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Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 15

CHILDREN AND FAMILY IN LATE ANTIQUITY

LIFE, DEATH AND INTERACTION

BY

CHRISTIAN LAES, KATARINA MUSTAKALLIO
AND VILLE VUOLANTO



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GROWING UP IN CONSTANTINOPLE:
FIFTH-CENTURY LIFE IN A CHRISTIAN CITY
FROM A CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

Reidar AASGAARD

1. INTRODUCTION

When Constantine the Great in 330 CE established Constantinople as the new capital of the Roman Empire, the *nea Roma*, this was a novel enterprise.¹ Unlike the old Rome, Constantinople was from the outset planned as a Christian city: churches were made an integral part of the city centre; the clergy were to serve important functions in its everyday life; even time, the calendar, was organised in keeping with the needs of the new, and now state-supported, religion.² In this way, Constantinople emerged as a grand experiment: an attempt at the formation of a new identity for a collective, a city. Not only the individual and families, but also society as a whole was to be shaped according to the new, Christian *paideia*.

In the year 330, Constantinople (the former Byzantium) was a rather small city of about 30,000 inhabitants. A century later — around the year 450 — the population had multiplied by ten, to 300,000. And by the middle of the sixth century it had doubled again, with approximately 600,000 people living within its walls — an extreme increase.³ During the same period, the population in Rome was reduced from ca. one million to about 60,000.⁴ A large

¹ For comparisons of Rome and Constantinople, see Van Dam 2010 and Grig, Kelly 2012a (esp. the chapters by Grig, Kelly and Ward-Perkins). The city's foundation took place in 324; its dedication was in 330, when Constantine took up residence there.

² On the idea of the city as a Christian city from the outset, see Van Dam 2010: 59-60; Grig, Kelly 2012b: 10-11; 23-5.

³ See the estimates in Van Dam 2010: 53, with references (note 9). See also Miller 2003: 10-12.

⁴ Van Dam 2010: 49-50 and the contributions of Harper and Laes in this volume.

percentage, possibly almost half of Constantinople's population, was likely to have been children under the age of twelve.⁵ In fundamental ways, they too took part in and were influenced by the radical transformation that was taking place.

What was it like to be a child in a city like the early Constantinople? To see and hear, taste, smell and feel the city from a height of three to four feet above the ground, and to sense its world in a small-size human body? What was it like to grow up there as a girl or a boy? In what ways would these factors contribute to shaping the identity of a child? And what picture can this give us of this city, the indisputable centre of the Byzantine Empire?

In this chapter, I shall attempt to describe how life in early Constantinople can have been experienced from a 'child's perspective'. In speaking of such a perspective, I certainly do not think that it is possible to creep into a child's body and mind and to sense the world from his or her perspective. I understand the expression here in a broader, looser way, as a twofold strategy: to have a look at the basic, everyday conditions of life for children at the time, but also to combine this with an attempt at viewing the world from the standpoint of a child. The former will be an external, 'from the outside', approach, the latter a 'from the inside' approach.⁶ Although the 'from the outside' approach is more well-tryed, the 'from the inside' perspective is also clearly viable, as I intend to show in what follows. A central aim of my contribution is to ask what difference this 'child's perspective' can make, both as concerns our perception of the world at that time and as concerns our understanding of childhood, using the city of Constantinople as example and a child's life there as a case in point. This is a matter to which I return in my final reflections.

Whatever is meant by a 'child's perspective', I readily admit that such an undertaking is a risky business, given the distance in time, place and culture, the limited amount of sources and the scarcity of

⁵ As far as I know, there have been no calculations of the number of children in early Constantinople. But the percentage is likely to be fairly similar to that of other cities in the Greco-Roman world, see Aasgaard 2009a: 92-4, with references. Since Constantinople was growing at a high pace (with many persons at a reproductive age), it is probable that the population was fairly young. The city's big orphanage, the *Orphanotropheion*, may be one indicator of this (see below).

⁶ These approaches have much in common with the emic/etic perspectives of Kenneth L. Pike, see e.g. Headland, Pike, Harris 1990.

first-hand testimony. The following presentation, which can be considered an instance of ‘microhistory’, will therefore be of an exploratory nature.⁷ Nevertheless, a good number of studies on childhood in the early Byzantine world have appeared in the last decade.⁸ In addition, the considerable amount of recent research on childhood in antiquity in general also furnishes us with much relevant source material.⁹ Taken together, these give valuable indications of what children’s life may have been like. In my presentation, I shall—in an interdisciplinary manner — make use of a variety of sources related to early Constantinople, such as inscriptions, archaeological remains, art, and biblical, extra-biblical and patristic texts. From this I shall collect pieces which in various ways can attest to or reflect children’s lives, such as objects, places, and events. By putting these pieces together as in a jigsaw puzzle, it is in my view possible to make a scholarly acceptable sketch of the life of a young human being in this city.¹⁰ It is of course not a true picture — it can only be a *plausible* one. But this is after all not so bad, and at least the best we can manage when dealing with history, and particularly history from such a remote past.¹¹

In the following, we shall turn to an early stage in the life cycle of Constantinople. We zoom in on the year 450, a time in which the city — to borrow a metaphor from our field of interest — was in a formative phase: It was a period in which Constantinople was in the

⁷ Here, I rely on recent trends within historical research, such as ‘history from below’, ‘microhistory’, and ‘life story’ approaches, see Burke 2001 (esp. the chapters by Sharpe and Levi); Gunn, Faire 2012.

⁸ See particularly Moffatt 1986; Gould 1994; Leyerle 1997; Guroian 2001; Miller 2003; Hatlie 2006; Krueger 2006; Hennessy 2008; Papaconstantinou, Talbot 2009; Kaldellis 2010. For a recent survey, with special emphasis on children as agents, see Katajala-Peltomaa, Vuolanto 2011. Material can also be found in Bakke 2005; Horn, Phenix 2009; Horn, Martens 2009; also Rawson 2011. For some reflections on the methodological approach, see Aasgaard 2009b, esp. 25–6.

⁹ For brief surveys, see the commented bibliographies in Bradley 2013 and King 2013; also Aasgaard 2006, and Vuolanto *et al.* 2014 for an extensive bibliography.

¹⁰ See part 3 below for reflections on the viability of this approach.

¹¹ The form of my presentation may, as I have noted, challenge the traditional form of an academic text, but is in my view a useful and valid approach (see the discussion in part 3 below). For fairly similar examples, see Hanawalt 1993; Oakes 2009 (esp. chs 1 and 5); Witherington 2012; also Orme 2012, and the contribution of Brooten in the present volume.

process of developing its distinctive characteristics.¹² In doing this, I shall make use of sources from the whole of the fifth century, and also some material that is difficult to date and place, but still relevant to the year 450. Except for the narrative framework—the description of the children and their activities — all information is based on what can be historically documented.¹³ To get sufficient profit from what follows, the main text must be read with a close eye to the notes.

