorius's majesty and splendour, see Claudian, *VI Cons.* 560–7; for his deference to the senators, 543–54; and for his reverence for the city and her traditions, 356–60, 407–24, 578–91.

107 On the need for an emperor to adapt his behaviour to his specific context, see Matthews, *Roman Empire of Ammianus* (above, n. 79), 237–8; and on the citizen-prince image, see A. Wallace-Hadrill, '*Civilis princeps*: between citizen and king', *Journal of Roman Studies* 72 (1982), 32–48. On the difference between Claudian's presentation of Honorius during an *adventus* at Milan in 398, and at Rome in 404, see Cameron, *Claudian* (above, n. 57), 382–3.

108 Claudian, *VI Cons.* 587–91. See also M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), 88–9.

109 Cameron, *Claudian* (above, n. 57), 382.

110 McCormick asserted that there was evidence for six victory celebrations between 411 and 422, which may well have been held at Rome, though the details are very unclear (McCormick, *Eternal Victory* (above, n. 108), 56–7). The *Theodosian Code* does record visits of the emperor to the city in 407/8 (*CTh* 16.5.40, 16.5.41, 16.2.38, 14.4.8, 1.20.1), 408 (*CTh* 16.5.43), 409 (*CTh* 7.20.13) and 414 (*CTh* 16.5.55) — and all of these occasions must have involved some imperial ceremonial.

111 See Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 144–5. Again, Humphries's forthcoming article, 'The city of Rome and Valentinian III (425–455)' deals with this point. Valentinian III was consul in 425, 426, 430, 435, 440, 445, 450 and 455 (for details see R.S. Bagnall, A. Cameron, S.R. Schwartz and K.A. Worp (eds), *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta, 1987) [hereafter *CLRE*], 386–445).

that the renewed value for Rome as an important stage for imperial display and ceremonial during this period owes much to the child-emperor phenomenon, which required this arena for displaying imperial majesty far more than the previous military regimes of earlier fourth-century emperors. I think there is another aspect of the increased imperial focus on Rome during the late fourth–mid-fifth centuries to add to the picture, however, and that is a significant influx of eastern Roman (or Constantinopolitan) political attitudes into the western court from the reign of Honorius onwards, and most markedly of all during the reign of Valentinian III.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Modern historians writing of the regimes of both Honorius and Valentinian III have tended to forget that both of these were largely eastern regimes that had been imposed upon the west. Honorius was the son of an eastern emperor, and originally had been made Augustus at Constantinople in 393. In 395 he found himself the new emperor of the west, and behind this eastern born and bred boy-emperor stood an equally eastern general, Stilicho.[112] The circumstances of Valentinian III's accession and reign are similarly of eastern origin. When Honorius died at Ravenna in 423, his nephew Valentinian was at Constantinople. Six-year-old Valentinian was entirely dependent upon his cousin, the eastern emperor Theodosius II, for the creation of his western regime. In 424 Theodosius sent his young cousin to the west with a substantial eastern army whose task was to depose a usurper who had arisen there, and to install the boy Valentinian in his place.[113] Having achieved this, the Constantinopolitan government continued to be very much a presence in the new western boy-emperor's regime for many years to come — involving eastern officials in the western government, sending eastern armies to the western province of north Africa to fight against the Vandals, and compiling the massive *Theodosian Code*, with western input but issued from Constantinople in 437 in the name of the senior, eastern emperor, and valid throughout both east and west.[114] Finally, in 437, Licinia Eudoxia, the only daughter of the eastern emperor, was married to her cousin Valentinian III.[115] At Constantinople a solidus was minted in honour of the marriage, with an image that

112 For details on Honorius's birth and upbringing, and Stilicho's involvement, see Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 106–73; Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 225–8; Cameron, 'Theodosius the Great' (above, n. 57), and also Cameron, *Claudian* (above, n. 57), 37–45.

113 Again, for details on Valentinian III's accession and his eastern backing, see Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 240–64; Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 282–5, 317–19; Oost, *Galla Placidia* (above, n. 30), 176–93; W.E. Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton, 1968), 19–29.

114 The *Gesta* of the promulgation of the *Code* at Rome record Valentinian accepting the initiative of his cousin with the loyalty of a colleague and son (*Gesta* 2). On the creation of the *Theodosian Code* and eastern and western input, see generally J.F. Matthews, *Laying Down the Law: a Study of the Theodosian Code* (London, 2000).

115 The marriage took place at Constantinople on 29 October 437. For primary source accounts of the wedding, see *Gesta* 2; Merobaudes, *Carmina* 1.10; Socrates 7.44 (though Socrates gave the wrong year); Marcellinus *s.a.* 437; Prosper 1328; Cassiodorus, *Chronicle* 1229; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 5926.

clearly showed the paternalistic attitude of the eastern emperor towards his western colleague — with Theodosius II, the largest figure, standing behind the young couple, joining their hands.[116]

It is crucial at this point to remember that, as discussed above, child-emperor regimes were by no means purely a western phenomenon, and that the eastern Roman empire had seen the accessions over the course of the late fourth–mid-fifth centuries of the youthful Arcadius and the infant Theodosius II. Over the past 50 years, much has been made in modern scholarship (largely as a result of Émilienne Demougeot's *De l'unité à la division de l'Empire romain 395–410*) of a so-called 'split' between east and west from 395 onwards, and of long-term hostile relations thereafter, but this dating seems premature.[117] In fact there is consistent evidence for continuing eastern interest in and support for the western regime down to 455 and beyond, and particularly throughout the reign of Valentinian III as noted above, though there certainly were low points in the relationship.[118] And as also discussed above, since the reign of Theodosius I in particular, the city of Constantinople had become the primary residence of the emperors of the east: as the home of Theodosius's elder son Arcadius, this eastern child-emperor rarely left the city from the time of his accession at the age of six years in 383 until his death in 408, a tradition followed also by his son, Theodosius II, throughout his long reign from 402 to 450.[119] This level of imperial commitment to a single capital city is undeniably unparalleled in the west. Nevertheless, the increasing tendency of western imperial regimes over the course of the fifth century, first to visit and then to reside at Rome, should be viewed as a complementary recognition in the west, as in the east, of the value of a capital city and its resident aristocracy in supporting the ceremonial of symbolic imperial rule in particular. Child-emperor rule in the west did not develop independently of the east, and nor should developments in western imperial ceremonial and presentation be seen as divorced from Constantinopolitan developments. These developments were, rather, part of an overarching and common developing imperial culture, and should be viewed as such.

It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that from the late fourth century onwards some Constantinopolitan attitudes to imperial ceremonial begin to become apparent in western

116 Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (above, n. 113), 28; Holum, *Theodosian Empresses* (above, n. 63), 209; Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 24. The records of the initial promulgation of the *Theodosian Code* in the west (which took place in December 438 according to the surviving minutes of the senate) also show a markedly paternalistic attitude towards the eastern emperor's new son-in-law Valentinian III (see *Gesta* 2).

