The religious controversies of the fifth century A.D. were complicated disputes which strained the capacities of the greatest minds of the age. Despite their complexity, the controversies affected every stratum of society, and the streets and the markets of the cities of the empire were filled with dispute. Often this popular involvement led to violence, perpetrated by the monks, by the soldiers of the state, or by anonymous members of the crowd. This study has sought to investigate and explain these interrelated phenomena by examining each in a series of specific events.

Throughout, a primary concern has been the question of motivation: why did the people of the late Roman East behave as they did in these controversies? As we have seen, the ancient sources are almost universal in their explanation of this. Each authority, according to his own religious position, pictured those who agreed with his view as moved by a love of truth and justice, while those who acted differently were wicked heretics and schismatics—or, often, pagans and Jews. Modern historians, on the other hand, have frequently doubted the simple religious explanations of the ancient authorities and sought social, economic, and political causes.

Since the sources say almost nothing about secular motivation, the historian has had to read between the lines to find such factors at work. Perhaps the most attractive approach to this problem is to see if religious and secular concerns correlate in any specific way, and throughout our investigation we have been particularly sensitive to any indication of divisions of the population along secular lines. On a number of occasions, such distinctions did in fact appear. Thus, the poor of Constantinople enthusiastically supported John Chrysostom, while most of his enemies
were rich and powerful. Likewise, the wealthy of Constantinople opposed the deposition of Flavian, and the poor of Alexandria remained loyal to Dioscorus while the rich supported his successor.

Nevertheless, reference to such simple social or economic distinctions does not fully explain the evidence as we have it. Thus, while it is true that the most important enemies of Chrysostom were from the upper classes of Constantinople, some of his most devoted followers were also wealthy, and they willingly associated with the poor who defended the popular bishop. In this case, the apparent social and economic considerations were merely the result of the "accident" of Chrysostom's preaching and manner of life: because he was outspoken in his criticism of the rich and powerful, he earned the enmity of many of them, while others, including most of the poor, were attracted by his eloquence and asceticism.

The situation in Alexandria seems more to have resembled a social conflict, since the division of opinion followed economic and social lines. The reason for this, however, is simple and applies only to the situation as it existed then in Alexandria. That is, there is no reason to think that the rich opposed Dioscorus because of any class issue, but simply because he had persecuted many of them and threatened their economic well-being. The poor, on the other hand, supported the deposed bishop, not because the rich opposed him, but because of certain religious considerations. There is no evidence that these controversies in any way represented class conflicts, and the poor, in particular, do not seem generally to have been influenced by economic or social factors. Further, nowhere was there any indication of hostility of the poor toward the rich or of action taken against their persons or property.

Incipient nationalism is another general secular consideration which has been discussed in connection with the late Roman religious controversies. Certainly the term "nationalism" is incorrect and misleading as applied to this period, but one might reasonably still ask about the importance of regional cultural unity and opposition to Roman control as a factor in the religious disputes. This question is naturally very difficult, and the sources provide exceptionally little information with which to answer it. On the surface, one should probably expect that the apparent resurgence of native language and art—or perhaps their acceptance as part of the growth of Christianity—contributed to an increase in regional identification. But such a conclusion does not necessarily follow. It is true that Alexandria and Ephesus, in the events discussed above, appear to have rejected the theology of Constantinople. Yet, it is misleading to see this as simple opposition to Constantinople, since both cities accepted the theology of the capital in 449. The importance of regional loyalty should not be summarily dismissed, but the conclusion of this study is that it did not play a significant role in the events considered.
Local patriotism should probably be clearly distinguished from the nationalism or regionalism discussed above: local patriotism would lead the inhabitants of one city to oppose those of another, neighboring city, even if they belonged to the same regional group. By the fifth century, the wars and athletic contests which had served as the outlet for local patriotism in an earlier period had long passed away. A city might, however, still be proud of the beauty of its buildings or the reputation of a native orator or imperial official, and with the rise of Christianity, local patriotism might naturally focus on a native saint or bishop. Such a phenomenon is difficult to detect, as it would be carefully concealed in the sources. But it is at least reasonable to suggest that the inhabitants of Ephesus and Alexandria felt a kind of local patriotism and that this had some effect in the development of popular attitudes. The encroachments of the bishop of Constantinople in the affairs of the churches of Ephesus and Alexandria were well known, and the faithful may have seen their bishops as the champions of local interests in their struggles with the capital. As we have seen, however, there is no direct evidence to support such a hypothesis; so far as we know, the crowd never shouted slogans hailing their bishop as the leader of the city against outside forces. Further, only when the inhabitants of the city were solidly in support of the bishop could he be regarded as the representative of the community, and on several occasions public opinion was so divided that this cannot have been the case.

The nobiles of Alexandria are a case in point because their concern for trade and their involvement in the affairs of the empire as a whole separated them from local concerns. Thus, the aristocracy of Alexandria did not support Dioscorus; other more pressing concerns prevented them. Likewise, in Ephesus the people seem generally to have supported Memnon, but internal schism had divided the loyalty of the citizens before 449 and Stephanos could not command such devoted assistance. In Constantinople, the situation was much more complex, perhaps because of the cosmopolitan character of the city and the fact that it was recently founded and expanded. The inhabitants had not yet had time to develop a consciousness as Constantinopolitans. However, it may well be that the episcopacy of Flavian represented a turning point and that from 449 onward the people came more and more to look upon their bishop as a representative and symbol of their civic identity and importance.

Only rarely did popular religious feeling directly involve the emperor. Perhaps this was because the imperial throne, in the East at least, was relatively secure in the first half of the fifth century. Particularly instructive is the slogan which the opponents of Nestorius shouted in Constantinople: “We have an emperor; we don’t have a bishop.” Even though Theodosius had openly supported Nestorius, the crowd was
unwilling to blame him. Once again, we should probably distinguish between politics as a general behavioral explanation and politics as a particular factor affecting the actions of certain individuals in specific situations. Thus, while political factors do not appear to have been significant in the general division of the populace into opposing religious positions, political concerns were not always insignificant, especially in the motivation of the powerful and presumably more politically conscious segments of the population. The wealthy of Constantinople, for example, may have opposed Eutyches for political reasons, since the archimandrite was clearly identified with imperial policy as determined by Chrysaphius.