Furthermore, we shall zoom in on the life of one particular child, a young boy. This particular person has never existed; nonetheless, he will be representative of many children who have indeed lived. In doing this, I shall be focussing on some specific elements and ruling out a number of others, depending on the choices I make regarding factors such as gender, social class, ethnicity and age.¹⁴ Moreover, I will be describing only a fragment of this boy's life story, namely his activities during one single day. With this as a framework, and also by making use of a number of pictures to visualise it, I intend to present a sketch of what life in Constantinople 450 CE can have entailed for a young child. In what ways will this urban social and religious experiment have influenced his life? How is the city likely to have shaped children's perceptions of themselves, of other human beings, of the world, and of God?

¹² The fifth century is the period in which the decisive shift of power and status between Rome and Constantinople (and in the Eastern Empire also Antioch) took place, see e.g. Ward-Perkins 2012: 54. For a late fourth-/early fifth-century inventory list of buildings and monuments in the various regions of Constantinople, see Matthews 2012. For the collecting of statues etc. in different early periods of Constantinople's history, see Bassett 2004.

¹³ The format of this chapter makes it necessary to restrict the number of references to the most relevant ones. Several references will be very specific, whereas others must be more generic. In a few cases, the dating (the floor mosaics of the Great Palace), the localization (the holy water basin at Hagia Sofia), and the origin of some objects (clothes preserved are primarily from Greece and Egypt) are tentative or uncertain. However, this is not very problematic, since we can assume that such material will have been representative of Constantinople ca. 450 CE, cf. Pitarakis 2009: 170-1. My sketch also has to lean on sources that are (more or less incidentally) preserved — this will of course also colour the picture given.

¹⁴ I am strongly aware that the choices I make for this figure will significantly reduce his degree of representativeness, but nonetheless consider it a viable approach. See part 3 below for reflections on intersectionality.

Ninian Smart, an influential religious studies scholar, has helpfully described seven dimensions that are characteristic of the modern world religions: the mythical, doctrinal, ethical, ritual, experiential, institutional, and material dimensions.¹⁵ Within the modern world religions all these dimensions interact — though in differing ways — to fundamentally shape human beings' view of themselves and their world. In the case of Christianity, these dimensions will be represented by the biblical and other foundational narratives, systematic-theological reflection, divine service and sacraments, norms and moral behaviour, religious experience, Christian communities, and church buildings and religious items respectively.¹⁶ In my view, these categories and how they are configured are also applicable to the study of human identity in general. Thus, I find them valuable as working tools for a study of the shaping of identity, including religious identity, in our place and period of concern. I shall not, however, elaborate each of these dimensions in my presentation. Instead, they will be used as a grid, an implicit pattern, underlying it, and I shall briefly return to this model in my final reflections.

2. CASE IN POINT: THE BOY CONSTANS

Now the time has come to become more concrete. We enter into the history of Constantinople a little more than a century after the foundation of the city. This is the last year of the long reign of the famous Theodosius II (401–50), who became emperor when he was only seven years old (408). The far less renowned Anatolius was at the time archbishop of the city (449–58).¹⁷ At this stage Constantinople must have appeared as a large melting pot, with hectic entrepreneurship, a pioneering spirit, and an ethnic and cultural plurality of people.¹⁸

Let us visualise this boy, who is about nine years old, and let us say that he has a sister who is a couple of years older. Let us also call

¹⁵ See Smart 1998.

¹⁶ For a similar use of Smart's model applied to the formation of Christian identity in fourth- to fifth-century Western Christianity, see Aasgaard 2011: 1257-8, 1277-8.

¹⁷ The title was changed from archbishop to patriarch in 451.

¹⁸ Cf. Van Dam 2010: 53-8; also Miller 2003: 40-1.

them Constans and Helena. These were famous names, and commemorate Constantine, the first Byzantine emperor, and his much admired mother.¹⁹ In addition, the names reflect central elements in the cultural mix of the imperial city, with Constans mirroring the Roman and Latin element, and Helena the eastern and Greek. In this presentation, Helena will only play a marginal role. Our main character will be Constans, and we shall follow him through a Sunday, a day of the week that in many respects would be as ordinary as any other day, but also in some ways special, being the Lord's Day.

How old the children really are, no one knows. The two, who probably were orphans, arrived in the city some years earlier, when they were quite small.²⁰ They were among the large number of people who for various reasons — as refugees, businessmen and -women, captives, slaves, and fortune hunters — immigrated to the city in this period.²¹ Very many of them probably were children.

Like many others, Constans and his sister had arrived in Constantinople by sea. They may have come from somewhere on the coast of Asia Minor, from Egypt or Africa, or from one of the Greek islands.²² Wherever they came from, they sailed in a north-eastern direction on the big *Propontis*, the sea before the Pontos, the Black Sea. The first thing Constans could remember, his earliest childhood memory, was a long hill reaching out into the sea, and a building that towered on its slope. They passed the building, rounded the promontory on

¹⁹ Constantine the Great (whose father's name was Constantius) called his children Constantine, Constantius, Constans, Constantina, and Helena. It was common for slaves in late antiquity to have a single name, and emperor names were commonly used, Turpin 2010: 49. In *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Constans occurs more than 90 times, with (at least) four times on slaves or freedmen, see Kajanto 1965: 258. Helena was a common name all over the Greek world, see the examples in the volumes by Fraser, Matthew 1987 and later; also Corsten 2010, with references. See also Martindale 1980: 310-25, 530.

²⁰ On orphans, see Miller 2003; also Kotsifou 2009. Many children whose background was unknown and who were themselves too young to know it, would have come to Constantinople — they may have been orphans, stolen from their parents, taken as war captives, etc. Thus, the age of many children would be very uncertain.

²¹ For example, a considerable number of people came from North Africa as a consequence of the Vandal invasion there (439-50), see Conant 2012 (chapter 2, on refugees to Constantinople, esp. 68-83).

²² On trade routes and arrivals by sea, see e.g. McCormick 2012 (also the chapter by Pieri in the same volume).

which it lay, sailed into the bay, and landed in the *Prosporon* harbour on the northern side of the headland.²³

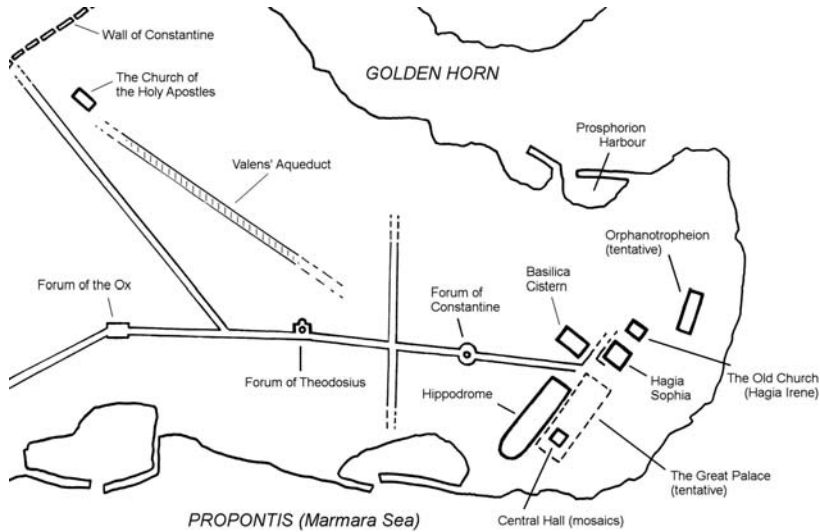


Fig. 1: Map of Byzantine Constantinople. Position and outline of some structures (buildings, harbours) are only tentative.