117 E. Demougeot, *De l'unité à la division de l'Empire romain 395–410* (Paris, 1951), esp. pp. 235–6.

118 Including between 395 and 400 and from *c.* 407–8, when the actions of Stilicho caused considerable suspicion at the eastern court. (For relations between the two courts in general, see A. Cameron and J. Long with a contribution by L. Sherry, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius* (Berkeley, 1993), 165–7, 246–50, 323–36.) Yet in 410 the eastern court sent military support to the west in an attempt to help the government of Honorius deal with Alaric, while the reign of Valentinian III saw not only the substantial and costly military campaign to establish the child as emperor in 425, but also lengthy and expensive eastern military campaigns in north Africa against the Vandals through the 430s. On the continuing eastern interest in the west, see Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (above, n. 113), esp. pp. 3–58.

119 Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 225–6.

imperial practice. Among these attitudes was a particular view of the capital city — Constantinople in the east, or Rome in the west — as the most appropriate location for significant imperial ceremonial. The visit of the eastern emperor Theodosius I to Rome in 389, more than 30 years after the last imperial visit to the city, could be seen in this light,[120] although Theodosius's visit also fits with the fourth-century imperial habit of visiting Rome after crushing a usurpation.[121] But one of the ways in which the appearance of eastern attitudes to ceremonial and the city can be seen most clearly is through the nature of the accessions of the period — and particularly that of six-year-old Valentinian III in 425.

The city of Rome was carefully, and deliberately, chosen as the location for the boy's acclamation as Augustus.[122] When the ceremony was staged at Rome in October 425, it was some months since the eastern army with the then Caesar Valentinian had achieved victory over the usurper John at Ravenna and held celebrations at Aquileia, but pointedly moved to Rome to stage the new boy-emperor's accession.[123] John seems to have enjoyed some support at Rome before the arrival of the eastern army, and no doubt this was also a factor in the decision to stage the ceremony there, but nevertheless it was a striking decision.[124] Yet in the fourth century, members of the Constantinian dynasty, as well as the emperors Jovian and Valentinian I, and the boy-emperors Gratian and Valentinian II, had all been proclaimed in military camps, often far from either Rome or Constantinople.[125] In the context of the military roles that most fourth-century emperors played, and the military or political crises to which their accessions were often a response, this makes perfect sense. In the later half of the fourth

120 Theodosius's victorious visit to Rome in 389 was celebrated with a panegyric by Pacatus (*Panegyrici Latini* II), and also written of by Zosimus (4.59.1–4) and Claudian (*VI Cons.* 53–72), while numerous laws record his presence in the city (for example, *CTh* 15.1.25, 14.4.6).

121 I am grateful to Mark Humphries for discussion on this point.

122 The accession was recorded by Olympiodorus, *Fragments* 43.1, 43.2; Marcellinus *s.a.* 425(2); Hydatius 85; Socrates 7.2.5; Philostorgius 12.13; *Chronicon Paschale* 580.13–15; Theophanes, *Chronographia*, AM 5916. See also Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 381–3.

123 After John's capture at Ravenna, he was brought to Aquileia and paraded on a donkey in the hippodrome, before being mutilated and then executed before the six-year-old Caesar in June or July of 425, at least three months before Valentinian was made Augustus at Rome: see Olympiodorus, *Fragments* 43.1, 43.2; also Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 380.

124 See Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 223, n. 1, and also J.J. Wilkes, 'A Pannonian refugee of quality at Salona', *Phoenix* 26 (4) (1972), 377–93, at p. 391.

125 Constantine I was proclaimed at York (*PLRE* 1.223). Of Constantine I's three sons who succeeded him, only Constantius was at or near Constantinople at the time of their father's death. Ammianus Marcellinus provided a detailed account of the accessions of Julian (proclaimed at Paris by his troops (AM 20.4.1–22)), Jovian (hastily made emperor on campaign in Persia after the death of Julian (AM 25.5.1–8)), Valentinian I (chosen emperor at Nicaea in his absence while on campaign at Ancyra, and when he reached Nicaea proclaimed on tribunal before soldiers (AM 26.1.1–11)), Gratian (raised as emperor before the soldiers by his father (AM 27.6.1–16)) and Valentinian II (brought to Brigetio for acclamation by soldiers (AM 30.10.1–6)). The acclamation of Julian as Caesar provides an exception — his elevation before the soldiers and journey back into the city in the carriage of the senior emperor (as reported by Ammianus Marcellinus) looks much more like a later eastern accession (AM 15.8.2–17).

century in the east, however, this trend was beginning to change. In 364, the emperor Valens was proclaimed Augustus before the army at the Hebdomon, a suburb of Constantinople that over the course of the fourth century became the traditional ceremonial place of acclamation for eastern emperors.[126] More significantly still, in 383 and 393, the boy-emperors Arcadius and Honorius were acclaimed, also at the Hebdomon.[127] Following the ceremony, the new emperors would take part in a lavish procession through the city to the imperial palace.[128] In 402, at the age of nine months, Theodosius II was apparently also acclaimed at the Hebdomon.[129] We have few details of the ceremonial surrounding Valentinian III's accession, although we do know that he was crowned by the eastern master of offices.[130] But the choice of Rome as the location for such a vitally important event as the boy-emperor's reign, particularly during a period when scholars traditionally have claimed that Rome had become a political backwater, is highly significant, and may have been a specific imitation of the eastern accessions of the child-emperors Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius II. I believe that the nature of Valentinian III's accession does suggest that this regime, so newly arrived from Constantinople, was adopting certain eastern conventions with regard to imperial ceremonial, reflecting the empire-wide nature of the child-emperor phenomenon — and that this involved a re-evaluation of imperial relations with the ancient capital and its powerful aristocracy.

The mausoleum of Honorius

The influence of Constantinopolitan political attitudes to ceremonial, and to Rome, that is apparent in the late fourth- to mid-fifth-century west, as well as the child-emperor phenomenon, with its emphasis on the religious piety of a young emperor, relate to a further instance of imperial commitment to Rome. The mausoleum of Honorius was built adjacent to the Constantinian basilica of Saint Peter's on the Vatican Hill, and, although difficult to date

126 Ammianus again reported the accession of Valens at the Hebdomon (AM 26.4.1–3) and stated that after Valens was adorned with the imperial insignia and a diadem, Valentinian I took him in his own carriage into the city. See further *PLRE* 1.930–1.

127 Arcadius's accession is reported at *Consularia Constantinopolitana s.a.* 383; Socrates 5.10.5; Sozomen 7.12.2; Philostorgius 10.5. For Honorius's accession, see Claudian, *IV Cons.* 203–9; Socrates 25.5; Philostorgius 11.2; Sozomen 7.24.1.

128 Claudian described the scene after Honorius's accession — the imperial chariot driving through Constantinople from the Hebdomon back to the palace, the new young emperor with his father and brother, all clothed in gold and wearing crowns (Claudian, *IV Cons.* 203–9).