All in all, then, it seems impossible to postulate a general secular explanation of popular opinion and action. In certain instances, economic or political considerations—usually opposition to imperial policy—probably affected certain people. But such factors influenced only a small segment of the population, and the effect of this changed from event to event. Further, it is significant that whatever secular concerns may have been involved were expressed only in religious terms. At no time, so far as we know, did anyone publicly involve secular considerations in the theological disputes. Even if the leaders may occasionally have been cynical in their manipulation of the religious sensibilities of ordinary people, the constant reference to theological questions must have submerged secular concerns in the minds of all but the most hardened. It is possible that the poor inhabitant of Ephesus or Alexandria unconsciously regarded his bishop as the champion of his political or economic interests, but, were we to ask him about this, he would probably deny it and proceed to explain the controversy in simple religious terms.

In fact, it is unlikely that the inhabitants of the cities of the later empire could have made the distinctions we have been discussing. Secular and religious concerns were not separate, and both were expressed in religious terms. Thus, from the time of Constantine, the keystone of successful imperial policy was the maintenance of correct religious doctrine. Conversely, oppressive and ill-directed policy—as well as natural disaster—was regarded as an obvious sign of God's displeasure with the religious views of the emperor and his court. Since secular and religious concerns could not be fully separated, we should not wonder if economic and political dissatisfaction was expressed in religious terms and that religious disputes reflected society, in a general rather than a specific way. It is important to see that any secular motivation would have been at most unconscious; the Johannite who set fire to Hagia Sophia and the Monophysite who tore Proterius limb from limb undoubtedly felt they were acting in defense of religious principle.

Nevertheless, it is not enough to say that the motivation of the urban
crowd was primarily religious. This does not explain why, for example, the inhabitants of different cities supported different religious positions. One approach to this problem is to investigate the nature and role of “popular Christianity,” as opposed to the Christianity of the theologians, during this period. This is a particularly difficult question, but one which is crucial to the present study.

Clearly, our analysis has shown that one cannot simply equate popular Christianity with a particular set of beliefs; it did not by necessity lean either toward Monophysitism or Nestorianism. This question has frequently been connected with the idea that in the later empire “oriental” or “native” elements, long submerged beneath a veneer of Hellenistic culture and Roman political control, began to reassert themselves. There is considerable disagreement about what this may have meant, but generally this “native” renaissance is assumed to have favored Monophysitism, in part because an emphasis on the majesty and unity of the Godhead presumably appealed to simple “oriental” preconceptions.

At first sight, the result of our study, and the development of the Monophysite controversy in general, seem to support this analysis: the inhabitants of both Ephesus and Alexandria supported proto-Monophysite theology as, ultimately, did most of the East; Constantinople, on the other hand, maintained a Dyophisite position. The situation as it developed, however, was not nearly as simple as it might appear. Even in Egypt one can argue that Monophysite theology was not originally the issue; it became crucial only after the death of Dioscorus, three years after the lines of division had been finally drawn. Earlier, in the days of Cyril, many of the monks—who must be taken to represent the mainstream of popular native religion—opposed the Origenism of the bishop and insisted on an anthropomorphic God, certainly a far cry from Monophysitism.

A further difficulty lies in distinguishing between the Romanized and the native elements in the population of the cities of the later empire. One might equate the rich with the Romanized inhabitants and the poor with the native population, but the danger of this should be obvious. Of course, it is interesting to note that the inhabitants of Constantinople, who were presumably less oriental—whatever that may ultimately mean—did accept the Council of Chalcedon, but we must be careful in rushing to a conclusion in this regard. In the first place, Alexandria had a long history of division along ethnic and cultural lines, and we should not suppose that the cosmopolitan Greeks had totally lost their dominance by the middle of the fifth century; in most respects it remained a Hellenistic city. Ephesus also presents a problem in this regard, for it had been a thoroughly Greek city for nearly all of its existence. Moreover, the inhabitants of Constantinople, who were presumably Hellenized and who
supported Flavian and Chalcedon in 448 and 451, cried relentlessly for
the deposition of Nestorius, who represented an extreme form of that
same theology. This is particularly significant, for it shows conclusively
that popular Christianity was not a static fixed system of beliefs, but that
it might change according to the situation and the personalities involved.

One must be careful, however, not to dismiss the importance of popular
religion entirely. Within a given area an undercurrent of theological
assumptions may have tended in one direction rather than another, but
this is generally impossible to prove, and it must not be made the basis of
any overall interpretation of religious developments. Viewed from
another angle, however, the concept of popular Christianity may be of
value in our assessment of the dynamics of these controversies. Looking
at a slightly earlier period in the history of the church, H. J. Carpenter
observed that popular Christianity could be characterized by three
general considerations: a concern with moral questions, an interest in
institutional organization, and a focus on theology that was practical and
historical in orientation. The latter two points are particularly interesting
and relevant to the present study. Specifically, Carpenter argued that
"... the average Christian was more ready to respond to aspersions cast
on the lives of individuals than on arguments of a theological nature." He
contrasted such practical concerns with the speculative theology of the
intellectuals, but admitted that as time went on, in the East at least,
thetical considerations became more important. This last point is
certainly true, and no one can doubt that popular Christianity in the fifth
century had a theological orientation, although some of the old
tendencies still remained and played a dominant role in the evolution of
popular opinion.

An important consideration in the analysis of the religious
controversies of the fifth century is the nature and role of leadership. On
numerous occasions it can be shown that leaders influenced popular
opinion and directed the actions of the crowd. Normally, such leaders
were local in origin and they had a personal or institutional base of power
from which they could operate, but at times outside agitators were
brought in expressly to encourage unrest among the crowd. Epiphanius,
the bishop of Salamis, was such an agitator, as were the monks and
sailors of Egypt. This is not to say that urban unrest was "caused" by
agitators—or leaders, to use a more neutral term—as they could not
direct a crowd against its will—witness the failure of Epiphanius. But
leaders normally played a crucial role in the development of popular
opinion and its canalization into action.

For the most part, we may assume that the leaders were concerned with
their own ecclesiastical or political careers, and they saw the manipulation
of the crowd as a means to that end. Thus, we should probably be
prepared to distinguish the motives of the leaders from those of the crowd. This is not to say that all popular leaders were ruthlessly cynical and dishonest. While presumably interested in practical politics, many were also moved by a concern for correct doctrine and practice. Nestorius found himself in difficulty because he refused to countenance the public use of the *theotokos*, a term, he admitted privately, which was perfectly orthodox but might lead the simple Christian into heresy. Similarly, John Chrysostom was an unwilling leader of the crowd; he went into exile rather than provoke sedition on his behalf.