© Hanna Waller Aasgaard.

At home and at work

The big building that Constans saw was the orphanage, the *Orphanotropheion*, which meant the 'welfare of the orphans'.²⁴ For several years this was to be the two children's home, and here they got their

²³ The bay was the Golden Horn.

²⁴ Miller 2003: 176-208. Little is known to be preserved today of the building, since archaeological investigations have been very limited, see *ibid.*, 51, with references. See *ibid.*, 113-32 on comparable institutions in Constantinople and elsewhere. The *Orphanotropheion* was probably built in the middle/late fourth century and considerably enlarged on later occasions, see *ibid.*, 53 and 59-60.

basic training for adult life.²⁵ It is still Constans' home on the Sunday when we meet him. Constans knew that the emperors of the Empire in their mercy wanted it to be a home for the homeless and needy.²⁶ Many orphans, both boys and girls, from all over the world lived there.²⁷

Every morning Constans is used to getting up very early. He puts on his clothes: his tunic and sandals.²⁸ He drinks a little water and eats the rest of his bread from the day before, and then goes off to work.²⁹ As a nine-year-old, he has become a servant boy in another grand building a few hundred meters south of the orphanage, the huge palace of the emperor. Here, Constans' main job is to keep the central hall of the palace clean.³⁰ The emperor and his family have

²⁵ Children of very different social, ethnic and cultural origins would be living there, and often their background would be unknown. On possible contexts for recruitment, see Miller 2003, chapters 4 and 6. We have only limited knowledge about their living conditions there, and what kind of training they received. Probably, they were taught music, Christian doctrine, and basic skills of reading and writing. See Miller 2003: 209-32 for a detailed discussion of this. On the children/students at the *Orphanotropheion*, see *ibid.*, 237-46.

²⁶ The institution was already one hundred years old in the fifth century and was to function for nearly eight more centuries, see Miller 2003: 51-62, esp. 53 and 59-60, also chapter 7. The existence of this institution was due to a combination of the ideal of Christian charity towards orphans as prescribed in Scripture (e.g. Deut. 24:17; Ps. 94:6; James 1:27), of the ancient Greek idea about human beings' right to citizenship in their home town, their polis, and of an effort to meet the demands of the quickly growing population, coupled with an opportunity for the emperor of the Roman east to display his generosity and clemency towards his people, see Miller 2003: 62-9, 132-40, 178; also Hatlie 2006: 185-7.

²⁷ The number is impossible to specify, and will have varied. Since it was the largest institution of this kind, it is likely to have accommodated at least one hundred orphans, and possibly many more, see Miller 2003: 133-34. However, far from all orphans grew up in the *Orphanotropheion*. In some cases, relatives — close or distant — were found. Other children were raised in monasteries, particularly those who had already had a basic Christian teaching. But those who lacked this were taken into the orphanage and given the training that was to make them fit for life in society, see Miller 2003: 1-3.

²⁸ On garments and footwear, see Pitarakis 2009: 178-87.

²⁹ On food, see *ibid.*, 203-17.

³⁰ Constans has become a domestic slave in the imperial residence. On child slaves in antiquity, see e.g. Laes 2008. Being in the service of the emperor would give him some status; social differences among slaves could vary considerably, depending *inter alia* on the status of their owner, see e.g. Martin 1990. For a presentation of the palace and its history, see Brett, Martiny, Stevenson 1947 and



Fig. 3: Central Hall of the Great Palace with mosaics (a modern computer reconstruction).

When doing this, Constans studies the pictures on the floor; there are many of them.³¹ They are made out of stones in very different colours. The pictures show both children and adults. Some of them work and others play. There are trees and plants in the pictures, more than Constans is used to seeing in the city. In one of the pictures a boy his own age is running after geese, trying to keep them under control. In another picture there is a youngster playing with wheels, and in another a child is sitting on the lap of a woman.

Constans looks very often at two of the pictures, especially when the overseer has hit him for working too slowly.³² One of them shows

³¹ The age of the mosaics is disputed, but they are usually dated to between the fourth and the eighth centuries, see Nordhagen 1963; Hennessy 2008: 53-9. Rice 1958: 152-60 dates them to ca. 450-550. Hennessy 2008: 43-53 also analyses a fairly similar mosaic program from a villa at Piazza Armerina, Sicily (ca. 320-340). Interestingly, the figures shown are almost exclusively male. All the children appear to be boys.

³² On child labour, see e.g. Laes 2011b: 140-221.



Fig. 4: Boy herding geese, mosaics detail, Central Hall of the Great Palace.



Fig. 5: Woman and child, mosaics detail, Central Hall of the Great Palace.

a small boy holding a dog in his lap.³³ Constans does not have such a pet. But he has a small dog made out of clay. He also has a clay cock and a dolphin.³⁴ If he breathes in a special way into a hole, tones as from a flute come out of them. He also has an amulet—this can protect him from evil powers, such as the demon Gello.³⁵



Fig. 6: Boy with a dog, mosaics detail, Central Hall of the Great Palace.

The other picture shows two boys sitting on a camel, with a man walking in front of them and leading the animal. They seem to be having a great time. Constans has only once seen such an animal, in the hippodrome. It must have come from a country very far off. His sister Helena has told him that she remembers camels from when she was small, before they came to Constantinople. When Constans sees

³³ For presentations of toys, see Pitarakis 2009: 218-50, esp. 218, 229-31, 234-41.

³⁴ A considerable number of such terracotta figures have been preserved.

³⁵ For the widespread beliefs in evil spirits etc., see Pitarakis 2009: 196-203; Talbot 2009: 284-90 (Gello); also Hatlie 2006: 184 (Gello); Pitarakis 2006.



Fig. 7: Whistle, terracotta dog
(Byzantine period, Istanbul Archaeological Museum).

this picture, it reminds him of the place they once left and which he cannot remember.

Constans does not see his sister so often any more. She lives not far away, with a rich lady who has many servants. Her name is Pulcheria.³⁶ There Helena learns spinning and weaving. This is the finest work a woman can do. Those who are good at this will be good wives. When Mary the mother of God met Joseph, she was already the best weaver of them all.³⁷ This is what Constans has heard.

³⁶ Aelia Pulcheria (398/399–453) was the sister of Theodosius II. When he died in 450, she became empress and reigned (together with her emperor husband Marcian) until 453, when she died.

³⁷ For the apocryphal story about Mary and Joseph, see Hock 1995: 50-5 (the *Infancy Gospel of James*).



Fig. 8: Boys on camel, mosaics detail, Central Hall of the Great Palace.