129 Few details survive of Theodosius II's accession in 402 — see *PLRE* 2.1100.

130 Helion, the eastern *magister officiorum*, crowned the young emperor. The eastern emperor Theodosius II had intended to crown his cousin himself, but had fallen ill on the journey west, and returned home instead (Olympiodorus, *Fragments* 46; Socrates 7.24.25). See also Wilkes, 'A Pannonian refugee' (above, n. 124), 391–2.

precisely, appears to have been constructed sometime between 400 and 408.[131] This construction was in itself an act of considerable significance, for, once again, it was a very long time since an emperor had been buried at Rome — not since Maxentius and his son Romulus in the early fourth century, although members of Constantine's family had been laid to rest in or near the city.[132] Part of Constantine the Great's construction plan for his new metropolis of Constantinople in the east had involved the building of the great Apostoleion, or church of the Holy Apostles.[133] According to Eusebius, here Constantine had planned to gather relics of each of the twelve apostles, and to have himself buried in their midst upon his death. In 337 when Constantine died, he was laid to rest there, as many emperors to follow him would be.[134]

The western empire of the late fourth century possessed no such extra-dynastic Christian imperial mausoleum. And in fact, when Valentinian I died in 375 — an emperor of the west, who died in the west — his body was transported all the way back to Constantinople for burial in the Apostoleion.[135] When the young western emperor Gratian's first wife Constantia died in 383, her body also was taken to Constantinople for burial.[136] It might be said that it was only western emperors who died in embarrassing or compromised circumstances in the late fourth century who were buried in the west — and even then, not at Rome. Gratian, who

131 The death of Maria, first wife of Honorius, probably occurred in early 408 (see *PLRE* 2.720; Zosimus 5.28.1 noted her death in 407 or 408) and she was buried in the mausoleum at Rome, which was presumably at least partially complete by this date (Mark Johnson suggests a construction date between 400 and 415: M.J. Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2009), 171). On the little available evidence regarding the mausoleum, see R. Gem, 'The Vatican rotunda: a Severan monument and its early history, *c.* 200 to 500', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 158 (2005), 13, 36–7; also J.D. Alchermes, 'Petrine politics: Pope Symmachus and the rotonda of St Andrew at Old St Peter's', *The Catholic Historical Review* 81 (1995), 8–9.

132 Maxentius's son Romulus (*PLRE* 1.772) predeceased his father, dying *c.* 309, and was buried in the mausoleum complex his father constructed on the Via Appia; Maxentius (*PLRE* 1.571), who was defeated at Saxa Rubra by Constantine in 312, drowned in the Tiber but his body may still have been buried at Rome — though not in the grand mausoleum he had constructed for himself (see Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 92–3, 201). Constantine I's mother, Helena, who died *c.* 329, was buried in a newly-built basilica by the Via Labicana at Rome (*Liber Pontificalis* 34.44.26; *PLRE* 1.410–11; see also Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 110–18); Constantina, the daughter of Constantine I, died in Bithynia in 354 and was buried by the Via Nomentana and the church of Sant'Agnese at Rome (AM 21.1.5; *PLRE* 1.222; also Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 139–56); Helena, Constantine I's other daughter and the wife of Julian, died *c.* 360 and was buried with her sister on the Via Nomentana (AM 21.1.5, 25.4.2; *PLRE* 1.409–10). The debate over Julian's place of burial and the suggestion of Rome as an appropriate location also indicates that the possibility of imperial burial in the old capital had not been forgotten entirely: see G. Kelly, 'The new Rome and the old: Ammianus Marcellinus' silences on Constantinople', *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 53 (2) (2003), 588–607, esp. pp. 590–4.

133 Much has been written on the structure and intent behind Constantine's Apostoleion; for the most recent analysis, see Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 119–28.

134 Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* IV.60.2, IV.71.2; G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: the Imperial Office in Byzantium* (trans. J. Birrell) (Cambridge, 2003), 139. Although in 359 Constantius II had his father's body moved into a mausoleum adjacent to the church: Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals* (above, n. 2), 59–60.

135 AM 30.10.1.

136 *Chronicon Paschale s.a.* 383; also *PLRE* 1.221. Constantia was the posthumous daughter of Constantius II, and burial with her father's family may have been a factor.

was assassinated in 383, was probably buried at Milan, following an ignominious tussle for possession of his body between the court of his brother Valentinian II and the usurper who had brought about his death, Magnus Maximus.[137] And when Valentinian II committed suicide in 392, his body was taken for burial at Milan also, rather than Constantinople.[138] The building of an imperial dynastic mausoleum at Rome early in the fifth century was therefore an important demonstration of renewed imperial commitment to the old capital — and perhaps too an attempt to restore the imperial profile itself in Rome and reassert the idea of Rome's equality with Constantinople.[139] It also took place at the same time as the eastern emperor Arcadius was adding his own personal mausoleum to the church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople.[140] An element of competition between the eastern and western courts in the linking of apostle shrines and imperial mausolea should certainly not be discounted, and indeed the writings of Paulinus of Nola indicate that fifth-century intellectuals were aware of potential comparisons.[141] Rome certainly had the edge over Constantinople here, boasting the burial sites not only of Saint Peter but also of Saint Paul, with both sites receiving specific imperial attention over the course of the late fourth–mid-fifth centuries.[142] It would hardly be surprising if the western emperor's ability to link his dynastic mausoleum with the shrine of Saint Peter was in some way a reassertion of Rome's equality — or indeed superiority — as an imperial capital.

The nature of relations between the two imperial courts is therefore important in this context, and, as noted above, from 395–400, largely as a result of the competing interests of dominant advisers at the courts of Honorius and Arcadius, relations were at a low ebb. Yet from 400 until 405 at least, there seems to have been some improvement, with each court acknowledging

137 Bishop Ambrose of Milan, who undertook two embassies to the court of Magnus Maximus between 383 and 387 (for details, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 161–3, 217), requested the return of Gratian's body to his half-brother Valentinian II for burial (Ambrose recounted his embassy at *Epistle* 30 (24)). It is not clear when Gratian's body was in fact returned, but later arrangements for Valentinian II's burial indicate that Gratian most likely eventually was buried at Milan. See M.J. Johnson, 'On the burial places of the Valentinian dynasty', *Historia* 40 (1991), 503–5.

138 Valentinian II committed suicide at Vienne and Ambrose of Milan communicated with the eastern emperor Theodosius I over arrangements for the young emperor's burial (Ambrose, *Epistle* 53.4), while Ambrose's funeral oration implies the brothers Gratian and Valentinian II were buried beside one another (Ambrose, *De Obitu Valentiniani* 72, 78, 80), probably in the mausoleum now called Sant'Aquilino attached to San Lorenzo; yet much speculation remains as to the date of construction of this mausoleum, and it does not appear to have been planned or used as an extra-dynastic mausoleum: Johnson, 'On the burial places' (above, n. 137), 503–5; also now Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 156–67.

139 Alchermes, 'Petrine politics' (above, n. 131), 8; H. Koethe, 'Zum Mausoleum der weströmischen Dynastei bei Alt-Sankt-Peter', *Römische Mitteilungen* 46 (1981), 10–11.

140 The so-called 'South Stoa' built *c.* 404: see, most recently, Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 127; P. Grierson, 'Tombs and obits of the Byzantine Emperors (337–1042)', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 16 (1962), 1–63.

141 Paulinus of Nola, *Carmina* 19.317–41; see also C. Mango, 'Constantine's mausoleum and the translation of relics', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 83 (1990), 51–61, esp. pp. 51–4.

142 In the building of the new basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura in the 380s, and imperial gifts and the building of the imperial mausoleum at Saint Peter's basilica, discussed below.

the other's consuls, and the two young emperors again holding joint consulships in 402.[143] And as noted above, gestures of unity and mutual support between the two imperial courts continued well into the fifth century, and the arguments for consistently hostile relations from 395 onwards cannot be supported. This does not mean that the possibility of competition in the area of imperial mausolea and apostle shrines should be discounted, and this consideration is very likely to have played a role in persuading the western court of the suitability of the Vatican Hill as a location for the mausoleum of Honorius. But we need not see the construction necessarily as some sort of defiant gesture towards the eastern government as sometimes suggested:[144] rather, in fact, we should see it as part of an empire-wide trend in developing imperial ideology of linking apostles and emperors as disciples of Christ.