The personality, public life, and institutional position of leading figures frequently played a significant role in the development of the loyalty which determined the direction of popular opinion. In part, this was a factor of the nature and organization of fifth-century Christian society, which produced a remarkable variety of popular leaders. Chief among these was the bishop, an individual who owed his position partly to the institutional structure in which he found himself. By the early fifth century, of course, the bishop had come to be universally recognized as the legitimate head of the local Christian community. In his control over the church, its personnel, and its finances, the bishop had ample opportunity to earn popular support as an accepted leader and secular patron. Moreover, in its homiletic and liturgical aspects, the episcopal office presented the bishop as the intermediary between God and the Christian people. Every time he performed the sacraments or proclaimed the word of God, the bishop demonstrated his legitimacy and advanced his doctrinal position. It is almost a truism that loyalty toward a bishop increased as the years went by; one never hears of a bishop suddenly becoming unpopular after years of successful rule. Popular opposition developed early, or it never developed at all. As we have seen, the affection felt for John Chrysostom increased from year to year, while Dioscorus overcame initial difficulties to engender unshakable loyalty among the majority of his subjects. Nestorius, on the other hand, encountered opposition as soon as he ascended the episcopal throne, and he was never able to establish his position firmly nor to develop personal loyalty toward himself.

How much loyalty toward a leader was affected by popular religious sentiment is difficult to say. This question is of fundamental importance, for it asks whether a leader was successful because he advocated a popular cause—or was a cause popular because a successful leader supported it? To cite a specific example, one may wonder whether Nestorius' difficulty was a result of his failure to appreciate and agree with popular doctrinal sentiments. It is not easy to answer this question with certainty, but it appears that preexisting popular belief played a minor, but limiting, role. Thus, the problems faced by Nestorius were not initially or fundamentally
Vox Populi

popular or even theological in nature. Had he been able to overcome these, the issue of the theotokos might never have been raised, or, if it had, he might well have been able to win popular opinion to his side.

This is not to suggest that popular opinion, when once fixed, was easily swayed. During the early stage of a controversy, issues were more fluid and personalities undoubtedly counted for much. Against established public opinion, however, no bishop could hope for any significant success, as Proterius and his followers learned to their dismay.

The abilities of an individual as an orator apparently were important in influencing popular opinion, but this should probably not be overly stressed. Thus, the oratorical skill of Chrysostom had considerable effect, as the sources clearly show, but Nestorius was also an accomplished public speaker and he was unable to translate that ability into effective popular support for reasons quite beyond his individual control. Perhaps more to the point was the experience of Severianus of Gabala, one of Chrysostom’s opponents and an orator of some distinction. He had spoken openly against John just after his first exile. Not only did he fail to convince the people of John’s guilt, but he set off the demonstration that ultimately resulted in the bishop’s recall to the city.

The personality and religiosity of a public figure appear to have played a somewhat larger part. In particular, the ascetic, especially one renowned for extraordinary self-denial, was likely to possess considerable authority with the crowd. In part, this was because of the ascetic’s ability to act as a “spiritual patron” for man before the court of God. When a bishop—with his considerable institutional legitimation—was also a famous ascetic, his leadership of the crowd was virtually unshakable, unless it could be clearly shown that he was a heretic. Not infrequently, however, there was a conflict between these two different kinds of popular legitimation, when the personal sanctity of the holy man contested the authority of the bishop. These two forces could be very evenly matched and individual circumstances and personalities played a crucial role in determining the outcome of such a conflict. Chrysostom was opposed by the monks of Constantinople, but he was himself an ascetic, and the monastic community of the capital could not effectively compete against him. In the case of Nestorius, however, the monks were eminently successful in their leadership of the opposition, and they later provided important support for Marcian and the time of Chalcedon. In Alexandria the situation was different because of the unique position of the bishop and his relationship to the monastic communities of Egypt, but we have seen how popular opinion in the days after the Council of Chalcedon, both for and against Proterius, formed around the monasteries.

From the events we have examined, it would appear that the leadership of the emperor counted for almost nothing in determining popular
religious feeling. Such a conclusion may be slightly misleading, for neither Arcadius nor Theodosius II were very popular or dynamic leaders, but it must be significant that in nearly every incident popular sentiment ran decidedly counter to the wishes of the emperor. This is all the more interesting in view of the exalted position of the emperor and the close relationship between emperor and the church in this period. It would seem, from these examples at least, that Constantine's claim to be "equal to the apostles" had fallen on deaf ears among the people of the cities.

From a discussion of the nature of popular leadership, it is necessary to move to a consideration of the means used to influence popular opinion. What methods were used and how effective were they? In many instances, popular opinion was controlled simply by whoever had effective possession of the church of a city. The faithful had long been accustomed to hear theological truth from their local priest, and the sermon was a most effective weapon in the arsenal of those who wished to sway public opinion. The bishop of the city, who was normally able to monitor the actions of his clergy, most often profited from the influence of the sermon, and on only one occasion did a bishop fail utterly to control popular opinion. Nestorius, as we have said, was an accomplished public speaker—this was a primary reason for his choice as bishop—and he clearly realized the importance of the sermon in influencing the minds of the faithful. But the new bishop was never in control of the situation in Constantinople; his election had been hotly contested, and his opponents did not accept his elevation graciously. They spoke openly in the churches condemning his teachings, and Nestorius was not able to command the monopoly of propaganda that was the prerogative of most bishops.

Another vehicle frequently used to influence popular opinion was the public notice: a document set up in a prominent place to explain and defend a particular theological position. Examples of this are provided by the denunciation of Nestorius tacked up by Eusebius of Dorylaeum in the church of Hagia Sophia, and the various notices set up by Eutyches and his followers. That the enemies of the archimandrite went about systematically tearing down the notices suggests that the notices were felt to be effective in achieving their purpose. Yet, as a means by which to sway popular opinion, the public notice had several disadvantages. As we have seen, one's enemies or the agents of the government could easily remove them. Perhaps more importantly, only a fairly limited number of people could read such a notice at one time, and many of the inhabitants of the cities could not read at all. As a result, would-be popular leaders frequently had important documents read to assembled crowds throughout the city. Imperial orders and letters from important ecclesiastical dignitaries were often treated in this manner. Proponents of one position or another organized elaborate processions, replete with the chanting of
psalms and the ringing of bells, which wound their way through the quarters of the city. As the procession gathered attention and a crowd began to form, the leaders called a halt at an appropriate spot—perhaps a martyr’s shrine—and they read the document in question, presumably with some explanation.

Such processions and other organized gatherings were important in their own right. One of the most serious problems faced by a popular leader is that individuals rarely support a cause for exactly the same reasons. In order to be successful, the leader must present the issue at the lowest common level to invite support from as wide a group as possible. Elementary justification has to be provided, to encourage the indifferent and convince the doubtful, but this cannot be too specific, lest this alienate some potential support. Ceremonial processions often fulfilled this function in the most economical way. Their form and, one might almost say, entertainment value, attracted attention while keeping the theological and canonical issues simple. Thus, one person might join in a demonstration praising the restoration of John Chrysostom or protesting the views of Nestorius simply because certain leaders had organized a good show. Others who had some deep theological or spiritual reason for taking part could join in the demonstration without hesitation and without arguing over incidentals.