Helena wears a beautiful necklace and bracelet.³⁸ She has just become an adult, since she now is physically a woman, and then is not as much outdoors as Constans. She cannot play as she did before.³⁹ This is why she has given her little wooden doll away. It had a tunic and necklace, just like her.⁴⁰ Boys and girls are very different, that is the way they were created.⁴¹

Going to church

When Constans has been working some hours in the early morning, he goes to church.⁴² There are many churches in the city, some of

³⁸ See Pitarakis 2009: 187-95. As a domestic slave of Pulcheria, the emperor's sister, Helena enjoys a higher status than many other slaves (see note above on Constans); this is likely to have been reflected in her clothes.

³⁹ On this see e.g. Horn 2005: 102-5, 112-14.

⁴⁰ Pitarakis 2009: 176-95; also Horn 2005 (esp. 102). Dolls were often given as votive gifts.

⁴¹ This of course refers to Constans' own opinion. Gender differences were strongly emphasised in antiquity, also in the formation of children, see e.g. James 1997. Such attitudes were also taken over by the Byzantine church fathers.

⁴² As an imperial house slave, Constans was allowed some freedom of movement.

them in the neighbourhood.⁴³ He goes to the one that is the nearest; it is the biggest and most beautiful. It is called Hagia Sophia, the 'holy wisdom'.⁴⁴ It is very high, but when Constans stands in front of it and raises his head he can see over the main door a row of lambs, almost like the sheep on the floor of the Great Palace. The Lord has said that he is a good shepherd who takes care of his flock, and they follow him.⁴⁵

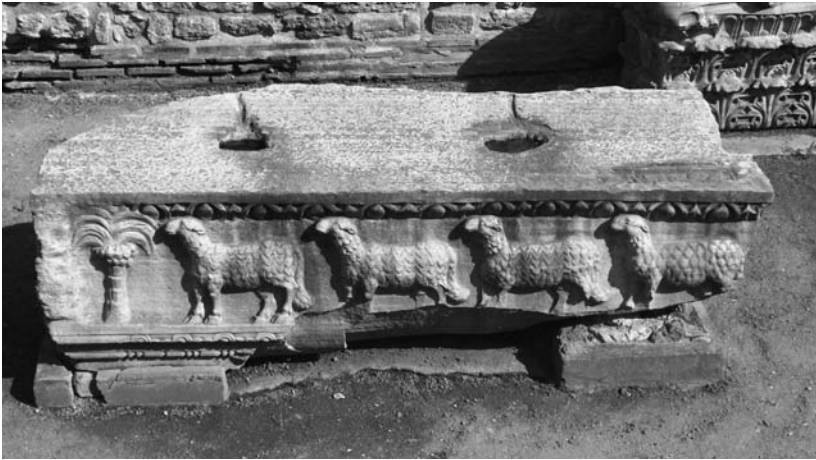


Fig 9: Relief with sheep, Hagia Sophia
(in situ; remains from the Theodosian church, destroyed in 532).

⁴³ In addition to Hagia Sophia, there were also other churches and chapels in the neighbourhood: the Church of the Holy Apostles, the Old Church (Hagia Irene), and the Martyrium of Saints Carpus and Pappylus, cf. Freely, Cakmak 2004: 32-35, 56; Van Dam 2010: 59-60. The Church of Saint John of Studios was probably also under construction, Freely, Cakmak 2004: 65-6. For discussions of the extent of church building in Constantinople, see Ward-Perkins 2012: 74-8; Matthews 2012: 115.

⁴⁴ This was the so-called Theodosian church, not today's Hagia Sophia (which was finished in 537). The Theodosian church (415) replaced the church built by Constantine (destroyed in 404). The Theodosian church was itself burnt down during an insurrection in 532 (the Nike insurrection). See Mainstone 1988: 129-43 (esp. 134-43); Freely, Cakmak 2004: 48-9.

⁴⁵ As far as I know, nothing is preserved from the Constantinian church. Among the very few remains of the Theodosian church is the monumental front relief from above the main door showing twelve lambs (probably representing the twelve apostles), cf. John 10:1-18.

At the entrance, there is a stone basin, placed on a pillar. Constans is just tall enough to stretch his hand over the rim and dip it into the holy water.⁴⁶ When he has done that, he makes the sign of the cross on his forehead.⁴⁷ Then he reads what is written along the edge of the basin. Adults have to kneel to see the letters, but he sees them right before his eyes. This is what is written:

N I Ψ' O N A N O M H M A T A M H M O N A N O Ψ' I N

As Constans is reading, he moves slowly along the stone vessel towards the right. Then he stops and moves back in the opposite direction, and then back again.⁴⁸ The entire text is written with no spaces in-between, as they do in books, and as he has been taught at the orphanage.⁴⁹ But Constans has also learnt to divide the letters into words and to read them out loud. He has read the text many times before and remembers it by heart. It goes NIΨ'ON ANOMHMATA MH MONAN OΨ'IN, and means: 'wash transgressions (away), not only the face'. For Constans, this is easy to understand: He should not only clean his face, but let the whole of his being be purified from his sins — he must let God complete his sanctification in him.⁵⁰

As Constans enters the church, he finds it full. All kinds of people — rich and poor, adults and children, men and women — are present. At first, it is quite dark. But then it gets lighter. The light

⁴⁶ The use of holy water and holy water fonts was very common in Byzantine times, see e.g. Gerstel 2006: 117-21. For such a font in Hagia Sophia, see Barsanti, Guiglia 2010: 45.

⁴⁷ On teaching children to make the sign of the cross, see John Chrysostom, *De inani Gloria* 22; also Malingrey 1972: 109.

⁴⁸ The palindrome may go back to Gregory Nazianzen (ca. 329–89/90), one of the Cappadocian church fathers. The inscription is known to have been in the atrium of Hagia Sophia in early Byzantine times, but is not extant there now (acc. to emails Dec 18, 2013 and Feb 7, 2014 from the *Istanbul Ayasofya Müzesi Müdürliğü*); see Preisendanz 1949: 133, with references; Gärtner 2000: 190, with references; also Brogan, Getty 1993. The inscription is attested on several ancient fonts and also elsewhere, such as on church walls.

⁴⁹ See Miller 2003: 209-46 on the teaching of reading and writing at the *Orphanotropheion*. On the methods of learning these skills, see e.g. Cribiore 1996 (esp. ch. 10).

⁵⁰ Cf. 2 Cor 7:1; 2 Pet 1:4. It is generally acknowledged that the idea of sanctification (*theôsis*, literally 'deification') was central to Byzantine theology and Christianity.



Fig 10. Base of a font for holy water, Hagia Sophia
(inscription not extant in situ, possibly moved/destroyed)

comes through windows right under the dome, and candles and oil lamps also illuminate the big hall. Now Constans can see the pictures on the walls. They tell the sacred history of the first human beings and the prophets, about Christ the child and Mary, the mother of God, and about all the apostles who preached the word. One of them was Andrew, the apostle who brought the faith to Constantinople and became the city's first bishop, just like Peter in Rome.⁵¹

Constans can also smell the incense, sweet and strong. Then everyone starts singing; it is a hymn from the Psalms of David. After that, the lector starts reading from Scripture.⁵² He reads a story about

⁵¹ Van Dam 2010: 66. Constantius II moved (ca. 357) the relics of Saint Andrew from Patras and placed them in the Church of the Holy Apostles. See also MacDonald 2005; Klauck 2005: 113-40. See Van Dam 2010: 50-2, 62-7 on the attempts on the part of Constantinople at establishing a history for itself on a level with Rome.