Our information about Honorius's mausoleum is very incomplete.[145] An eighth-century source informs us that Honorius was buried there in 423.[146] By the fifteenth century, knowledge of the function of this rotunda adjacent to the basilica of Saint Peter's had been lost, and it was now known as the chapel of Saint Petronilla.[147] But in the process of the demolition of the old Saint Peter's and the building of the new, from the mid-fourteenth to mid-fifteenth centuries, a series of remarkable discoveries allowed identification of the rotunda as the mausoleum of Honorius.[148] Three rich late antique burials were unearthed, the last of which was the only one that could be identified securely — and that was the burial of Empress Maria, the first wife of Honorius, who died in early 408. Identification of Maria's burial was possible due to the rich treasures that were found with her body — an estimated 180 precious items, of which only two can be identified today, as no record was made of the dispersal of these late

143 The eastern consuls for the years 399 and 400 had not been acknowledged in the west, but the eastern consulship of the general Fravittas in 401 was acknowledged; moreover, the joint imperial consulship of 402 was the first held by Arcadius and Honorius since 396: see *CLRE* 338–9; Cameron, *Claudian* (above, n. 57), 38–1; P.J. Heather, *Goths and Romans* (Oxford, 1991), 210; W.N. Bayless, 'The Visigothic invasion of Italy in 401', *Classical Journal* 72 (1) (1976), 65–7.

144 As, for example, Koethe, 'Zum Mausoleum' (above, n. 139), 10–11; Alchermes, 'Petrine politics' (above, n. 131), 35.

145 For the most recent scholarly study, see F. Paolucci, 'La tomba dell'imperatrice Maria e altre sepolture di rango di età tardoantica a San Pietro', *Temporis Signa: Archeologia della Tarda Antichità e del Medioevo* 3 (2008), 225–52. See also Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 167–74.

146 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana* 13.7. Although there is no contemporary record of the burial of Honorius at Saint Peter's, and Oost, *Galla Placidia* (above, n. 30), 178, claimed that evidence that the emperor was at Ravenna three weeks before his death suggests he was laid to rest there instead, it still seems more likely that the emperor was buried beside his late wife in the imperial mausoleum at Rome (Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 202).

147 It was also sometimes called the 'Capella de' Franchi': see Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 167; Paolucci, 'La tomba dell'imperatrice Maria' (above, n. 145), 225.

148 The discovery of late antique sarcophagi beneath the chapel of Saint Petronilla occurred in three phases, with the first find of a marble sarcophagus in 1458, several more being unearthed in 1519, and finally the finding of Maria's sarcophagus in 1544. The discoveries were recorded in a number of contemporary Italian chronicles, such as that of Niccola della Tuccia of Viterbo. This and other sources for the discoveries are discussed in Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 171–4, and Paolucci, 'La tomba dell'imperatrice Maria' (above, n. 145), 225–31.

antique treasures. One of the items to survive to the present day, however, allowed positive identification of the burial. It is a *bulla*, or seal, inscribed with the names of Maria, Honorius and other members of Maria's family — significantly arranged in the shape of a Chi-Rho, the first two letters of Christ's name.[149]

In terms of imperial attitudes to Rome in the fifth century, and the increasingly heavy emphasis on the Christian piety of an emperor, the location of this mausoleum is of tremendous significance. From the time of Constantine and the founding of his eastern, Christian capital onwards, an imperial desire for association with the apostles can be discerned, and now, under the child-emperors of the west, this was being taken up at Rome also. Given the precedent of the Apostoleion at Constantinople, when the decision was made to build an imperial mausoleum in the west, where better to place it than at Rome, adjacent to the tomb of Saint Peter, the proto-apostle? And although Claudian did not mention it in his account of Honorius's visit to Rome in 404, a sermon of Saint Augustine, describing the same visit, asserts that Honorius visited the tomb of Saint Peter before entering Rome, and kneeling down at the shrine, removed his crown.[150]

We know that in the mid- to late fourth century members of Rome's highest Christian élite were choosing to be buried at the Vatican, including members of the high profile Anicii family and Junius Bassus, urban prefect in 359.[151] As it was already a privileged burial space of the Roman aristocracy, it did make sense for an imperial mausoleum to be located at Saint Peter's once the decision was made to build one. The move also could be seen as a further attempt to build bridges with the powerful Christian senatorial aristocracy at Rome. But aside from the importance of such a decision at a time when the emperors traditionally have been seen as turning away from Rome, a further layer of complexity is added to the picture when we notice that, while fifth-century emperors were being buried at Saint Peter's, fourth-century and early fifth-century popes, the bishops of Rome themselves, were not.

During the first few centuries of the Christian era, according to the tradition of the *Liber Pontificalis*, the Vatican Hill, close to the tomb of Saint Peter, had been a common place of burial for bishops of Rome, with many — though certainly not all — bishops from 64 down to Victor (*c.* 195) being laid to rest there.[152] But after this point, from *c.* 195 down to the death

149 Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 173–4; Paolucci, 'La tomba dell'imperatrice Maria' (above, n. 145), 223, 232. The *bulla* is now in the Louvre, Paris. According to Paolucci, the other surviving item from Maria's burial treasure is an agate ladle, now in the Museo degli Argenti in Florence.

150 Saint Augustine, *Cum pagani ingrederentur* 26, in *Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*, ed. F. Dolbeau (Paris, 1996), 266. See also P. Liverani, 'Victors and pilgrims in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages', *Fragmenta* 1 (2007), 83–102, at p. 83.

151 On Junius Bassus, and also members of the high profile Probi-Anicii family being buried at Saint Peter's, see Paolucci, 'La tomba dell'imperatrice Maria' (above, n. 145), 246–9. The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus was discovered in 1597 (*CIL* VI 1737; *PLRE* 1.155).

152 The *Liber Pontificalis* records the burial places of each pope from Saint Peter (*Liber Pontificalis* [hereafter *Lib. Pont.*] 1) onwards, with Victor (died 195; *Lib. Pont.* 15) being the last until Leo I (died 461; *Lib. Pont.* 47) to be buried on the Vatican Hill near the tomb of Saint Peter. The reliability of the *Liber Pontificalis* as an accurate historical source often has been questioned, and reasonably so, but in this case in

of Pope Leo the Great in 461, not a single pope is known to have been buried at the Vatican, with sites such as the cemetery of Callistus or that of Priscilla often being preferred (and in fact, if we leave aside the tradition of the *Liber Pontificalis* entirely, even more strikingly, the first securely attested papal burial in the basilica only took place in 461).[153] Even after the great Constantinian basilica was built over the tomb of Saint Peter in the early fourth century, it still was not the chosen place of burial for bishops of Rome at this time. In the early fifth century, the mausoleum of Honorius may have received as many as ten members of the imperial house (although this number is debatable), interred close to the martyred apostle's tomb.[154] In contrast, of the fifth-century bishops of Rome, none were buried at Saint Peter's until the 460s, with popes who died earlier in the century being laid to rest at locations like San Lorenzo fuori le mura or the cemetery of Priscilla.[155] And although it is true, of course, that it was not Saint Peter's basilica but the Lateran that was the seat of the papacy at

recording at least the tradition of where each pontiff was believed to have been buried, it is very useful. For a recent study on the source in general, see H. Geertman, Hic Fecit Basilicam: *studi sul* Liber Pontificalis *e gli edifici ecclesiastici di Roma da Silvestro a Silverio* (Leuven, 2004). The *Chronography of 354*, part 13 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Chronica Minora* I (1892), 73–6) also provides a very useful list of bishops of Rome from Peter to Liberius (died 352), but does not provide information on their burial sites.

