Episcopal Succession in Constantinople (381–450 c.e.): The Local Dynamics of Power

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Research on episcopal succession has tended to focus on the social background of bishops, the role played by individual charisma, and church canons governing elections. Such studies have identified regional differences, especially between the eastern and the western parts of the Roman Empire. Through a comparison of three communities in Theodosian Constantinople (Novatians, Eunomians, and Nicenes), this paper argues that succession patterns also reflect the sociological structure of each community and the local balance of power, two factors that are shown to be closely interlocked. Especially the role of the local church establishment, which attempts to keep control over succession against imperial intervention and popular opinion, is shown to be vital. The form this establishment takes depends on the specific social and political situation each community finds itself in, as well as its theological views. Such a local perspective is an important corrective to generalizations about episcopal successions in late antiquity.

No case needs to be made for the importance of the bishop in late antiquity, identified by scholars as one of the key figures of authority in this period. A growing body of scholarship has explored the various aspects—religious, political, social, and legal—of the bishop’s role. A sound understanding of how one could acquire that position is therefore crucial. Although individual cases have often been studied in accounts of their lives, a comprehensive

I dedicate this paper to my teacher, Professor Hans Hauben, now enjoying the negotium of retirement.

synthesis was only published recently by Peter Norton (2007), after three pioneering articles by Roger Gryson of the 1970s.2

As exemplified in Norton’s recent synthesis, two issues dominate research into episcopal elections. First, what were the rules and customs governing an election? Here the focus is on the study of the laws, canons, and customs, and on charting changes over time and regional differences. The second theme is the identification of the qualities that could propel an individual onto an episcopal throne. This implies fathoming popular expectancies of a future bishop, such as a reputation for holiness and a habit of almsgiving, but also the background of bishops, including social status and patronage. Modern interest is obviously directed by the nature of our sources: on the one hand, we have a sizeable body of canons and secular law that allow us to reconstruct rules and procedures; on the other, we possess numerous accounts of “ideal bishops,” who acquired their position because of their virtues, and even some theoretical explorations of what made a good bishop.3

This double focus does not exhaust the possibilities for analysis, nor may it give full insight in what directed episcopal succession. Indeed, limiting our attention to these two factors would equal thinking that the outcome of the American presidential elections is a function, on the one hand, of the personality and program of the candidates and, on the other, of the rules established to allow the electorate to exercise its democratic rights. But politological studies have amply shown that the nature of American society, i.e. how it includes and excludes certain groups through implicit mechanisms of power and how that power mediates certain economical, social, and religious interests, strongly influences which groups of people go out to vote and how their choice is determined.4 In a similar way, we

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3. See the three “theoretical” texts studied by Rapp, Holy Bishops, 41–55: John Chrysostom, On the Priesthood; Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 2; Ambrose of Milan, De officis.

should try to grasp the sociological dynamics that played in late antique communities when they elected a bishop.

To make clear the difference in perspective between the usual focus of research on episcopal elections and the approach proposed here, take the phenomenon of family traditions of episcopal office holding. Examples of this practice go back to the beginnings of Christianity, and it is also prominent in the church of Constantinople, as this paper will show. Rapp sensibly suggests a variety of possible explanations: “More often than not, they were occasioned by a combination of genuine religious motivation for serving in the Christian ministry, the desire to acquire distinction through ecclesiastical office, and the impetus to perpetuate within the family the social status that derived from both.” Such an assessment focuses on the motivations and reasoning that underpin the behavior of an individual. A different analysis is possible, one that interprets such habits in relation to the structure of the community in which they take place and its internal balance of power. As we shall see, the relatively high number of relatives holding office among the Novatians in Constantinople is related to a community characterized by a tight control by an establishment. Control of the personnel, including the use of family relations, is essential for maintaining power, as is illustrated by the important degree of inbreeding witnessed in the oligarchies into which some modern western European political parties have developed. This sociological explanation that considers family dynasties symptoms of how power was inscribed in a given community, does not exclude the more psychological one proposed by Rapp: just as contemporary politicians, members of an episcopal dynasty in late antiquity may have thought (and honestly so) that they assumed power for the improvement of their flock. Rather, it offers a perspective that goes beyond individual motivations by focusing on the dynamics of power that played in a society.