⁵² Reading from the Bible in the services was an important task; this was usually performed by a lector, a reader (Gr. *anagnôstês*).

Cain and Abel, and how Cain killed his brother Abel.⁵³ Constans recognises the story, the teacher at the orphanage has told it to the children there.⁵⁴

When the reader has finished reading, the archbishop explains the message of the story. He says: ‘See how great a sin is greed, how great a sin it is to envy a brother. And see how great a sin it is to think that you can hide from God. For he sees all things, even those that are done in secret.’ And he continues that one ‘can also learn other things from the story: there is no reason for grief in adversity. God shows this from the very first in the example of this boy, seeing that he received one who was righteous through death into heaven’.⁵⁵ The archbishop then admonishes the rich and says that men and women should lead a pure and simple life. Several times people interrupt him with clapping and cheering, and some by asking him questions.⁵⁶ When he is finished, they all sing again and make intercessions to God, and after that those who have been baptised take part in the holy Eucharist. During the service some youngsters play with dice behind the columns.⁵⁷ But Constans does not join them.

In the streets and at the forum

When the service is over, they all leave the church. Since this is a day for a big church meeting, bishops and others have come from far away, and they go out in a long row.⁵⁸ The archbishop leading the procession on foot holds the Holy Bible high up in front of himself.⁵⁹

⁵³ Cf. *De inani gloria* 39. The following examples and quotations are taken from John Chrysostom, *Address on Vainglory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children (De inani gloria)*, translation by Laistner 1951. For a critical edition with French translation, see Malingrey 1972.

⁵⁴ Cf. John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 40.

⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 42.

⁵⁶ Cf. the descriptions in Maxwell 2006a and 2006b of the exchanges between preacher and laity during the sermons.

⁵⁷ Cf. the example in Caseau 2009: 150, with reference.

⁵⁸ A regional church council/synod was held in Constantinople in October 450, see e.g. Grillmeier 1975: 529. On ecclesial and imperial processions in the city during this period, see Van Nuffelen 2012 (esp. 189-90); Miller 2003: 55-9.

⁵⁹ A considerable number of manuscripts — often of a precious kind — of the Bible (and parts of it) were produced in Constantinople during the fourth to sixth centuries, possibly also the Rossano gospels (042, probably sixth century) which

Constans gets a glimpse of the beautiful book. The procession, with bishops, priests and deacons dressed in colourful clothes ahead of a crowd of people, follows the main street to the big forum, and ends near the huge statue of the holy emperor. He sits on a horse and stretches out his hand, pointing towards the orient, towards the rising of the sun.⁶⁰

On this Day of the Lord there are more people in the streets than usual, and those from the other churches also join in.⁶¹ Oxen pulling carriages with food for sale also appear, but scarcely manage to make their way through the crowd.⁶² The coachmen cry out and scold the oxen. On the Lord's Day, fewer people are at work than on the other days of the week. On this day the workers do not build on the big houses along the streets, those that have shops, taverns and apartments for the rich on the ground floor. Above, there are three or more floors, where most of the tenants live.⁶³ Sometimes on the Lord's Day, Constans and his friends climb the scaffolding that carpenters and masons have put up, and play on top of the big, almost flat roof. They are very high up when they look over the edge — even adult people look small down there.⁶⁴

have a depiction of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and children greeting him (Matt 21:1-11, 14-16), see e.g. Hatlie 2006: 192. For a description of an ecclesiastical procession around 450, see Van Nuffelen 2012: 189-90, with references.

⁶⁰ This was the monumental Forum of Theodosius, built by Theodosius I (emperor 379–95). See Freely, Cakmak 2004: 43-4; Van Dam 2010: 57.

⁶¹ Unlike Rome, where the churches were mainly built at the city outskirts, but later integrated as the city grew, the churches in Constantinople were from the beginning erected in the center and at other central places in the city, see Van Dam 2010: 59-60.

⁶² See Pitarakis 2012 (esp. 401-7) for a description of everyday life at a marketplace.

⁶³ These were the so-called *insulae*, the apartment buildings that were common in large towns and cities in the Empire. They would accommodate a considerable part of a city's population, could be built fairly quickly, and varied very much in standard, not least as concerns security. The higher up, the poorer were the tenants. For a brief presentation of houses in Constantinople, see Ward-Perkins 2012: 71-5. See Matthews 2012: 114-15 for a discussion of the geographical (and partly social) distribution of the city's population.

⁶⁴ The apocryphal *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (2nd c.), which has its origin in the Greek-speaking part of the Roman Empire, relates a story about Jesus playing with his friends on the (flat) roof of a house. One of the children fell down and was killed, but was then resuscitated by Jesus, see Aasgaard 2009a (e.g. 42).

Once there was a fire in such a house. A heater with burning coal had been overturned in a kitchen on the ground floor. The people who lived there ran out. The flames spread very fast. Those who lived on the other floors could not use the stairs. Many jumped out of the windows and were hurt, and many were burnt to death.⁶⁵ Constans saw it.

When the procession is over at the forum, many people — children, youngsters and adults — gather in one of the corners. Here, a storyteller narrates a story by Aesop about wise and foolish animals and a tale about a hero from the past, about Jason and the golden fleece.⁶⁶ Finally, he tells an exciting story about the travels of the apostle Andrew and other disciples of Christ to distant lands and cities such as Myrmidonia, and all the miracles they performed there among the godless peoples; some of them ate human flesh and drank human blood instead of bread and water.⁶⁷ The audience often laughs and rejoices at the stories, and some give the storyteller money.

Constans used to meet a friend every Sunday at the forum. It was a boy the same age as himself, but he was smaller. He had only one leg and no family, not even a sister.⁶⁸ Every time he sat begging for food or money near the statue of the emperor. Sometimes they played together. They often pretended they were bishop and lector conducting a service.⁶⁹ When his friend was bishop, he could stand straight

⁶⁵ Fires were common in such apartment buildings, and whole blocks could burn down. Rome had numerous big fires, and it is no reason that they should have been less common in Constantinople, considering the speed and bad quality of building. Unlike Rome, Constantinople also had several serious earthquakes during its early centuries, particularly in the sixth century. There was a big earthquake in 447 which severely damaged the Theodosian wall (see note below), and smaller earthquakes in 438, see Van Nuffelen 2012: 186-7.

⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 38-39.

⁶⁷ See MacDonald 2005 (esp. 19). On storytelling and the importance of oral and narrative traditions for the shaping of identity among the common people, see e.g. Aasgaard 2009a: 193-202, with references; also Aasgaard 2009b. On warnings against storytelling, see Aasgaard 2009a: 200; Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 39.

⁶⁸ On sick and disabled children, see e.g. the chapters in Horn, Phenix 2009 (by Holman, Horn, and Kelley). See also Talbot 2009: 291, 296-8, 301, 303, 308.