153 The *Liber Pontificalis* records sixteen papal burials at the cemetery of Callistus on the Via Appia, from Anicetus (died c. 160; *Lib. Pont.* 12) to Miltiades (died 314; *Lib. Pont.* 33). Similarly, the cemetery of Priscilla on the Via Salaria was credited with being the resting-place of six popes, from Marcellinus (died 303; *Lib. Pont.* 30) to Celestine (died 432; *Lib. Pont.* 45). On the attestation of Leo's burial, see Alchermes, 'Petrine politics' (above, n. 131), 12.

154 My estimate of members of the imperial family potentially buried in the mausoleum of Honorius includes: Empress Maria (died 408); Empress Thermantia (died 415); Emperor Constantius III (died 421); Emperor Honorius (died 423); Theodosius, the first son of Galla Placidia and the Visigothic king Athaulf, who died in 416, and was reinterred at Rome in 450; Empress Galla Placidia (died 450); Empress Justa Grata Honoria (died 450–5?); Emperor Valentinian III (died 455); and possibly also the later emperors Libius Severus (died 465) and Olybrius (died 472). See similarly the list of Johnson, who, however, omits Justa Grata Honoria from among the possible imperial burials (Johnson, *The Roman Imperial Mausoleum* (above, n. 131), 202). Although the question of where some of these individuals were buried remains debatable, I believe a case can be made that the location for each was the imperial mausoleum adjacent to Saint Peter's in Rome; with three attested imperial burials in the mausoleum, and other imperial family members in need of burial in the fifth century and whose burial sites remain largely unknown, it seems likely that more than three such burials took place in the mausoleum adjacent to Saint Peter's.

155 Between 400 and 500, twelve papal deaths occurred. Of these, according to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the burials of Anastasius I (died 401/2; *Lib. Pont.* 41) and Innocentius (died 417; *Lib. Pont.* 42) took place at the cemetery Ad Ursum Pileatum. Pope Zosimus (died 418; *Lib. Pont.* 43), Sixtus III (died 440; *Lib. Pont.* 46) and Hilarus (died 468; *Lib. Pont.* 48) were all buried at San Lorenzo fuori le mura. Boniface I (died 422; *Lib. Pont.* 44) was buried in the cemetery of Saint Felicity on the Via Salaria, and Celestine (died 432; *Lib. Pont.* 45) in the cemetery of Priscilla. Felix III (died 492; *Lib. Pont.* 50) was buried at San Paolo fuori le mura. Only with the death of Pope Leo the Great (died 461; *Lib. Pont.* 47) was a bishop of Rome certainly buried at the Vatican. Simplicius (died 483; *Lib. Pont.* 49), Gelasius (died 496; *Lib. Pont.* 51), Anastasius II (died 498; *Lib. Pont.* 52) and many bishops in the centuries to follow thereafter would be buried at Saint Peter's (Alchermes, 'Petrine politics' (above, n. 131), 12; see also J.-C. Picard, 'Étude sur l'emplacement des tombes des papes du IIIe au Xe siècle', *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École Française de Rome* 81 (1969), 746–55).

this time,[156] bishops of Rome were not being buried there either in the fourth and fifth centuries.

There may have been many reasons why bishops of Rome were being laid to rest at various locations around the city, and often their place of burial was a church or ecclesiastical site to which they had contributed in terms of building or adornment.[157] But even with this consideration in mind, it is surely significant for the role within the church that late Roman emperors were claiming for themselves to find emperors and not popes being buried close to the apostle's tomb during this era. Furthermore, it is also possible that the burial of Pope Leo at the Vatican in 461 was related directly to imperial promotion of papal primacy during the reign of Valentinian III, as discussed further below.

The position of an emperor within the Christian church had in fact been a vexed one ever since the conversion of Constantine.[158] In general throughout the fourth century emperors seem to have avoided public church services where it was unclear whether they could attend mass in the sanctuary among the select ranks of the clergy, or remain with the public.[159] Although the evidence is fragmentary, it does look as if the unease of this situation was beginning to be overcome in the era of the child-emperors and the ceremonialization of imperial rule. In 395, when Ambrose of Milan delivered his funeral oration for Theodosius I, he explicitly allowed Honorius to stand beside the altar during the service, a privilege he had denied Honorius's father only a few years earlier.[160] And in 450 we know that, in February, Valentinian III and the whole imperial family attended ceremonies in celebration of the Feast of Peter's Chair;[161] and, indeed, the timing of this imperial return to the city to coincide with the important feast commemorating the establishment of Peter as bishop may have been significant in view of the

156 As Krautheimer observed, from its foundation onwards Saint Peter's was constantly competing with the Lateran as the focus of Christian Rome and the seat of the papacy: Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals* (above, n. 2), 117.

157 Such as Boniface I, who built an oratory in the cemetery of Saint Felicity (*Lib. Pont.* 44), Hilarus who built a monastery at San Lorenzo (*Lib. Pont.* 48), and, indeed, Leo I, who renewed the apse-vault at Saint Peter's (*Lib. Pont.* 47). And admittedly, provincial bishops during this period were not necessarily being buried at their cathedral churches either — see, for example, Perpetuus of Tours, in Gregory of Tours X.31.

158 See specifically on this N.B. McLynn, 'The transformation of imperial churchgoing in the fourth century', in S. Swain and M. Edwards (eds), *Approaching Late Antiquity: the Transformation from Early to Late Empire* (Oxford, 2004), 235–70. Also Dagron, *Emperor and Priest* (above, n. 134), 127–57.

159 On the blurring of the issue of an emperor's role in the church, particularly as revealed by relations between Theodosius I and Ambrose of Milan, see McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 298–309. According to Sozomen, at one service Theodosius I took up a place in the sanctuary and was ordered out by the bishop (Sozomen 7.25.9). See further McLynn, 'The transformation of imperial churchgoing' (above, n. 158), 263–5.

160 Ambrose described Honorius as 'assistente sacris altaribus' (Ambrose, *De Obitu Theodosii* 3). See further McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 357–8.

161 Leo, *Epistulae* 55.1; C. Pietri, *Roma Christiana: recherches sur l'Église de Rome, son organisation, sa politique, son idéologie de Miltiade à Sixte III (311–330)* (*Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome* 224), 2 vols (Rome, 1976), I, 382; Seeck, *Regesten der Kaiser* (above, n. 16), 384; Oost, *Galla Placidia* (above, n. 30), 287–9; F.M. Clover, 'The family and early career of Anicius Olybrius', *Historia* 27 (1978), 178–9.

imperial desire for association with Saint Peter discussed above.[162] Most pointedly, this imperial mausoleum of Honorius, attached to the basilica of Saint Peter's, staked a strong public claim of church–court cooperation and the emperor's Christian credentials.