Slogans and songs often served the same function. They expressed the complaints and the demands of the crowd on a fairly elementary level. No opponent of Nestorius, regardless of why he disliked the bishop, could object to the cry βασιλέα έχουμεν, έπίσκοπον οὐκ έχουμεν. Similarly, in another context, the slogan “One is the incarnate nature of God the Word” concisely expressed the position of the Monophysites, just as “Nika” unified the Greens and the Blues in 532. The rhythmical chanting of a slogan undoubtedly attracted the uncommitted and emotionally bound together those whose motives were very dissimilar. The evidence that slogans were frequently shouted further indicates at least a modicum of organization.

From a consideration of the vehicles by which spokesmen attempted to encourage and direct popular opinion, we should turn to the content of these vehicles: what arguments did popular leaders make in their sermons and public notices and which of these were more successful in eliciting popular support?

By far the most common argument was the appeal to tradition. In almost every sermon and other public statement, the protagonists claimed that their opponents had espoused a position which had long ago been condemned by all right-thinking men. The most frequent means of doing this was to assert, usually over and over, that one’s opponent represented nothing less than the reappearance of some particularly notorious heresy.
Thus, the opponents of Nestorius equated him with Paul of Samosata, while Nestorius called his adversaries Manichaeans. After the condemnation of Nestorius, Eutyches labeled Flavian a Nestorian, and the Eutychians were called Apollinarists. This kind of appeal was undeniably a reflection of the conservative and exclusivist aspect of Christian thought. Even the ordinary believers felt that the truth had been revealed once and for all and that present ideology was to be judged against the standards of past decisions.

Obviously, it was not sufficient merely to assert that one’s enemies were heretics. In order to prove this allegation, the protagonists brought forward statements attributed to condemned heretics and compared them with the views of their opponents. The point was obvious: anyone who said the same things as Paul of Samosata must be a heretic and therefore deserving of condemnation.

A defense could be made against these charges. Those accused of heresy or innovation prepared florilegia of quotations from the Fathers showing that their views had been held by orthodox theologians in earlier years. Again, like the letters and other documents, these statements were frequently paraded through the streets and read to the faithful amid much ceremony.

Other arguments, of course, were used. One might make frequent reference to the Bible or explain how one’s opponent had acted illegally or immorally. As the historian Socrates remarked, when it was impossible or inconvenient to accuse an enemy of heresy, it was always possible to discover something which he had done against the canons. The Council of Chalcedon deposed Dioscorus not for his Monophysite theology, but because of his uncanonical actions at the Latrocinium and because he refused to reply to the three summonses to appear at the council. His supporters, meanwhile, deplored what they considered his illegal condemnation. Public sermons and letters frequently mentioned illegalities as important considerations, and the best example was probably the case of Chrysostom, where his enemies tried to found their argument on the bishop’s uncanonical behavior. In this instance they had a good case, but it had little effect on the people of Constantinople, who might have been moved only if a theological objection to the bishop had been established.

In this connection, a distinction should be made between charges of illegality of an abstract or political nature—such as Chrysostom’s returning to his duties too early or his interference in the affairs of Asia—and those which might immediately be perceived by the crowd (e.g., charges which involved moral culpability). In addition, the deposition of a bishop (for example, Chrysostom, Dioscorus and possibly Flavian) might itself be regarded as illegal, and opposition to such an action often lay at the basis of popular opposition. But this involved sentiments of personal
loyalty, and the issue is quite distinct from accusations against an official for dishonest or uncanonical behavior. In other words, although the issue in Alexandria in 451 was the deposition of Dioscorus, this canonical concern was not the primary reason why individuals supported or opposed the bishop.

Frequently, theological arguments were made in a way that the crowd could understand and appreciate. The problems involved in the christological controversy were complicated, and we should suspect that the protagonists might have met with popular indifference had they attempted to explain their views in technical theological language. Instead, whenever possible, they clearly explained the practical consequences of their theology for the salvation of the individual. And, of course, this was the central question of the controversy: was the Christ preached by the theologians able to save mankind? As we have seen, popular Christianity did not provide any "natural" answer to this question, although the school of Alexandria probably had the slightly simpler case: when the issue is the ability of Christ to save mankind, it is easier to emphasize his divinity rather than his humanity.

Theologians on both sides did not hesitate to simplify their theological arguments and often to distort the views of their opponents. A crucial point was the use of key words and phrases to define and characterize theological positions. Cyril of Alexandria realized, for example, that if people believed that the Christ of Nestorius was a mere man (ψιλός ἄνθρωπος), few would support him. A similar and even more crucial role was played by the theotokos in the same controversy. One of Nestorius’ main difficulties was his inability to express his theology simply in a way that was persuasive and acceptable to the people of Constantinople.

Appeals to faith, tradition, and justice were the most common means used to influence popular opinion throughout this period, but violence was often resorted to and the phenomenon should be viewed in the same context. Violence—or the threat of it—was most frequently employed by the state to deal with religious dissidents or a hostile crowd. Such officially directed violence might occur at two different stages in the development of a controversy. The most spectacular forms of violence took place once popular opinion had formed and there was considerable opposition to official religious policy. Persuasion had failed, and an attempt was made to neutralize popular opinion by force. Examples of this were the attacks on the Johannites and the military action taken in support of Proterius. In all such cases, the state used the army to suppress the crowd, and special measures were often taken to secure soldiers who had no interests in the controversy and who might be expected to deal harshly with civilians. The confrontations were bloody, and excesses on the part of the soldiers were far from rare. Because of the overwhelming
military superiority of the state, the short-term outcome was always the same: the soldiers secured order and frustrated the wishes of the crowd. On the other hand, this use of violence did nothing to change men's minds, and the brutality of the soldiers often encouraged sympathy for the demonstrators. Opposition to the religious policy of the state continued and had to be controlled by the continuous presence of the army. In the end, of course, such a program could not be successful. It is difficult to see what else the state could have done in the situation; certainly it could not tolerate open defiance of official religious policy. But we must conclude that—as a means to influence popular opinion (as opposed simply to controlling it)—violence was a failure once a particular view had been accepted by a substantial number of people.