⁶⁹ For examples of children's role play in Byzantium and Constantinople, see e.g. Hatlie 2006: 190-1 (John Calybite, 5th or 6th c.); Caseau 2009: 135-9, 153, 155, 161; Katajala-Peltomaa, Vuolanto 2011: 91-2; also Horn 2005. Role play involving ecclesial figures appears to have been quite common.

on his leg, without wavering, and preach for a long time. One Sunday some time ago, his friend was not at the forum. Constans had never seen him since.

Now Constans has to return for more work. On his way back, he passes the forum of Constantine, who gave his name to the city. The forum is round and in the middle there is a high column. On the top of it is a big statue of him. He has a crown on his head. Seven golden beams go out from it. Constantine looks like a god.⁷⁰



Fig. 11: Column of Constantine (reconstruction by C. Gurlitt, 1912).

⁷⁰ The column was originally about 35 meters high, with a statue of Constantine in the shape of the sun god Apollo on top, see Freely, *Cakmak* 29-30. See also the description in Cameron, Hall 1999: 125 (Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 3,10).

At the hippodrome and back home

After a short walk, Constans enters the hippodrome. It is close to Hagia Sophia and the Great Palace. The hippodrome is very long.⁷¹ In the middle of the race field there are more columns — they stand in a straight row. The emperors have gathered them from all the regions of the world and put them here in the centre.⁷²



Fig 12: Hippodrome (A modern computer reconstruction).

One of the pillars is shaped like snakes that crawl and are twisted around one another, just like the snake on the tree in paradise. They say that this column was a gift from the oracle in Delphi.⁷³ Another, much higher column is different from all the others that Constans has seen. It is not round, but square, and has mystical and magical signs on it: birds and eyes, and curved lines and straight lines. At the

⁷¹ The hippodrome was ca. 460 meters in length and 120 in breadth (race track ca. 430 and 77 meters). It could hold between 50,000 and 80,000 spectators, see Freely, Cakmak 2004: 13-17.

⁷² On the 'obelisk competition' between Constantinople and Rome, see Ward-Perkins 2012: 57-61.

⁷³ This is the so-called Serpent Column; see Freely, Cakmak 2004: 28-9.

foot of it there is a picture of the emperor who put it up; his name is Theodosius. He holds a laurel wreath in his hand — he is going to give this to a winner at the games. His children are gathered around him, those who became holy emperors after him.⁷⁴ They are dressed in costly clothes.⁷⁵



Fig. 13: Obelisk of Theodosius (*in situ*).

⁷⁴ This obelisk (originally made around 1500 B.C.) was brought from Egypt to Constantinople in 390 by Theodosius I. It was originally 30 meters high. At the bottom, Theodosius placed bas-reliefs in marble, depicting himself and his family watching chariot races at the hippodrome, see Freely, Cakmak 2004: 42-3, also 16; Harrison 1989: 16.

⁷⁵ On archbishops/patriarchs and emperors (and their children) as ideals, see e.g. Angelov 2009: 94, 97, 115-17.

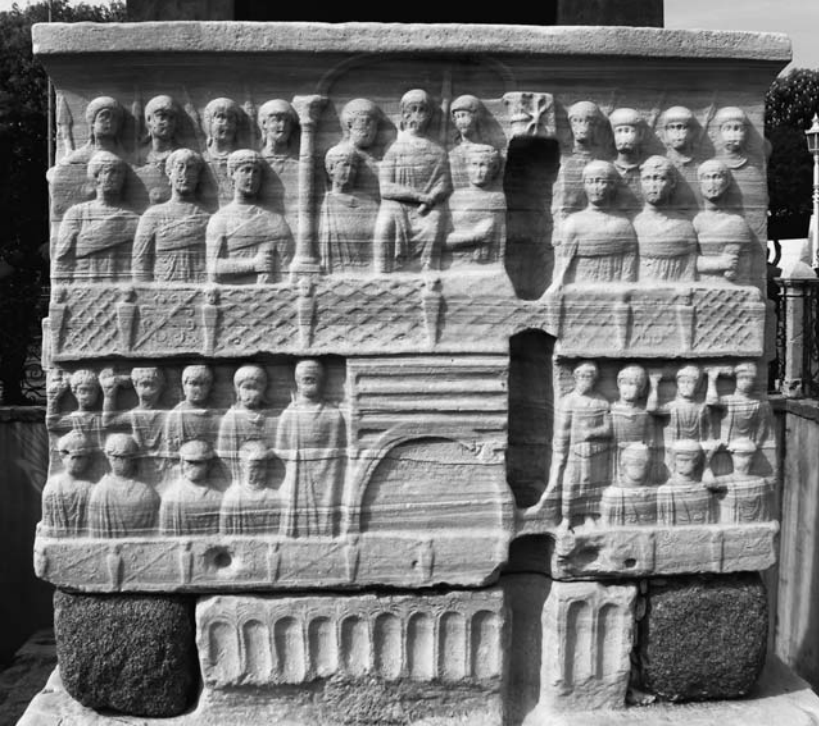


Fig.14: Obelisk of Theodosius, base (*in situ*).

This evening Constans has been ordered to work at the hippodrome. There have been horse races there the day before, and he has to sweep and clean up the bandstands together with many others. It is very hard work since the tribunes are made of wood and are old and worn, and everything sticks to them.⁷⁶ Sometimes the Blue and Green supporters have had a fight, and then there is much blood and muck.⁷⁷ Constans thinks that he favours the Blue. Constans has been

⁷⁶ The building of the hippodrome was begun by Septimius Severus (193–211), but was only finished by Constantine (330). The original wooden and worn bandstands were replaced with marble bandstands by Justinian I (mid-6th c.), see Freely, Cakmak 2004: 14.

⁷⁷ The Blue and Green were supporters of different charioteers. According to Freely, Cakmak 2004: 16, the Blue recruited from the middle and upper classes and were more traditional in religion and politics, whereas the Green usually had a

at the horse races a few times. In the breaks there are sometimes parades, with music, clowns, jugglers and acrobats.⁷⁸ Some of them are children.⁷⁹ Strange human beings and dwarfs also perform. The dwarfs are even smaller than him.

When Constans has finished his evening work and it has become dark, he receives his ration of food, some bread and cheese, and fetches water in his jug at a cistern nearby.⁸⁰ When he is not tired, he sometimes goes to a special place. At the end of a small street there is a high wall with a locked grated door in it. Inside there are bushes and trees, but never any people. Only small animals and children can slip in between the bars. Once inside, he can just sit there a little, or maybe play very low on his flute.



Fig. 15: Game piece with cross and game board fragment (5th–6th century, Istanbul Archaeological Museum).

lower class and more ‘radical’ background. The conflicts between them could lead to fights and even insurrections.

⁷⁸ Such performances are well-documented, see e.g. Freely 2004: 16-17; Tougher 2010: 138-40. One of the marble reliefs on the Column of Theodosius also shows artists at the races, e.g. musicians.

⁷⁹ Children could be both actors and spectators on such occasions, see e.g. Hatlie 2006: 187-8.

⁸⁰ On water supply and cisterns, see Ward-Perkins 2012: 64-7, with references; also Freely, Cakmak 2004: 39-40, 55-6, 59-60; Grig, Kelly 2012a (ch. 5 by Crow).