PAPAL AND IMPERIAL POWER AT ROME IN THE EARLY TO MID-FIFTH CENTURY

The traditional view of scholarship has been that by the fifth century the popes had taken over the role of emperors within the city of Rome in authority, patronage and church building efforts.[163] Yet we know that when the evidence is assembled, the imperial court of Honorius, and even more so that of Valentinian III, frequently visited, and eventually took up residence in, Rome between 400 and 455. The concept of papal primacy — that is, the claim of bishops of Rome to spiritual authority over all other sees — was certainly on the rise during this period, and there is no doubt that the papacy did in time come to be the dominant power in the city.[164] But this was a gradual process; and certainly one of the ways in which the continuing involvement of the imperial family in the city of Rome can be seen most clearly is through imperial benefactions made to churches at Rome during these years. Given what we know of the imperial presence in Rome during this time, along with these benefactions, it may be that the growing prominence and recognition of the pope's position was at least to some extent owed to imperial interest and support.

Christianization was arguably the greatest transformation that late antique Rome underwent — the transfiguring of the topography of the city through widespread building of churches.[165] Starting with Constantine I in the 310s, the great basilicas of the Lateran and of Saint Peter's had set the tone of imperial Christian donations to the city. Popes of the fourth century had been involved also in the building of at least eight churches at Rome between 312 and 410.[166] And in 386, the emperors Valentinian II, Theodosius I and Arcadius ordered the building of the so-called 'basilica of the three emperors', to create an appropriately grand shrine for the

162 Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 147. There is also a report of the imperial family's attendance at a service, along with the pope and members of the senate, for the reinterment of the infant son of Galla Placidia and the Visigoth Athaulf, Theodosius, who had died in Spain in 415, and originally had been buried in Barcelona (Prosper Tironis, *Addimenta Altera* A. 446–57, in *Chronica Minora* I, 489; also S.I. Oost, 'Some problems in the history of Galla Placidia', *Classical Philology* 60 (1965), 7–8.

163 For example, Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals* (above, n. 2), 99, 121. Scholars such as Humphries have pointed out that this dating is premature: Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 25, 46–7, 54–7. Sotinel's important forthcoming article ('La *Domus Pinciana*, résidence impériale de Rome') will also examine imperial–church relations at Rome in the fifth century.

164 As Jane Merdinger demonstrated, assertions of papal primacy during this period did not meet with success everywhere: north African resistance to papal interference in local affairs during this period can be seen particularly in the case of Apiarius: see J.E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustus* (Yale, 1997), esp. pp. 183–99.

165 Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity* (above, n. 2), 30.

166 For details, see Lançon, *Rome in Late Antiquity* (above, n. 2), 30–1.

burial site of Saint Paul — the basilica we know today as San Paolo fuori le mura.[167] But interestingly, it is the regime of Valentinian III, from 425 to 455, that saw the greatest imperial investment in church adornment at Rome since the era of Constantine, and this is particularly striking considering how much western imperial revenues had shrunk in the meantime.[168] This young emperor's reign happened to coincide with the pontificates of two popes known for their extensive activity in this area — Sixtus III (432–40) and Leo I (440–61).[169] But the imperial family itself often was involved also.

During the 430s, for example, the *Liber Pontificalis* records that, as part of Sixtus III's redecoration of Saint Peter's, the emperor presented a valuable gold image, decorated with precious jewels, to be placed over the shrine.[170] Valentinian III is recorded as having made expensive donations to the Constantinian basilica of the Lateran, replacing items that had been stolen back in 410, when the city was sacked by the Goths. The emperor also gave permission for the pope to construct a new basilica dedicated to Saint Laurence.[171] An inscription of the 430s records the contribution by the young emperor's mother, Galla Placidia, of mosaics to a chapel of the church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem.[172] And at the basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura, Valentinian III is also credited with the building of a silver confessio.[173]

San Paolo, in fact, provides a particularly interesting case of explicitly attested imperial and papal cooperation in church renovation and decoration at Rome during these years. As mentioned above, this basilica had been begun in the 380s on imperial orders. It was probably completed around the year 400, and possibly dedicated in the presence of the emperor Honorius a few years later.[174] Early in the 440s, following fire damage, Pope Leo and the empress Galla Placidia jointly contributed to the renewal of the building, as a mosaic inscription on the triumphal arch of the basilica proclaimed.[175] This inscription survived until the fire of 1823, which required substantial rebuilding of the basilica, but it has been copied in the reconstruction and still can be seen on the triumphal arch today. Such a public statement of papal and imperial cooperation is an important reminder that the emperor and his family were very much a presence in mid-fifth-century Rome, and in the Christian life of the city. The Christian image of the

167 *Collectio Avellana* 3; also R. Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianum Romae*, 5 vols (Vatican City, 1937–77), V, 97–8, 161–2.

168 Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 145.

169 Sixtus III is credited with the building of the basilica of Saint Mary (now Santa Maria Maggiore) (*Lib. Pont.* 46), and Leo I with renewing Saint Peter's basilica (*Lib. Pont.* 47). For further details, see Krautheimer, 'The architecture of Sixtus III' (above, n. 2), 291–302; Krautheimer, *Three Christian Capitals* (above, n. 2), 96–100; Pietri, *Roma Christiana* (above, n. 161), I, 503–14.

170 *Lib. Pont.* 46.

171 *Lib. Pont.* 46.

172 *ILS* 817; see also Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianum Romae* (above, n. 167), I, 167; Oost, *Galla Placidia* (above, n. 30), 269–71.

173 *Lib. Pont.* 46.

174 Prudentius, *Peristephanon* 12.49.

175 *ILCV* 1761, a, b, c; *ICUR* II, 28, 68 note; see also Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianum Romae* (above, n. 167), V, 99.

boy-emperor and the imperial family was a high priority — and I think again influenced by contemporary Constantinopolitan ideals of pious imperial rulership.

Early in the 430s, a church dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul (now known as San Pietro in Vincoli) was constructed as part of the building programme of Pope Sixtus III.[176] This church seems to have had a particular connection with the wife of Valentinian III, Licinia Eudoxia, the daughter of the eastern emperor, who had travelled to the western court in early 438 after her marriage. An inscription at this church in Rome attests to the empress supporting the new foundation in the names of her parents, either by contributing to the costs of the building, or possibly, as one legend has it, receiving as a gift from the eastern court one half of the chains of Saint Peter, which had found their way to Constantinople, reuniting them with the half that had remained at Rome, and donating them to the church.[177]

The increasing efforts of the emperor and his family to contribute to church benefaction during this period surely were part of the intensifying emphasis on the Christian piety of emperors during this time. At Ravenna, a substantial church-building programme had been part of imperial involvement in the city in the fifth century,[178] but it is at Rome that these efforts combined with papal cooperation and display to the senatorial aristocracy in a particularly potent manner, and represented by far the most significant imperial generosity to the church at Rome since Constantine I.[179] And it is therefore important to recognize that although the power of the papacy was on the rise during this period, this rise in all probability was supported by the western imperial court, frequently present in Rome from 400 to 455, rather than occurring at its expense.[180] A few episodes involving the pope and the emperor during the first half of the fifth century also reinforce the idea that papal power at this time remained at least to some degree dependent upon secular authority. We know, for example, of several instances in the first half of the fifth century when the papacy directly appealed to the imperial court for support, or for resolution of a crisis. In 418, when Pope Zosimus died, two rival popes were appointed in his place by different factions, and the issue was resolved through the intervention of Emperor Honorius.[181] And in 445, Pope Leo appealed for support

176 Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianum Romae* (above, n. 167), III, 181.