This paper proposes a comparative analysis of episcopal succession in the capital of the eastern empire under the Theodosian dynasty. Due to the survival of the church histories of Philostorgius, Socrates, and Sozomen, we are relatively well informed about Constantinople under this dynasty (Theodosius I [379–395], Arcadius [395–408], Theodosius II

5. Cf. Eus. h. e. 5.24.6 on Polycarpus of Ephesus.
6. Rapp, Holy Bishops, 199.
7. An important study is Ian N. Wood, “The Ecclesiastical Politics of Merovingian Clermont,” in *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, ed. P. Wormald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 34–57, but whereas he shows how the aristocracy managed to control the see of Clermont, I focus mainly on the dynamics internal to the different communities.
[408–450], and Marcian [450–457]). All three historians wrote their works in Constantinople under Theodosius II, Philostorgius after 425, Socrates ca. 439, and Sozomen ca. 445. Representing three different doctrinal points of view (Philostorgius was an Eunomian, Socrates a Novatian, and Sozomen a Nicene Christian), they offer a rarely paralleled insight in three different communities in Constantinople in this period. The case of Eunomianism slightly transcends the Constantinopolitan context, as I shall focus on the episcopal structure created in 363 for all the eastern provinces. However, this structure may have existed up to the end of the century and even under Theodosius II there probably were still Eunomian bishops in Constantinople. The peculiar nature of the Eunomian hierarchy provides an important contrast with that of the Novatians and Nicenes, and as such will help us to perceive connections between patterns of succession, the nature of a community, its theological self-definition, and the exercise of power within it.


11. A dissenting voice is Harmut Leppin, “The Church Historians (I): Socrates, Sozomenus, and Theodoretus,” in *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity*, ed. G. Marasco (Leiden: Brill, 2003): 219–54. At the 2006 Philostorgius conference in Strasbourg, Leppin has retracted his doubts concerning Socrates’ Novatian allegiance. Even if Socrates were not to be a Novatian, he is at least extremely favorably disposed towards them.

Rudimentary though my analysis will seem in comparison with studies of modern elections, it will, I hope, generate insight in the mechanisms that determined episcopal succession. My vocabulary, although influenced by modern sociological research, is intentionally non-technical. The aim is to illuminate connections that appear in the material, not to impose a model on it. Based on an analysis of prosopographical data of the various bishops, the political and ecclesiastical context, and patterns in the episcopal succession of the three communities, I attempt to identify the struggles for power that shaped episcopal succession in Constantinople. In all three cases we can identify an establishment that managed to control succession most of the time, although how the establishment was configured differed profoundly from one community to another. I have chosen the term “establishment” on purpose: it conveys the meaning of leadership but also underscores its embedded nature. An establishment is not an external force but part of the make-up of a community. I shall suggest that, besides the tendency of an establishment to assume control, the way it does so and the way it exercises power is closely related to how a particular community functions and how it relates to wider society. The term “establishment” is used, instead of the more common “elite,” to suggest that the position of power is strictly correlated to the group in which it is exercised and does not necessarily imply a high social standing. “Elite” can have the same relative meaning but usually implies an element of social prestige recognized by the whole of society. The term is used in this latter sense in this paper. My preference for “establishment” is determined by my wish to focus on the internal social dynamics of specific communities. But, as we shall see, most Nicene and Novatian bishops also belonged to the elite of late antique society. The situation is less clear for the Eunomians.

One of the key factors is the simple opposition between “open” and “closed” communities. Outlawed heresies, such as Eunomianism, had a tendency to close themselves off from society, which led to attempts to impose tight control on episcopal succession. Indeed, in a system in which leadership is in principle for life, the choice of a new leader tended to be a time of intense pressure and danger for the established order. It was then that control could be taken by outsiders, a possibility that the establishment wanted to forestall. Being the church supported by the state and with the greatest number of followers in the fifth century, the Nicene church of Constantinople tended to be an open community: given the fact that many individuals and groups had a stake in it (not in the least the emperor), it could not close itself off or exercise the same degree of control as the Eunomians could. Thus, although the Nicene community was also dominated
by an establishment, its episcopal succession could not be as rigidly con-
trolled as it was among the Eunomians and Novatians.