But tonight Constans is tired, and he goes straight back to the orphanage. There he plays a board game with one of the other boys. Some of the game pieces look as if they have the sign of the cross on them. On his mattress, Constans makes this sign on his forehead and prays the Lord's Prayer, just as he has been taught to do. And as he falls asleep, he leaves us, and we must leave him.

3. REFLECTIONS: A 'CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE' ON CONSTANTINOPLE

I shall now be shifting tone, and will round off with some reflections on what has been achieved by this attempt at a 'child's perspective' view on life in fifth-century Constantinople. Let us return to my questions in the introduction: can this approach make a difference, and — if so — in what ways? What can be gained from doing research this way? In my view, there are gains as concerns both methodology and the subject matter itself.

As for method, I have basically made three moves, which are closely interrelated: (1) I have presented an example of microhistory, in the form of (a part of) a life story; (2) the person I have described is not historical, however, but a fictional figure; and (3) I have to attempted to present this figure (to a considerable degree) with a 'from the inside' approach. As for the first move, the microhistory approach is already well established as a way of studying history and society by seeing individuals or small groups and their actions, choices and ideas as reflections of the events or the larger society of which they are a part. This kind of approach has often been successful in revealing historical and social features that are otherwise left unnoticed, not least as concerns marginalised groups of people.⁸¹ In my opinion, it has also been useful in the case of Constans. Since children usually are not able to assert themselves within a public setting, a microhistory approach is obviously appropriate, indeed almost required, if they are to come into view, and especially on their own terms. Consequently, microhistory should be regarded as particularly suitable for research on the history of children and of childhood.⁸²

⁸¹ See note 7, esp. the discussions in Sharpe 2001 and Levi 2001.

⁸² For examples of this kind of research, see the references in note 11 and Orme 2001.

The second — the ‘fictional’ — move, however, is more problematical as a form of scientific work, as also noted at the outset. It may for example cook up a seemingly plausible scenario or story, which on closer examination turns out to be impossible to maintain. It may also appeal to our emotions, experiences and imagination in ways that allure and deceive. On the other hand, such a narrative approach also has — for similar reasons — its potentials: it can manage to take a broader set of factors into account as compared to more well-trying methods. It also has a heuristic value, since it enables us to configure a character such as Constans, our case in point, in a variety of ways, for example as concerns social status; I will shortly return to this matter. Clearly, this kind of fictional microhistory has its own and somewhat different rhetoric — but this does not necessarily make it less responsible or less plausible. On the contrary, it can offer fresh insights and open up for new but well-justified perspectives. After all, more conventional scholarly approaches to history also in their — often veiled — ways tell stories, adapt to certain expectations from readers, and have their more or less conscious agendas, which similarly, on closer scrutiny, can turn out to be untenable constructions.⁸³ If employed uncritically, the risk of finding just what one is looking for is very much the same irrespective of approach.

The third element, the ‘from the inside’ approach, also has its evident dangers. These have been much debated, particularly within social and cultural anthropology.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the approach today enjoys broad recognition, particularly when it also makes allowances for a ‘from the outside’ approach. This is what I have aimed at doing in the case of Constans. The complicating factors for me, however, are that I deal with a remote past (fifth-century Constantinople) and with children (who have left little first-hand evidence). But as I have indicated above, research on childhood in antiquity has made great advances, so that we are much better equipped now than just a few years ago. In my search for sources, there turned out to be a considerable amount of relevant material, and of various kinds, and I found that much could be related to children in very immediate ways (e.g. toys and clothes). When interpreted with an eye to children, however,

⁸³ See for example the discussions of various traditional approaches in Burke 2001.

⁸⁴ See note 6 above.

other kinds of material also proved to be more relevant than I had expected. In fact, looking at 'adult' matters, whether objects, places, events or ideas, from a child's perspective has served to draw these matters as well more firmly into the realm of childhood history: not only things often associated with children, but also things traditionally seen as belonging to an adult or some 'neutral' sphere would in different ways contribute to the picture of ancient childhood. Taken together, then, the various jigsaw pieces added up to considerably more than they would have done by themselves. And in this effort at developing a plausible historical scenario for the child Constans, the interdisciplinary approach has been both necessary and rewarding.

So much for method and resources. But what about the subject matter itself, childhood in early Constantinople? What difference has my attempt at fictional microhistory made to the study of children and their role in a city like Constantinople? The first, and striking, feature is how dependent children were on other people, mainly adults. Whereas most other groups — also other marginalised groups — could have a relatively fair chance of taking care of themselves, children would be the ones least able to assert themselves, in terms of both knowledge, position and physical strength.⁸⁵ Whether they had a family or not, they — at least the youngest ones — were even on a daily basis totally reliant on other people. And in a melting pot like Constantinople, children were the more vulnerable, and their lives very much at a risk. At the same time, however, the case of Constans has clearly demonstrated that children were not mere objects exposed to the goodwill of others. They were agents too, in their own lives, in the lives of others, and in the life of the city as a whole. For example, there could obviously be tension, and even conflict, between the interests of children and of adults. Social life, the physical environment and society at large were very much shaped according to the premises of grown-ups, and children would have to develop strategies to deal with this, which they surely did. Furthermore, even though children in antiquity to a large extent had the cultural milieu in common with adults, they would also have areas of their own, whether at play with each other or by themselves. In games, riddles and rhymes, which now are mainly forgotten, children could enact elements of what is today often called a

⁸⁵ Many disabled and/or elderly persons would probably also be in an equally vulnerable situation.

‘children’s culture’.⁸⁶ And as for making a living, several children had to manage all on their own, at work or in the street. Many had to contribute to the daily income of their household, and were expected to secure the future of their family and to support parents in their old age. Whether they were slaves, freeborn or other, children from an early age formed part of the labour force of Constantinople. And in the religious and the imperial propaganda, they served as symbols of the prosperity of the city and the Empire. Thus, through their presence, work and activities, children would — of course to different degrees — have important, and even indispensable, functions within the demographical, social, economical and ideological systems of Constantinople. The children were not only dependent on others; others, even the city itself, were dependent on them. It was very much a matter of interdependence across age differences.

Looking into a specific case such as that of Constans has also made it clear to me that the living conditions of children differed greatly, depending on social and ethnic background, age and gender, faculties and bodily constitution. Thus, in the study of ancient childhood, whether in Constantinople or elsewhere, such factors must be taken into consideration. Children’s lives were no less diverse than were the lives of grown-ups. There were huge differences indeed on the scale between a son of the emperor and a disabled orphan girl on the street. Dealing with Constans and making choices on his part has alerted me to the broad spectrum of options at hand and their potential effect on a child’s life. This corresponds closely to the insights of recent intersectionality studies.⁸⁷ Scholars who make use of this approach underscore that we need to take a number of factors — and their interplay — into account when doing historical research, not least in order to avoid undue generalizations: the shape of peoples’ lives will vary strongly depending on the synergy effects of these variables. If Constans, for instance, had been a slave child working in the mines instead of at the emperor’s palace, this would have made his ‘life’, and my story, very different.