177 *ILS* 819; Krautheimer, *Corpus Basilicarum Christianum Romae* (above, n. 167), III, 181.

178 On the imperial court's church benefactions at Ravenna, see Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis* 17, 41–3; also Oost, *Galla Placidia* (above, n. 30), 273–87; Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 146, n. 55.

179 And as Bryan Ward-Perkins has pointed out, imperial patronage of church building efforts at Rome during the reign of Valentinian III far outstrips the more famous imperial church benefactions at Ravenna during the same period (B. Ward-Perkins, *From Classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Urban Public Building in Northern and Central Italy, AD 300–850* (Oxford, 1984), 241). This point is emphasized also by Humphries in his forthcoming 'The city of Rome and Valentinian III (425–455)'.

180 As Gillett has pointed out in connection with the building projects of Sixtus III and Leo I: 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 145.

181 *Lib. Pont.* 44; Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (above, n. 16), I, 210–11; A. Chastagnol, *La préfectaire urbaine à Rome sous le Bas-Empire* (Paris, 1960), 172–7; Honoré, *Law in the Crisis of Empire* (above, n. 52), 245.

from Valentinian III over the issue of the deposition of a fellow bishop in Gaul who had been accused of abusing his position by claiming superiority over other bishops in the province.[182] The emperor issued a law in response that not only confirmed Pope Leo's ruling, but explicitly confirmed also the primacy of the bishop of Rome — the pope's position as the highest Christian authority in the empire. According to the emperor, the conduct of this wayward Gallic bishop constituted crimes 'committed both against the majesty of the Empire and against reverence for the Apostolic See ...'.[183] This coupling of the majesty of the empire and reverence for the apostolic see is an important one, which already had been expressed earlier in the building of the mausoleum of Honorius adjacent to Saint Peter's. Even as late as 445, a bishop as powerful as Pope Leo the Great was still looking to the Roman emperor for support. Indeed, the nature of papal and imperial relations in the west during this period should be seen as a convincing indication of imperial power, and not weakness, at this point.

From the death of Valentinian III in 455, down to the fall of the last western Roman emperor, the child Romulus Augustulus in 476, Rome continued to be a key political stage for the imperial court. As Gillett's invaluable study has demonstrated, the emperors who rose and fell rapidly across this period often made the ancient capital their principal seat — such as Anthemius (467–72) and Glycerius (473–4) — or made the effort to visit the city for major ceremonial occasions during their reigns — as in Avitus's journey to Rome in 455 for the inauguration of his consulship for 456.[184] And this continuing trend, even through non-minority regimes, I would argue, represents the convergence of a number of factors that all contributed to the re-emergence of Rome as the main imperial city of the west. As scholars have suggested already, the contraction of western imperial territory over the course of the fifth century, in particular, was so severe that by the death of Valentinian III little was left but Italy, making the city of Rome thereby all the more significant symbolically.[185] In addition, as imperial revenue was lost from imperial territories, the support of the wealthy senatorial aristocracy of Rome became ever more crucial to any imperial government, a support more likely to be won by more frequent imperial presence at Rome. And to this picture I would add a significant transformation in the nature and perception of the imperial office, resulting from the repeated accessions of children to the western imperial throne, but with implications for all imperial regimes to follow, one of the most significant of which was the gradual recognition of the city of Rome as once more the most

[182] Pope Leo's appeal to Valentinian III in 445 over the issue does not survive, but his ruling on the case does (Leo, *Epistulae* 10), and the surviving law of Valentinian III deals explicitly with the case, making Leo's appeal to the emperor undisputed. On the case of Hilary of Arles, see M. Heinzelmann, 'The affair of Hilary of Arles (445) and Gallo-Roman identity in the fifth century', in Drinkwater and Elton (eds), *Fifth Century Gaul* (above, n. 56), 239–51.

[183] *NVal.* 17.2: *his talibus et contra imperii maiestatem et contra reverentiam apostolicae sedis admissis ...*

[184] Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 149, 152–4. Also Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 40–1.

[185] Humphries, 'From emperor to pope?' (above, n. 5), 40.

valuable arena the west had to offer for the demonstration of the emperor's ceremonial, and especially his Christian, credentials; and thereby his role in the security of his empire.[186]

CONCLUSION

In the late fourth to mid-fifth centuries, the role of the emperor had undergone a remarkable transformation, which stemmed directly from the promotion of children to the imperial throne. One of the key aspects of this transformation was a changing emphasis on the ceremonial and religious role of an emperor. The Christianization of the imperial office was already well underway by the time that the first of these boys, eight-year-old Gratian, became emperor in 367. Indeed, as MacCormack pointed out, '... by the end of the fourth century, it was Christianity which could stand for security, continuity and imperial respectability'.[187] But this demonstration of security, continuity and imperial respectability took a new turn with the repeated accessions of child-emperors to both the eastern and western thrones across this period. With children who could not demonstrate personally the security and Christian blessing they brought to the state through military leadership, different imperial virtues came to be emphasized in imperial presentation — virtues like youthful promise, piety, innocence and meekness. And demonstrating that imperial respectability and connection with the security of the state became all the more important when the emperor was a child, or even a child-turned-adult emperor who continued to some degree to play a ceremonial role even upon reaching adulthood, and not to make a full transition to independent rulership.

This development is crucial in understanding why emperors like Honorius, and even more so Valentinian III, were to be found far more frequently at Rome from *c.* 400 to 455 than any of their more recent predecessors. The military arena that their fourth-century predecessors more frequently had operated within was not available to these young emperors during childhood, and rarely taken up in adulthood: a new arena was required, and in the west the city of Rome offered a key location for ceremonial and also for highlighting the connection between emperor and pope, through church benefactions and, of course, the building of the mausoleum of Honorius. And there were other benefits as well: increased imperial presence in Rome also meant the chance of a closer relationship with the powerful resident senatorial aristocracy, always important to any imperial regime, but all the more so at a time when western imperial

186 Ongoing excavations on the Pincian Hill in the last decade have uncovered what appears to be the remains of a fifth-century imperial palace, which the excavators have suggested may have been built following the sack of 410, and prior to Honorius's visit to Rome in 416. See H. Broise, M. Dewailly and V. Jolivet, 'Rome: Pincio (Jardins de Lucullus)', *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Antiquité* 112 (2000), I, 432–53, esp. p. 448. Such a palace — and indeed the proximity of such an imperial residence to the Vatican — would have direct significance to this argument regarding the character of fifth-century imperial presence in the city. Sotinel's forthcoming article, 'La *Domus Pinciana*, résidence impériale de Rome', explores this issue more thoroughly.

187 MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony* (above, n. 68), 150.

territory and revenues were being threatened on many fronts, and the emperor was not personally leading his armies to deal with these problems.[188] The more frequent visits and eventual residency of fifth-century emperors in the city of Rome meant a more direct involvement of the wealthy senatorial aristocracy in imperial policy, an involvement that brought with it the greater chance of keeping the goodwill of that aristocracy, on whom so many activities of the state increasingly depended for support and funding.