THE NOVATIANS

The Novatian schism originated in a dispute about the treatment of Chris-
tians who had lapsed during the Decian persecution (250–251 c.e.) in
Rome, when Novatian challenged the election of Cornelius on the grounds
that the latter was too lax in his dealings with lapsi. The Novatians soon
spread to the eastern empire and by the end of the fourth century there were
two major centers of the schism: rural Asia Minor, in particular Phrygia
and Paphlagonia, and Constantinople. Each represents a fundamentally
different tendency within the community.

The Novatians of Constantinople had close contacts with the secular
and Nicene elite of the capital—to the point that bishop Marcian (384–395
c.e.) was said to have been the tutor of Valens’s children. This generally
good relationship was reflected in their church policy, which emphasized
the closeness of Novatianism to the dominant Nicene church. The Nova-
tians argued, for example, that both adhered to the doctrines set out by
the apostolic fathers. As we can gather from Socrates, this implied that the
Novatians pretended to have adhered to the Nicene faith even before it was
formulated in 325 but also adopted the Nicene date of Easter. The aim
of this policy was to ensure the survival of the community by minimizing
the risk of persecution. The situation of the Novatians was, indeed, always
precarious and depended on the benevolence of the ruler. Safeguards set
in law by Constantine the Great, for example, did not prevent a persecu-
tion by Valens. In 423 an edict classified them as heretics and forbade
residence within the cities, but five years later their right to have churches
in the cities was re-affirmed. The status of the Novatians as “heretics”
was clearly constructed or deconstructed in constant debate, and it was
thus of capital importance for them to be able to influence that debate in

13. An overview of the history of the schism in the fourth century is Martin Wallraff,
“Geschichte des Novatianismus seit dem vierten Jahrhundert im Osten,” Zeitschrift
für antikes Christentum 1 (1997): 251–79.
14. Socr. b. e. 4.9.5.
15. Socr. b. e. 1.10, 7.25.15.
16. Socr. b. e. 5.21.6–19; Soz. b. e. 7.18.11.
17. Codex Theodosianus 16.5.59 (September 25, 326); Socr. b. e. 4.9.2.
18. Codex Theodosianus 16.5.59 (April 9, 423) and 16.5.65 (May 30, 428).
19. For an analysis of this way of defining heretics, see Caroline Humfress, Ortho-
their favor. But the strategy of trying to stay close to the Nicene church without abandoning their own identity was not without its dangers: the closer the Novatians moved to the Nicenes, the higher the risk of succumbing to the pressure of assimilation exercised by the state. This eventually happened: the last Novatian bishop of Constantinople we know of, Mar- cian (from 438 to some point in the 450s) crossed the floor to the Nicene church and became the oikonomos of bishop Gennadius.

The tactic adopted by the Constantinopolitan faction seems to have been deeply resented by the “hard line” Novatians from Asia Minor, who were less directly exposed to the might of imperial power and not softened by social contacts with the elite of the capital. From Socrates we can gather that the tensions between both groups expressed themselves in a dispute about the date of Easter, with the Novatians from Asia Minor insisting on continuing quartodeciman practice. The Novatians actually split over the issue, and relations between the two communities were frosty for a while, as evidenced by a Phrygian attempt to hold a general synod in Pazus without the Constantinopolitans under Valens, and Socrates’ rant against Phrygian “simpletons” who adopt the “Jewish” date of Easter. The Phrygian position was not without support in Constantinople, although it does not seem to have been strong. A Constantinopolitan presbyter named Sabbatius built his career on exploiting Novatian resentment of the philo-Nicene policies in the capital; in 384 he caused a schism in the capital and in 412 he even got himself briefly ordained as bishop of the capital by his followers. But even after his death in exile a short while later he remained a focus of contention, and Atticus, the Nicene bishop of Constantinople but a friend of the Novatians, had his body removed to a grave unknown to his followers.