At the same time, the case of Constans has made me more aware that there are also certain features that were common to children

⁸⁶ See Aasgaard 2009b for examples of elements of such a ‘children’s culture’. Of course, ‘culture’ is here used in a broad and indefinite sense.

⁸⁷ For a presentation of intersectionality, see Cho *et al.* 2013; cf. also note 14.

across the many, or even most, kinds of division, whether social, ethnic or other. These would be representative of a large number of children, and would also make their experiences differ from those of adults.⁸⁸ There are particularly three such features, and I shall now turn to them, since they bear on a crucial concern in this chapter, namely: what difference can a 'child's perspective' make for how the city of Constantinople itself, its cityscape, is perceived?

The first is as banal as it is important: the size of a child, as in the case of Constans. The city, with its space, objects and people, will not look the same from a height of three to four feet above the ground: people, and other living beings, appear different from below, both in size, shape and — not the least — in terms of power. At the same time, from this height things can be spotted that escape adult eyes. And a child can also enter spaces that are inaccessible to big-body human beings. Thus, size will in a number of ways strongly have affected how the city, both its physical shape and its social relationships, was experienced by half of its population.

Second, children's range of movement is usually more limited than that of adults. The world they know is 'smaller': whether a home, a street, a playground, or — as with Constans — a place of work. But this world will also be the more familiar, and in some respects even bigger and more important to them than it generally would be to adults. For a child, the difference is in this respect in the details. However, it is also important to note that children's range of movement in antiquity was not only a matter of physical, but also of cultural limitations. And these were as a rule set by adults, whether parents or others: they were the ones in power. In the ancient world, this would particularly make a difference with respect to gender. As a boy, Constans would benefit from having a wider range of movement than his sister Helena. This would not only apply to space (public/private, outdoor/indoor), but also to culture: within the range of tolerable, 'honourable', behaviour, there would generally be more freedom of movement left for boys than for girls.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Intersectionality approaches have, sometimes rightly so, been criticised for leading to historical fragmentation, of making history disintegrate into singular events. However, this need not be so, as I maintain below.

⁸⁹ Aasgaard 2009a: 103-12; Aasgaard 2009c.

The final way in which a ‘child’s perspective’ on Constantinople would make a difference is of a psychological kind: the most formative and lasting experiences of a human being are those of his or her early childhood, not least on a sub-conscious level.⁹⁰ Here, the thoroughly ideological structuring of Constantinople as a city would have had a strong impact on a young child like Constans. Whereas — as noted in the introduction — the cityscape of the old Rome developed out of various roots and in a long-lasting and uneven process, Constantinople was right from the start consciously shaped as a new kind of city, a *nea Roma*. It was a Christian city, in which public buildings and churches were built side by side, basic education and religious teaching went hand in hand, and social-political structures and ecclesial organisation were tightly intertwined.⁹¹ Such elements would form a totality involving all aspects of life — very much in agreement with Ninian Smart’s seven-dimensions model.⁹² In an everyday life that could be pleasant, but also demanding, and even very frightening, this blend of elements must have served to create a fairly coherent and uniform view of the world, and not least to develop an individual and collective identity that was distinctively Christian.⁹³ Since Constantinople was the only world most of its children had experienced, the profile of its cityscape would be fundamental for the shaping of their ideas about themselves and about reality as a whole — and more so than with many adults, who would have arrived in the city from other places in the ancient world.

⁹⁰ I am of course aware of the problems inherent in dealing with this from the point of view of modern psychology. However, I do not think that these problems should be overestimated.

⁹¹ Of course, this does not mean that other cultural or religious factors were not important. Pre-, semi- or non-Christian elements were also very much present, such as the (aspects of) emperor worship or the belief in evil spirits such as Gello. But they were to a large extent subsumed into an over-arching Christian framework.

⁹² In Constantinople, these seven dimensions interacted closely, as Constans, the case in point, indicates: narratives (biblical and other stories), reflection (education, preaching), rites (Christian services, processions, private rituals), ethics (norms, good conduct), experience (sight, sound, smell), the social (communal gatherings, organisation of space), and the material (from toys to churches).

⁹³ And — possibly — also distinctively Byzantine; see the brief reflections in Papaconstantinou 2009: 13-14.

EPILOGUE

John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), one of Constantinople's most famous figures and its archbishop about two generations before Constantine's time, took a great interest in children's formation, and in their Christian formation in particular.⁹⁴ In his treatise *Address on Vain-glory and the Right Way for Parents to Bring Up Their Children*, we see the contours of a pedagogical program involving a child's life in all its dimensions.⁹⁵ This is very much seen in his use of metaphors. Of particular interest for us here is his comparison of a child to a city: a child's soul is the city itself, the body its walls, and the child's senses are the gates that must be tended and guarded to produce good fruits.⁹⁶ Chrysostom transforms the metaphor into an allegory that reflects his thinking not only about children's formation, but also about what a city and its citizens should be like. This is how he summarises his ideas:⁹⁷

The child's soul then is a city, a city but lately founded and built, a city containing citizens who are strangers with no experience as yet, such as it is very easy to direct. ... Draw up laws then for this city and its citizens, laws that inspire fear and are strong ... Draw up laws, and do you pay close attention; for our legislation is for the world and today we are founding a city. Suppose that the outer walls and four gates, the senses, are built. The whole body shall be the wall, as it were; the gates are the eyes, the tongue, the hearing, the sense of smell, and if you will, the sense of touch. It is through these gates that the citizens of the city go in and out; that is to say, it is through these gates that thoughts are corrupted or rightly guided.

⁹⁴ See Leyerle 1997; O'Roark 1999; Guroian 2001 for presentations of Chrysostom's ideas about childhood.

⁹⁵ The treatise (*De inani gloria*) may have been written in Constantinople about 400 CE, or possibly in Chrysostom's years in Antioch (386–97). However, no decisive conclusion can be reached as to its place of origin, see Laistner 1951: 78–84.

⁹⁶ In order to defend the city on the land side, Constantine the Great built a four-kilometers long wall from the coast of Marmara to the Golden Horn. This wall was standing at the time of Chrysostom, and may have served as a vivid illustration of his idea about the child as a city. As Constantinople grew, Theodosius II built a double wall further to the west. This was nearly seven kilometers long and was finished just before 450, see Freely, Cakmak 2004: 12, 26, 49–55.

⁹⁷ John Chrysostom, *De inani gloria* 25–27; translation by Laistner 1951.

In the mid-fifth century, the city of Rome was aging: it had begun its rapid decline towards its 'first' death.⁹⁸ In Constantinople, the situation was the opposite: the city and its inhabitants were in their 'childhood', growing and developing at a high pace. In Chrysostom's treatise, we get a glimpse of both these processes at the same time: that of a child and that of a city. This was in fact what was going on in fifth-century Constantinople: at this stage in its history, the formation of the *nea Roma* and of its children went hand in hand. It was a process in which a new, Christian identity was taking shape, and on two closely interrelated levels: in a collective and in individuals, in the city and in its citizens, whether adults or children. But more fundamentally, and with much more far-reaching consequences, in its children.

⁹⁸ It was not to begin its second life before well into the Middle Ages.

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