In an earlier stage of a controversy, however, the situation might be different. As we have seen, individuals in a conflict, including those opposed to the policy of the emperor, did not hesitate to use violence to intimidate their enemies. Much of this may have been simple harassment designed to discomfort individuals, but some of it had a significant effect on the formation of popular opinion. Thus, when the supporters of one view closed the churches to their enemies or kept them shut up in their homes or monasteries, they deprived them of an opportunity to present their side to the people. In such a situation, it is obvious that popular opinion would tend in one direction rather than the other. Nestorius and Eutyches both seem to have been particularly hampered by the intimidating tactics of their enemies. In this way, when applied at an early or crucial stage in the development of a controversy, violence might play a significant, although secondary, role in the formation of popular opinion.

The state and the various individual protagonists were not the only ones who used violence to express their views; occasionally the crowd itself resorted to open demonstrations and acts of violence. Such crowd violence, in the events we have studied, was surprisingly rare, but several examples did occur. The most significant of these were the destruction of Hagia Sophia by the Johannites and the opposition to Proterius in Alexandria after the Council of Chalcedon. Note that both of these events involved not only crowd violence, but also violence directed by the state. Much more frequent were demonstrations of popular sentiment where, so far as we know, no violence occurred. These demonstrations, which ranged from a few angry individuals shouting at an unpopular cleric to a well-organized group chanting their demands before the palace of the emperor, characterized all of the events we have examined. From all of the evidence, the religious controversies of the fifth century, just as those in the time of Gregory of Nyssa, commanded the passionate interest of most of the people of the late Roman East—interest which was expressed vocally in demonstrations and occasional acts of violence.
Such expression of popular views seems out of place in the "corporate state" of the later empire, under which the individual is supposed to have been all but submerged in the rigid economic, religious, and political structures which surrounded him. The emperor, in the seclusion of the sacred bedchamber or in the sacrum consistorium, made all important decisions of policy, and a complicated bureaucracy enforced these decisions on a population firmly regimented and long accustomed only to passive obedience.

Nevertheless, in the events examined above, the crowd never waited passively to be told how it should react to the religious questions of the time. It often took action, sometimes violently opposing the wishes of its bishop and emperor. Likewise, as we have seen, the crowd did not seem to have acted irrationally, but pursued reasonable, well-defined goals.

Ironically, the structure of late Roman society seems to have been responsible for the frequent outbursts of popular feeling. Life and property were never secure in an ancient city, but through the second century, at least, the Roman government—or the various municipal governments—seriously undertook the maintenance of public order. In the later empire, however, life was notoriously dangerous, as the state progressively withdrew its protection from the private citizen. In part this was probably connected with the barbarian invasions, which threatened nearly every city in the empire, and it involved the general shifts in priorities occasioned by the near collapse of the empire in the third century. The maintenance of peace within the cities was not as important as the protection of the frontier or the collection of taxes.

We cannot follow this process in any detail, especially in the smaller cities, but in Rome, and to a lesser extent Constantinople, the decline in public order is clear. The praetorian guards and urban cohorts, which had maintained peace since the time of Augustus, were disbanded by Constantine. There were replaced for the most part by a kind of amateur night watch, which was of little value in controlling mass insurrection. The praefectus urbi in Rome and the provincial governors and municipal officials in smaller cities had normally to meet the actions of the crowd supported only by the members of their officium, who were trained for secretarial rather than police duty.

When a disturbance first broke out, an appropriate official attempted to deal with the rioters himself, either appealing to reason or sympathy or holding out threats of ultimate punishment. Not surprisingly, these methods were rarely successful. At this point, the disturbance evolved in one of several directions. In some cases, perhaps because the issue was not serious enough, enthusiasm dwindled and the crowd melted away. More frequently the disturbance continued until the government yielded to the
demands of the insurgents or called for the use of armed troops against the crowd.

This failure of the Roman state to develop a really workable police system probably encouraged the outbreak of urban violence, which was rarely stopped in its initial phase. But this does not fully answer the question. The government, which at this time did not hesitate to attempt to control the economy of the empire and the minds of its citizens, surely could have provided a more effective police force. Indeed, when the state chose to employ force against the crowd, it never failed to quell the disturbance, at least temporarily. The massacre of thousands of people in Thessalonica under Theodosius I and in Constantinople under Justinian are the best examples of what the government could do against a rebellious crowd if it so desired. Instead, at the onset of trouble, the emperors took little action against the expression of popular opinion. Only when the disturbance continued for some time, and especially when it erupted into open violence, did the government intervene, almost always effectively, with the use of force.

Shortages of manpower may have played a role in the hesitancy of the state to act quickly and decisively, but other reasons may be sought. Not even the most autocratic of governments can for long ignore the demands and interests of its subjects, and it is unlikely that the later emperors attempted to do this. In many states, popular opinion can be effected, or at least discerned, through constitutional means; but by the time of Constantine, the popular assemblies of the Roman Republic had long passed out of existence and the provincial and city councils—which might have served as a bridge between ruler and subject—were collapsing under new political and economic strains. Emperors of this period had to devise new means or adapt old institutions in order to ascertain the needs and desires of their subjects. For this purpose, public demonstrations—based partly on the old Roman practice of acclamatio—probably attained a quasi-constitutional position.3

The circus had long been recognized as a place where the inhabitants of Rome could petition the emperor and otherwise freely express their sentiments. The almost inevitable consequence of this “customary liberty” was that this right of free speech would be exercised in the streets and the marketplaces, as well as at the spectacles. Such a practice, assuming that it could be properly controlled, had several advantages for the state as well as for the people. As Ramsay MacMullen has said, “It is in the nature of aloof and authoritarian governments to communicate with their subjects from some royal box or palace balcony . . . and to respond not only to mass acclaim but to mass abuse.”4

The Codex Theodosianus preserves several statutes which suggest that
the emperor listened with interest to the vociferous shouts of the urban crowd, whether they praised good provincial governors or condemned official imperial policy. In 331, Constantine guaranteed to all persons the privilege of praising by public acclamations the most just and vigilant judges, so that We may grant increased accessions of honor to them. On the contrary, the unjust and evil-doers must be accused by cries of complaint, in order that the forces of Our censure may destroy them. For We shall carefully investigate whether such utterances are truthful and are not poured forth effusively and wantonly by clients (clientelae). The praetorian prefect and the counts who are stationed throughout the provinces shall refer to Our Wisdom the utterances of Our provincials.5

Nor did the provincials have to depend upon the praetorian prefect alone to relay their wishes to the emperor: a law of 371 shows that they had the right to use the cursus publicus to bring local acclamations to the attention of the emperor.6 But most important for our purposes, and most remarkable in view of the exalted position of the emperor in the later empire, is a statute of 393. It deserves quotation in full:

If any person, insensible to decency and ignorant of propriety, should suppose that Our name should be assailed with wicked and imprudent maledictions, and if, riotous with drunkeness, he should disparage Our time, it is Our will that he should not be subjected to punishment or sustain any harsh or severe treatment, since, if such conduct should proceed from levity, it must be treated with contempt; if from insanity, it is most worthy of pity; if from a desire to injure, it should be pardoned. Wherefore, the case shall be referred to Our knowledge with all its details unchanged, so that We may consider the words on the basis of the character of the man and that We may decide whether the offense should be punished or not.7

In this law, the government hedged against undue criticism: all who spoke against the emperor were foolish, insane, or malicious. Yet, it is remarkable that such persons were not always to be punished. Instead, the primary function of the law was to require that all public complaints against the emperor be brought directly to his attention “with all the details unchanged,” thus allowing him to escape for a moment the flattery of the court and learn what people were saying about him. This is not to suggest that the emperor openly encouraged public opposition, merely that statements critical of the government might be tolerated. Despite the rigid structure of society—or perhaps because of it—the emperor needed to know what his subjects were thinking.