20. This is illustrated by an anecdote in Socr. h. e. 7.25.15–19 (GCS NF 1: 374.8–26): a fanatic Nicene criticizes the Nicene bishop Atticus for letting the “heretical” Novatians have churches in the city. The bishop was thus supposed to be able exercise influence on imperial power to have that right repealed.
22. Socr. h. e. 4.28.14–19, 5.21.6–19, 7.23.10. From his Constantinopolitan perspective, Socrates (h.e. 4.28.16 [GCS NF 1:265.2]) accuses them of “changing” the date of Easter (τὴν ἑορτὴν τοῦ Πάσχα μετέθεσαν).
23. Socr. h. e. 5.22.82 (GCS NF 1:305.11) states that every regional community adopted its own practice and that the Novatians thus split in innumerable communities.
24. Socr. h. e. 4.28.14–19.
25. Socr. h. e. 5.21.18 (GCS NF 1:296.30–32).
26. Socr. h. e. 5.21.6–19, 7.5.
27. Socr. h. e. 7.24.9–10.
Thus, in terms of their own survival, the Novatians in Constantinople were caught between two unattractive alternatives: by following Sabbatius and stressing their differences with the Nicene church, they invited state repression; but the act of balance performed by the Novatian establishment in Constantinople with the emphasis on closeness to the dominant church was almost an objective ally of the assimilationist religious policy of the Theodosian dynasty. Moreover, the tension created between both tendencies within the Novatian community endangered the positive public profile that the Novatian establishment wished to maintain in its relation with the secular elite of the capital. These factors profoundly influenced the episcopal succession of the Novatians in Constantinople.

On the basis of Socrates, the following list of Novatian bishops of Constantinople can be established:

- Agelius (?–384)
  - He ordains Sisinnius as successor, but after protest by the laity, he “additionally ordains” (ἐπιχειροτόνει) Marcian.28
- Marcian I (384–395)
- Sisinnius (395–412)
  - Sisinnius mentions Chrysanthus, the son of Marcian, as his chosen successor. The latter refuses but is forcibly ordained.29
- “usurpation” of Sabbatius (412)
- Chrysanthus (412–419)
- Paul (419–438)
  - Paul exhorts his flock to choose a bishop while he is still alive. They refuse to do so, and he puts the name of Marcian, maybe the son of Chrysanthus, in a sealed document that is opened on the third day after his death.30
- Marcian II (438–?)

Brief as it is, this list allows for some important conclusions. The most obvious fact is the tight control exercised by the incumbent on the choice of his successor: Marcian I, Sisinnius, Chrysanthus, and Marcian II all are nominated and the first two also ordained31 by the current bishop.

29. Socr. b. e. 7.12.
30. Socr. b. e. 7.46.
31. One can speculate about the reasons of this change: Chrysanthus’s initial refusal probably meant that Sisinnius was already dead when he was ordained. But the change of procedure at the succession of Paul (secret nomination by the bishop) may represent another way of not offending the Nicene church, as ordination by the
This control is also reflected in the fact that the Novatian bishops are predominantly drawn from the same social class and background: Marcian I had been in imperial service and had taught Valens’s children, his son Chrysanthus was on his way to become prefect of Constantinople after a successful career,32 Sisinnius was widely respected for his philosophical learning acquired in a shared education with the emperor Julian,33 and as a Latin grammarian, Paul seems to have had the lowest social standing of all the names on the list. Socrates remains silent about the background of Marcian II, but it is possible he was Chrysanthus’s son. Indeed, with Marcian I being the father of Chrysanthus, Marcian II might well be the third scion of this little “dynasty,” in that case named after his grandfather. There is no direct proof of this, but it is not unlikely in chronological terms (roughly twenty years separate the tenures of Marcian I and Chrysanthus and between those of Chrysanthus and Marcian II). The choice for men of such elite status had a clear aim, as openly admitted by Socrates: maintaining the good position of the Novatians and avoiding disturbances that would attract imperial attention.34 Indeed, it was felt to be important to have a bishop who could make a positive impression on the elite of the capital.35

The desire to avoid public trouble can also explain the close and generally good collaboration between bishop and laity. When Agelius’s choice for Sisinnius is challenged by the laity, the bishop quickly accommodates their wishes by ordaining Marcian as well. Yet the compromise that Sisinnius will be bishop after him is also respected by the laity. Also, Sabbatius’s exploitation of Chrysanthus’s initial refusal remains short-lived because the laity tracks the latter down, installs him, and removes Sabbatius. Moreover, Socrates depicts the people as insisting on sticking to custom: on Paul’s deathbed they request him to nominate a candidate rather than accepting the liberty he offers them. Both the leaders of the community and the laity clearly prefer mutual accommodation to confrontation. We shall notice that things were quite different in the Nicene community.