An influx of Constantinopolitan political attitudes to the west across this period, and indeed the common developing imperial ideology of the time, also contributed to the western imperial court's refocus on Rome in the fifth century. In the east, Constantinople had become the principal imperial seat essentially from Theodosius I onwards; but it was only under his young son, Arcadius, and his grandson, the child-emperor Theodosius II, that it became an imperial residence that the emperor did not leave even to go on military campaigns. Yet the ceremonial importance of the city grew over this period to the extent that adult soldier-emperors, following on from the young rulers of the Theodosian dynasty, also continued to reside at Constantinople. Long-term imperial residence at a major ceremonial centre did not indicate a weak or incompetent regime. It is important to recognize in this common, overarching development in imperial politics, in both the eastern and western empires, that in describing a 'transformation' in the imperial office, the term is not being employed as a euphemism for 'decline', nor is this argument aimed at propounding yet another theory of a single major cause for the 'fall' of the western empire. The rule of child-emperors during this period was an empire-wide phenomenon, a strong and enduring new model of government, a true transformation in the nature and perception of imperial rule, and one that operated successfully over a lengthy period, in both east and west. We should not forget, either, that in looking back as modern historians at this fifth-century refocus on the city of Rome, we have the benefit of hindsight: by no means could it have been self-evident to the western imperial government that it would have ceased to exist by the end of the century. The system of a more ceremonial-style imperial rule and the long-term delegation of imperial military duties to a powerful general, developed in the late fourth century and expanded in the fifth, was functioning successfully well into the 430s and even beyond.

In the west, continual imperial presence in the city of Rome did not reappear until late in the reign of Valentinian III, but as the imperial office was transformed gradually across the late fourth and mid-fifth centuries by repeated minority regimes and the almost constant delegation of imperial military duties across this period, imperial visits to the ancient capital steadily increased

[188] It is worth considering the possibility (suggested to me by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill) that after Theodosius I's famous anti-pagan legislation of 391 (for details, see Matthews, *Western Aristocracies* (above, n. 16), 232, 236; McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan* (above, n. 25), 331–3), Rome became a 'safer' location for the courts of Christian child-emperors: however, I do not think this would explain sufficiently the trend of imperial visits and residencies in the city after 395. In 389 Theodosius I had happily brought his five-year-old son Honorius to Rome for victory celebrations, and furthermore the regimes of both Honorius and Valentinian III, despite this anti-pagan legislation, showed no aversion to involving and encouraging pagan aristocrats, such as Symmachus and Virius Nicomachus Flavianus, at their courts.

in number, and continued into the reigns of the adult emperors to follow. And again, this was not an indication of regime weakness, but it was an indicator of major changes in the nature of imperial rule: of a strong imperial partnership whereby the young emperor's dominant general represented him in the military sphere, while the emperor himself played a more visible ceremonial role in the urban context of Rome. The enduring importance that this urban ceremonial had taken on is confirmed by the fact that in the west, as in the east, soldier-emperors following the death of Valentinian III also regularly spent much of their often short reigns at Rome.

In addition, this more civilian focus in the emperor's role, and particularly within the urban context of Rome, provided unparalleled opportunities for the emperor to demonstrate his fulfilment of his function as a Christian leader. In the west, as in the east, late Roman emperors advertised their closeness to Christ and the apostles — as in Rome with the building of the mausoleum of Honorius adjacent to Saint Peter's basilica, a move that also demonstrated a renewal of long-term imperial commitment to the city itself, and to its resident Christian élite. Major imperial benefactions to churches at Rome under Valentinian III in particular reinforced this commitment, as in turn did imperial support for the rising claim to primacy of the bishops of Rome.

While this investigation can be pursued further, and the eastern side of the question in particular needs further specific development, some conclusions can be drawn at this point. Overall, one of the most important consequences of the infantilization of the imperial office in the late Roman period was that, by 455, even emperors who came to the throne as adults might no longer truly be expected to be more than ceremonial rulers. Over the course of this prolonged period of minority government, the active functions of the imperial office had contracted, while in the west the powers of the *magister militum* (or commanding general) had increased substantially. Ceremonial rulership had become entrenched as an imperial model where 100 years previously it had not been, although the active model — especially including that of imperial military leadership — did not disappear completely.[189] A number of serious rebellions by military leaders in the provinces, particularly during the reign of Honorius, suggests that in regions like Gaul and Spain imperial subjects still sought more active leadership from their emperor.[190] And, indeed, following on from boy-emperors like Honorius and Valentinian III, were again military emperors like Avitus, Majorian and Anthemius, whose panegyrist Sidonius Apollinaris portrayed them as traditional soldier-emperors, and not as ceremonial or dependent rulers.[191] The soldier-emperor model had not vanished. However, I

189 The accession of Flavius Constantius in 421 is the obvious counter-argument to any such claim.

190 For details, see Drinkwater, 'The usurpers' (above, n. 30), 269–98; and M. Kulikowski, 'Barbarians in Gaul, usurpers in Britain', *Britannia* 31 (2000), 325–45. And, indeed, Sidonius Apollinaris, in a speech delivered in 455 at Rome, for the consulship of Avitus, expressed a candidly unfavourable contemporary opinion of child-emperorship: see *Carmina* 7.532–42.

191 On Anthemius, see, for example, Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina* 2.199–201; on Majorian, *Carmina* 5.470–2; and most conspicuously on Avitus, *Carmina* 7.241–63.

would argue that ceremonial rulership nevertheless had come to be preferred by those at the centre of imperial politics, at court; and that, of the so-called 'shadow emperors' who came to the western throne between 455 and 476 (all of whom were adults except the very last, Romulus Augustulus), every one of these emperors showed signs of struggling to cope with this legacy of infantilization, and to assert his position as more than a ceremonial ruler. Interestingly, many of these emperors — such as Anthemius and Olybrius — also spent substantial amounts of their often short reigns at Rome.[192] In the process of the transformation of the imperial office in the late fourth to mid-fifth centuries, Rome had regained its place as a centre of western imperial politics once more, a place it held thereafter until the very end of the western imperial regime.

[192] Anthemius, emperor from 467 to 472, spent the whole of his reign at Rome, as Gillett's charting of his court's movements has shown (Gillett, 'Rome, Ravenna' (above, n. 5), 152–3); similarly Olybrius's short reign (472) was spent entirely at Rome (Gillett, pp. 153–4), and the longer reign of Libius Severus (emperor from 461 to 465) shows the emperor probably resident at Rome from 463 to 465 (Gillett, p. 151). The very recent monograph of Deborah Deliyannis (*Ravenna in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2010), at p. 104) makes the interesting point that after Valentinian III, emperors with stronger senatorial connections tended to focus on Rome during their short reigns (for example Petronius Maximus and Anthemius), while emperors who were backed by generals or were generals themselves (for example Majorian and Libius Severus) still spent significant amounts of time at Ravenna. This development is genuine and significant; nevertheless, it is worth remembering that even these general-backed emperors usually spent time at Rome, while the interests of emperors like Honorius and Valentinian III in the city of Rome clearly emerged well before the rapidly changing 'shadow-emperors' of the last two decades of the western Roman empire.