Some of the laws of the Code do forbid gatherings and demonstrations. But all of these were concerned with religious disputes, particularly the Arian controversy after 381 and the intransigence of the Johannites after 404—both incidents in which the emperor took an unpopular position after some hesitation. Obviously, once an emperor had made up his mind
about an issue and refused to reconsider it, demonstrations against his decision were only irritating and dangerous.

One of these laws which restricted assembly and protest plainly implies that such a right was normally a very real one, appreciated by the populace as a whole:

If those persons who suppose that the right of assembly (collegendi copiam) has been granted to them alone should attempt to provoke any agitation against the regulation of Our tranquility, as authors of sedition (seditionis auctores) and as disturbers of the peace of the church (pacisque turbatae ecclesiae), they shall pay the penalty of high treason with their lives and blood.8

After the first exile of Chrysostom, the crowd besieged the palace demanding the recall of the bishop. Although the wishes of Arcadius were clear, no measures were taken against the demonstrators. Even more significant was the inaction of the emperor during the episcopate of Nestorius. Theodosius openly supported the bishop, but he did nothing against those who loudly called for his deposition. After the Council of Ephesus, he tried to prevent news of its decisions from reaching Constantinople, but the enemies of Nestorius were at work in the city, “rousing up a disturbance and discord among the people with an outcry, as though the emperor were opposed to God.”9 So far as we can tell, Theodosius took no action to discourage this expression of popular sentiment. In fact, Nestorius complained that “the emperor allowed everything to take place.” Similarly, Theodosius and Chrysaphius supported Eutyches against Flavian, yet they took little action against those persons who spread rumors against the archimandrite and tore down the notices he had posted in his own defense. Only when the crowd threatened Eutyches’ life did the emperor intervene by sending troops for the monk’s protection. Again, in Alexandria after the Council of Chalcedon, the imperial forces appear to have been completely unprepared for the violence which suddenly broke out, and the emperor could respond only by sending soldiers from Constantinople.

The hypothesis that the government did not always wish to discourage popular demonstrations will help to explain the frequency of the phenomenon. But why did the autocratic emperors of late antiquity concern themselves with popular opinion in the first place? One reason for this is obvious: the inhabitants of the cities of the empire posed a serious threat to the stability of the state. The high degree of centralization heightened the danger since a serious disturbance in the capital might disrupt the whole functioning of government. Thus, demonstrations and even minor rioting might be accepted as a warning against more serious dangers to come. The government apparently heeded these warnings and took appropriate measures against popular revolution, for, although the number of demonstrations and minor riots in the later empire was large,
the number of disturbances which seriously threatened the government was surprisingly small.

Nevertheless, the line between a nonviolent demonstration and a violent riot is very fine. In the cases we have studied, the distinction seems to depend most frequently upon the attitude of the government. On several occasions, there was violence between the supporters of two different causes, such as the battle between the inhabitants of Constantinople and the groups of Egyptians after the recall of John, and the various incidents preceding the first Council of Ephesus. But more often violence erupted when the government attempted to suppress the expression of popular opinion by force. The supporters of Chrysostom in 404 acted no differently from the way they had at the time of the first exile of their bishop; they wished to defend him, and they protested the action of the emperor. At the time of the first exile, the situation was potentially violent; bloodshed was averted when Arcadius acceded to the demands of the crowd. At the time of John's second exile, the emperor and his advisers were prepared to accept confrontation and violence as the price of being rid of Chrysostom. They escalated the conflict by refusing to yield to the demands of the Johannites. The attitude of the latter was not different from what it had been before, but now they met armed resistance. The result was the destruction of Hagia Sophia and the violent persecution of the Johannites. Theodosius II, on the other hand, averted bloodshed and serious sedition in the affair of Nestorius by abandoning the bishop when he discerned the magnitude of popular opposition. In Alexandria after 451, Marcian was determined to enforce the decisions of Chalcedon at any cost; from the outset there was massive popular resistance to Proterius and the Chalcedonians, and the inflexibility of the emperor made bloodshed inevitable.

We have suggested that the reason that the emperor was prepared to tolerate the expression of popular sentiment was primarily practical: he wished to learn what his subjects were thinking and thus avoid serious political difficulties. Another reason may have been ideological. It is true that in the later empire the political philosophy which underlay the imperial throne was more and more "oriental"—or, perhaps better, Hellenistic—in character. Monarchy was praised as the best form of government, and the power of the emperor was regarded as coming directly from God. In such a scheme, one would think that there was little place for the common people. Yet, a spark of the old Roman "democratic" tradition survived, and it is interesting to note that it frequently found expression in exactly the way we have been discussing. For example, upon the accession of a new emperor, it remained customary for his subjects to "approve" his election by shouted acclamations. Of course, the common people had no say in the choice of an emperor, and their role
had become little more than ritual. Yet, the idea which lay behind that ritual—that power came ultimately from the governed—was not entirely dead, and the reality of political revolution made any ruler realize his dependence on the goodwill of his subjects.  

A modification of this idea and its adaptation to fit the new conception of monarchy was the belief that in a special way the actions and feelings of the crowd represented the will of God—the familiar *vox populi voluntas dei*. The considerable attention paid by the ecclesiastical historians to popular opinion is probably a reflection of this view.

Everything we know about the structure of the late Roman city leads us to expect that popular demonstrations and violence would be organized and led by the various organizations through which the state dealt collectively with its citizens: the guilds, the circus factions, even the theatrical cliques. Urban dwellers must have been accustomed to approach the government through these groups, many of which had special weapons they could use in any confrontation: the circus factions were presumably armed, and the guilds could withhold essential goods and services. Each group also had an organization which could give unity to popular demands. Nevertheless, a close study of popular involvement in the religious controversies of the early fifth century provides little evidence that these groups played any role at all in the formation or direction of popular feeling. There is an occasional mention of the circus factions, but their role is impossible to assess. The sailors of Egypt, who were presumably closely organized, took part in the violence in Constantinople, but their role as outsiders was a special one, and they cannot be seen in the same category as local groups. It is dangerous, of course, to argue *a silentio* that the urban organizations could have played no role in these controversies—as they clearly appear to have done in later events—but it is noteworthy that we hear almost nothing about them. The reason probably is that the disputes were exclusively religious, while the organizations were—at this time at least—predominantly secular in orientation and function. Religious divisions probably cut across the membership of many of the groups.