incumbent was forbidden by the church canons (cf. Council of Antioch 326, canon 23, as cited by Norton, *Episcopal Elections*, 205).
32. Socr. *h. e.* 7.12.3.
33. Socr. *h. e.* 5.21.2.
34. Socr. *h. e.* 5.21.3, 7.12.8, 7.46.6.
35. See Socrates’ description of Paul’s funeral (Socr. *h. e.* 7.46.1–2) and Sisinnius’s reputation among the senate (Socr. *h. e.* 6.22.20). As a bishop of the Novatians, Marcian II seems to have supported the Nicenes in building the Anastasia church: Wallraff, “Ein prominenter Konvertit,” 22–25.
As shown by the schism about the date of Easter, the explanation should not be that the Novatians were inherently irenic. Rather, the tight control exercised by the Novatian establishment, their choice of elite candidates, and the apparently good relations between leaders and laity, can be understood in the light of the position the Novatians in Constantinople found themselves in. The closely controlled, elitist episcopal succession can be interpreted as an attempt to fend off external and internal pressures. In the Theodosian state which progressively tolerated less diversity in the religious landscape, personal contacts and influence with the secular elite and the Nicene church (which could influence the former) were essential in forestalling attempts to halt the fairly tolerant regime enjoyed by the Novatians. For example, Paul succeeded in halting Nestorian’s attack on the Novatians. Apart from reflecting a common tendency to choose a successor from one’s own background, the choice for elite bishops is a clear attempt to remain embedded in the Constantinopolitan elite that could influence imperial policies. Not just the secular elite could do so: the Novatians cultivated good relations with the ecclesiastical Nicene establishment as well. In this context it is important to note that the usual pro-Novatian attitude of the Nicene church in Constantinople, largely based on personal contacts, was challenged by John Chrysostom and Nestorius, who were, as we shall see below, the only two “outsiders” on the see under the Theodosian dynasty. Traditional bonds of friendship were strengthened again when both were successfully ousted. Internally, the Novatian elite was convinced that it should not give in to “traditionalist” demands to keep greater distance from the Nicene church, which would weaken its support among the Nicene elite. Sabbatius’s unsuccessful interloping shows the general support for such a policy.


37. Socr. b. e. 7.29.11 (GCS NF 1:378.11–12).

38. Van Nuffelen, Héritage, 14–26, argues that Socrates was part of a literary circle centered on Anthemius (magister officiorum from 398–405 and PPO from 405–414 [PLRE 2:94, s. n. Anthemius 2]), who governed the empire during the first years of the reign of Theodosius II, and that several other Novatians participated in it as well. On this figure, see William N. Bayless, “The Praetorian Prefect Anthemius: Position and Politics,” Byzantine Studies 4 (1977): 38–51.

39. Socr. b. e. 6.22.11–13, 7.29.11.
Although the evidence is sketchy and one-sided, one can with reasonable probability establish connections between the nature of the Novatian community, as it was shaped by its internal tensions and the wider political and religious context, and the choice and election of its bishops. Nomination of a bishop by the incumbent, his selection from a limited social class and even from one family, a close collaboration between laity and clergy, it all contributed to shaping a community that was closely controlled by a clerical establishment. But because such an elitist establishment could cultivate good relations with the secular and ecclesiastical elite of the capital, it is was probably the Novatians’ best bet to survive.

THE EUOMIANS

By the end of the fourth century, Eunomianism, an “Arian” sect known for emphasizing that there was no essential resemblance between the Father and the Son and named after its founder Eunomius, one time bishop of Cyzicus, was caught in a two-edged dynamic of exclusion. On the one hand, internal rigor, with the aim of maintaining the purity of the community and a stress on doctrinal akribeia, had always made relations with other Christian churches problematic.\(^{40}\) On the other, from the last quarter of the fourth century onwards, the Eunomians became the target of the Theodosian state in its attempts to reduce dissension.\(^{41}\) As expressed by a constitution of 398, the Eunomians had to be expelled from all contact with cities and communities.\(^{42}\) Eunomianism was thus caught in a dialectic of exclusion: seeing themselves as pure and wanting to maintain the rigor

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of their community, they sought to mark their separation from all other faiths; Theodosian legislation confirmed this “self-exclusion” by excluding the Eunomians from society. This dialectic led to their marginalization and ultimate disappearance: although Socrates and Sozomen attest to the existence of lively Eunomian communities in Constantinople in the 440s, Theodoret of Cyrrhus described them in the same period as “troglodytes,” celebrating their rites in caves. The polemical nature of that jibe does not need to be pointed out, but it does show the degree of marginalization the Eunomians had reached at least in the mind of the victorious Nicenes.

The social structure and internal organization of their sect can be understood in light of this double dynamic. Although Aetius played an important role in both doctrine and organization of the movement, Eunomius with his charisma was undoubtedly the leader on whom the life and structure of the community centered. For example, disputes within the community were ultimately settled with a visit to the master himself. It is unsurprising, therefore, that our meager evidence suggests that family relations and a geographical extraction from Cappadocia, shared with Eunomius, may have played an important role in the community. For example, under Theodosius II, the Eunomians in Constantinople, probably the most important group in the empire, was led by Lucian, the son of Eunomius’s sister. Several Cappadocians ended up in Constantinople, including the historian Philostorgius and a certain Theophronius, who later championed his own version of Eunomianism.

Given the emphasis on *akribeia* and purity, the Eunomians tended to patrol closely the borders of their community. Various apparently odd customs can be understood as having this sociological function. The Eunomians were reputed to insert secret codes in the “letters of friendship” that were given along to members of one local community who went to visit another, to make sure that intruders would be found out. The decision to rebaptize every convert, significantly taken when Theodosius I inaugurated his pro-Nicene policy, clearly implied a rejection of the sacraments of other churches. The choice to baptize with one immersion rather than

44. Thdt. *haer.* 4.3 (PG 84.422).
46. Soz. *h. e.* 7.17.5.
three and to baptize in the name of death of the Lord again stresses the will to mark the frontiers with clear ritual gestures.\(^\text{51}\) The baptismal innovations may have emerged only in the Constantinopolitan community,\(^\text{52}\) where, among so many faiths, the need to establish clear differences was probably mostly keenly felt.\(^\text{53}\)

The history of Eunomianism is also marked by several ruptures with other “Arian” groups, in order to maintain doctrinal and ritual purity. According to Philostorgius, Aetius had already in the 340s broken with the “Arians” of Alexandria. Eunomius would do the same thing in Cyzicus under Valens, and in Constantinople under Theodosius I.\(^\text{54}\) A major break with the group we call the “Homoians” happened in 363, after Julian’s death, when Aetius and Eunomius proceeded in Constantinople to the establishment of a proper Eunomian episcopal hierarchy, by ordaining a number of bishops and, remarkably, assigning particular regions to them.\(^\text{55}\)

51. Philost. b. e. 10.4; Socr. b. e. 5.24.6; Soz. b. e. 6.26.4; Thdt. haer. 4.3 (PG 84.422); Bas. Spir. 12.28.1–7.
52. Vaggione, Eunomius, 343–44.
54. Soz. b. e. 7.6.2; Philost. b. e. 3.14, 10.4.
55. Philost. b. e. 8.2, 9.18. My reconstruction of events differs from the one proposed by Vaggione. He dates these ordinations to the reign of Julian on the grounds that Philost. b. e. 7.5–6 and 8.2–4 (GCS 21:83.3–86.4; GCS 21:105.1–106.27) represent the same events (Eunomius, 278–79). This seems unlikely to me. In b. e. 7.5–6, Philostorgius recounts an assembly of supporters of Aetius and Eunomius in Constantinople under Julian, a gathering which has the support of Eudoxius, the homoian bishop of Constantinople, and which also seems to have included some Homoians. Eudoxius exercised at this time pressure on Euzoios of Antioch to review his excommunication of Aetius. Philostorgius states that Eudoxius intervened repeatedly with Euzoios, who after a delay convened a synod according to Eudoxius’s wishes. But the sending of the acts of this synod to Constantinople was forestalled by Julian’s persecution of Christians in Antioch. The account of Philost. b. e. 8.2–4 continues the story, but events are now situated under Jovian. Here Philostorgius states that Euzoios was not in a hurry to resolve Aetius’s status. Only then, in response to Euzoios’s tergiversations, did Aetius and Eunomius, who were still in Constantinople, proceed with the creation of their own episcopal structure. In Philostorgius, the two events are clearly separated in time and in between quite some time seems to have passed. Philostorgius assumes a lengthy correspondence between Euzoios and Eudoxius about Aetius. He also suggests that only when Euzoios had no excuse anymore to procrastinate, Eunomius decided to break with the Homoians. This implies again that quite some time passed before the decision to go their own way was taken. For all of this to have happened under Julian’s reign, as Vaggione’s reconstruction has it, events must have unfolded fairly rapidly with swift communication, which is unlikely in the light of Philostorgius’s account. It is important to distinguish these two passages: both
The most likely explanation for why this happened precisely in that year is that the new emperor Jovian’s faith was uncertain (surely to the outside and maybe to himself as well)\(^{56}\) and all sects attempted to win him for their cause.\(^ {57}\) The Eunomians had long lived in a rather strained relationship with the followers of Eudoxius, who had supported Eunomius and Aetius, and the new ecclesiastical climate under a new emperor made the moment seem propitious to go their own way. The Eunomian decision to create an episcopal hierarchy, obviously resented by Eudoxius,\(^ {58}\) implied that some of their supporters now had to make up their mind. Whereas a number left Eunomianism and re-aligned themselves fully with Eudoxius (such as Theodosius of Lydia\(^ {59}\)), others remained. Some of the new Eunomian bishops thus were already bishop in the “official” church (at this moment generally homoian in tendency in the eastern regions of the empire). Most of the bishops of 363 were, however, newly appointed by Eunomius and Aetius. The list runs as follows:\(^ {60}\)