Up to this point we have been examining the question of why individuals accepted one theological position rather than another. It is appropriate now to investigate the more general question as to why the inhabitants of the late Roman cities became involved in these controversies in the first place. Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius agreed that Christ was both human and divine; they further agreed that there were two natures in the person of Christ. The difference in their theologies involved the definition of the unity present in the person of Christ: Cyril held a close association of the divine and human elements (*ἐνωσις ὑποστατική*), while Nestorius taught a looser connection (*κατά
The uneducated people of Constantinople cannot have fully understood this controversy, but they all realized its importance to them personally. A sailor and a shopkeeper might decide to support Cyril or Nestorius for reasons which had little to do with the theological issues as such—they might be persuaded by whoever was the best speaker or had the most appealing personality—but a deep identification with Christianity as they understood it would force both a sailor and a shopkeeper to become seriously involved in the controversy. In this period, as throughout the history of the Christian Roman empire, a person identified himself as a Christian first and as a Roman, an Egyptian, or a citizen of Constantinople second. His very existence, and his relationship with his environment, was determined by his Christianity. Christianity, whether correctly understood or not, was the center of his existence, and it defined him as a person.

This intense personal concern for Christianity and its theological system was largely responsible for the involvement of the urban crowd in the religious controversies. The application of the methods of Greek philosophical inquiry to Christian doctrines may have given rise to the controversies on an intellectual plane, but the participation of ordinary believers was not primarily due to any “Greek love of disputation.” Dockmen and laborers in Constantinople may have enjoyed a good argument, just as their descendants in Athens do today, but that can hardly explain the massive and passionate outbursts of popular sentiment. Those who supported Chrysostom and Dioscorus did so, not because they liked to quarrel, but because they understood that their personal salvation depended upon the successful resolution of the controversy. Further, since nearly every aspect of life had been connected, in one way or another, with Christianity, all kinds of personal loyalties and interests were inseparably involved with the controversies. As argued above, economic, social, and political concerns must be rejected as the overt motivation of the crowd, but the ability of Christianity to subsume all secular concerns into itself must have contributed greatly to the passionate concern shown by the urban crowd.

A.H.M. Jones has proposed various criteria for determining whether ancient heresies were really nationalist or social movements “in disguise.” Among these is the proposition that the heretic or schismatic had to realize that his opposition to orthodoxy was really disguised secular concern. Clearly, such was normally not the case. Yet, as Jones seems to have realized, this is not nearly enough. The Johannites, Nestorians, and Monophysites—at least in the early stages—did not represent nationalist or social movements, partly because they did not all share a common motive. The only bond which held each group together was religion and opposition to the religious policy of the emperor. Yet, the individual is
complex, and it is unlikely that the motivation of any person was a simple matter. Secular concerns, personal loyalties, and psychological factors, about which we will never know, contributed in a unique way to determine the action of each individual. This is difficult to understand fully, even in a modern situation where there is much more information and evidence.

Life in a late Roman city must have been filled with tension, frustration, and insecurity. Population was probably increasing, and the barbarian threat was greatest in the East during the first half of the fifth century. The rigid and stultifying effects of the post-Constantinian social, economic, and political structure have certainly been exaggerated, but there can be little doubt that regimentation and control were characteristic features of contemporary life. On the other hand, no vital social structure can survive without some institutional means of relieving its pressures, and the spectacles in the hippodrome have long been recognized as fulfilling such a function: as we have seen, they provided an opportunity for the ordinary people of the great cities to express their feelings openly. The religious controversies probably served a similar function as a kind of social safety valve. Correct Christian doctrine was a matter which interested everyone and, as we have seen, the state took little decisive action to discourage the public discussion of these issues. In this way, the religious controversies provided a nearly unique opportunity for the expression of popular opinion, which would otherwise have been suppressed.  

At very least, popular involvement in the religious controversies reflected some of the basic characteristics of contemporary society and culture. Thus, any familiarity with this period will show the central place of religion, especially Christianity. This concern with religion was shared not only by bishops and theologians, but it was deeply and personally felt at all levels of society, and it is no wonder that even the least educated people took an extraordinary interest in religious questions. One rarely hears of such religious disturbances in the earlier empire simply because the nature of the religious experience was essentially different: it was not personal, doctrinally oriented, and exclusivist, as Christianity was to be. In addition, the expression of popular religious attitudes in the fifth century reflected the contemporary organization of society. Thus, there was little in the way of popular or revolutionary leadership; leaders, instead, were members of preexisting groups (bishops, monks) whose authority was already legitimate. These leaders were absolutely crucial in the formulation and expression of popular religious ideas, something which undoubtedly derives from the traditionally structured character of late Roman society, where emperors, bishops, senators, and generals were acknowledged as leaders and separated from the mass of humanity not
only by the power at their disposal, but also the visible symbols of that power, such as distinctive dress, the numerous members of their entourage, and specific kinds of portrait iconography. It is no wonder that, in the East at least, religious division in such a society never denied traditional values and approaches and that Johannites, Nestorians, Eutychians, and Chalcedonians all maintained their affection for ritual and a strict hierarchical church.

In a very real sense, popular involvement in the religious controversies is proof of the vitality of contemporary urban life. On the intellectual level, it has long been recognized that the religious controversies represented a continuation of the Greek philosophical tradition which was kept alive by the intellectual and academic institutions of the late Roman city. It was no accident that the Western part of the empire, where urban life was failing, made little substantial contribution to the theological debate. The same can be said of popular involvement in the controversies. In the East, popular preachers were trained in theology, and the cities provided an intangible stimulus for curiosity and a relatively high level of popular consciousness. The result was that in the West, where this stimulus was absent, theological controversy met with general popular indifference, while in the East, as we have seen, there was overwhelming popular concern and participation, not only in jurisdictional or disciplinary disputes, but also in controversies involving the most difficult theological issues.13

The popular debate, of course, did not always use the complex language and reasoning of the intellectual debate, and personalities and simplification played important roles. But popular argument never departed very far from the learned controversy, and it would be fair to say that in any popular demonstration or movement, most participants understood at least the fundamentals of the theology involved.

We need finally to consider the effect of popular involvement on the eventual resolution of the religious controversies of the early fifth century: exactly how important was popular sentiment in the larger context? In the first place, we should note that this question may be improperly put. As seen on several occasions, popular religious opinion was not something fixed and determined; it evolved and changed according to local events and circumstances. Therefore, it should always be seen in a dynamic relationship with various official and nonofficial views and positions. In most cases, popular opinion was determined as the controversy was being resolved, and it is not always easy to know which movement affected the other. Nevertheless, on several occasions popular opinion had to contend with considerable opposition, usually from the emperor, and it is remarkable that the final solution of every controversy reflected popular opinion as it prevailed in each city.
The urban crowd of the late Roman empire had several means by which it might force its will upon the emperor or his representative. The most important of these, of course, was violence or the threat of it. Ever since the early days of the empire, the population of the great cities had posed a very real danger to the rulers of the Roman world. When any sizable portion of the urban population united for a specific purpose, it could do great damage, especially in one of the important administrative centers of the empire. A violent uprising, particularly in Constantinople, might disrupt the normal functions of state and could even threaten the person of the emperor. In a great economic center such as Alexandria, popular violence could—and did—disrupt the flow of goods, not only to the commercial market, but also for the critical needs of the state. Fire, a frequent weapon of the angry urban crowd, was potentially devastating in the tightly packed cities of the ancient world, and the destruction of important buildings and monuments was disturbing to rulers who used these structures as evidence of the munificence and general excellence of their reign. Perhaps most important, the politics—secular and religious alike—of the later empire often turned on very fine points. Opposing forces were normally well-balanced and, even after the demise of the ancient popular assemblies, the inhabitants of Roman cities could often turn the tide of events by allying with one side or another. Such power must always have given the rulers practical reason to listen to popular opinion with interest.

On most occasions, however, the crowd did not have to resort to violence in order to make its wishes known: emperors and bishops were normally prepared at least to listen to peaceful protest. It is true that almost all demonstrations of popular opinion were potentially violent, and a fear of violence might ultimately force those in power to consider the demands of the crowd. Yet, as we have argued, there is good reason to think that the expression of popular opinion was in some way regarded as an indication of the will of God. In the Byzantine view, success was its own justification: since God actively rules the world, any important policy which is in accord with the will of God must succeed. In the case of religious dispute, it was the duty of the emperor and the bishops to define and defend the truth and maintain the unity of the faith. The refusal of large numbers of people to accept official religious policy was a sign of its failure and an indication of the anger of God.14

Ultimately, for both practical and ideological reasons, the late Roman emperors had to come to terms with the religious opinions of their subjects. By the latter part of the fifth century, these had hardened into at least two mutually hostile camps and, although a succession of emperors attempted to respond to this problem, they were ultimately unsuccessful, and only the partition of the empire by the Arabs could put an end to the
difficulty. In the early fifth century, however, the situation was different, and the emperor could deal with the problem of popular opposition by yielding to it once it was clearly established. This is not to say that the urban crowd determined the solution of the christological controversies; there were clearly many forces at work, including politics at court, bribery, and the interests of important individuals. Nevertheless, the action and influence of the urban crowd was certainly a significant ingredient which cannot be ignored in any reconstruction of these events.

1. In this regard I would accept the ideas of Mary Douglas (in *Natural Symbols*) against those of many sociologists who wish to see specific changes in society or specific reactions of individual groups as the motivating factor in religious change. Instead, it would seem to be more useful to examine the social (and ideological) system as a whole, and place religious movements in that broader context. This is perhaps a historian’s prejudice.


3. See Theodor Klauser, s. v. “Akklamation,” *RAC*, vol. 1. There were various kinds of acclamations, from the obsequious and tiresome shouts of senators in support of an imperial edict (for example, see the minutes of the Senate usually appended to the text of the *Codex Theodosianus*) to the approval given an *imperator* by his troops. On the political significance of popular acclamations see Milton V. Anastos, “*Vox Populi, Voluntas Dei* and the Election of the Byzantine Emperor,” in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, part 2, ed. Jacob Neusner, (Leiden, 1975), pp. 181–207. In the later Empire acclamations became more and more stereotyped and formal: “die Akklamation wird mehr und mehr zum Hymnus, der von Dichtern und Musikern, auf Geheiss vor allem der Zirkusparteien, vorbereitet und von eigenen Sängern vortragen wird” (Otto Treitinger, *Die oströmische Kaiser und Reichsidee nach ihrer Gestaltung im höfischen Zeremoniell* [Jena, 1938], p. 72; see also P. Petit, *Libanius et la vie municipale*, pp. 224–25). This stylization did not, however, rob the acclamation of its effect or even its spontaneity so long as the compositions remained outside the control of the state (i.e., until about the seventh century). For until then acclamations might be “hymns” in honor of the government, but they might also be popular, rhythmic solgans against imperial policy. We have already stressed the importance of such slogans in unifying an angry crowd.

4. *Enemies of the Roman Order*, pp. 178–79. In the famous passage describing the visit of Constantius II to Rome in 357, Ammianus speaks of the *libertas coalita* of the plebs at the spectacles (*Res Gestae* 16. 10, 13). The evidence for this customary liberty in the early Empire is collected by Yavetz, *Plebs and Princeps*, pp. 18–24, and there is considerable evidence that in the later Empire the rulers were at least willing to listen to the statements of the crowd. Cf. P. Petit, *Libanius*, p. 225: Constantine and Julian “en un mot considère comme efficace ce moyen de connaître l’opinion.”

5. *C. Th.* 1.16, 6 (November 1, 331, Constantinople), translation Pharr.

6. *Ch. Th.* 8.5, 32 (December 11, 371, Trier). In this statute the right to use the public post is granted to senators, but from the text it is clear that the *plebs urbana* and the provincials (presumably through the provincial councils?) already had that right.

7. *C. Th.* 9.4, 1 (August 9, 393, Constantinople).

8. *C. Th.* 16.4, 1. (January 23, 386, Constantinople). This law was published at a time
when the government of Theodosius was threatened by the revolt of Maximus in the West (see Stein, *Histoire*, vol. 1, pp. 202–7) and it is possible that the emperor made concessions to those who might have harmed him in order to undermine Maximus’ support or to appease such people as the Arians, whom he had recently persecuted.


10. Milton V. Anastos, “*Vox Populi Voluntas Dei* and the Election of the Byzantine Emperor.”


13. For a stimulating discussion of differences between East and West in this period, see Peter Brown, “Eastern and Western Christendom in Late Antiquity,” in *The Orthodox Churches and the West*, ed. Derek Baker (Oxford, 1976), pp. 1–24.