57. According to Philost. b. e. 8.6, the Eunomians Candidus and Arrian, relatives of the emperor, were sent to Edessa to meet him and counter Athanasius’s influence.

58. Vaggione, Eunomius, 278–79, suggests that the creation of a parallel hierarchy was a temporary measure to take care of the communities until the dispute with the Homoians was settled. This finds support in the task assigned to Theophilus when he arrives in Antioch: try to come to an agreement with Euzoius and, if that does not succeed, take care of the Eunomians (Philost. b. e. 8.2 [GCS 21:165.19–21]). Even if this were the case, Eunomius and Aetius can hardly have expected that Eudoxius would interpret their act in such a way: creating a parallel hierarchy is the decisive act of rupture.

59. See Philost. b. e. 8.4.

60. Philost. b. e. 8.2.
• Candidus and Arrian are co-bishops for Lydia and Ionia.\textsuperscript{61}
• Theodoulos, who was already bishop of Chaeretapa in Phrygia, is assigned to Palestine. He is succeeded first by Carterius, after whose death John takes over.
• Poimenius and Florentius are bishops of Constantinople.
• Thallus becomes bishop of Lesbos.\textsuperscript{62}
• Euphrontius directs the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, and Cappadocia.
• Julian receives the control of Cilicia.
• Theophilus the Indian is ordained for Antioch.
• Serras, Stephanus, and Heliodorus, who were bishops of Paretonium, Ptolemais, and Sozousa, respectively, now oversee Egypt and Libya.

The events of 363 reveal a strikingly tight, central control exercised by Eunomius and Aetius. First, both intervene personally: they ordain the bishops and assign provinces to them;\textsuperscript{63} when the bishop of Palestine dies, they travel to the region to ordain the successor;\textsuperscript{64} Aetius goes to Lydia when Candidus and Arrian are challenged by local clergy.\textsuperscript{65} Control is also centralized in a geographical sense: the ordinations of 363 happened in Constantinople and a passage from Philostorgius suggests that afterwards an important number of bishops often resided in the capital.\textsuperscript{66} Even more remarkable is that neither Eunomius nor Aetius form part of the episcopacy, even though both had been ordained as bishops before. Eunomius had been bishop of Cyzicus, but had abandoned that see and did not consider himself a bishop anymore.\textsuperscript{67} Aetius had been ordained a bishop during the synod of Constantinople of 362 (no see is mentioned), having refused that honor years before.\textsuperscript{68} But neither figures in Philostorgius's

\textsuperscript{61} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 8.2 (GCS 21:105.6–7): ὅν Κάνδιδος μὲν καὶ Ἀρριανὸς ταῖς κατὰ Λυδίαν καὶ Ἰωνίαν ἐκκλησίαῖς ἐφίστανται. Candidus and Arrian were relatives and in Philostorgius always act as a pair: Philost. \textit{b. e.} 8.6 (GCS 21:107.5–9).

\textsuperscript{62} Lesbos is an anomaly in this list, but can be explained by the fact that Aetius had received a domain on the island from Julian (Philost. \textit{b. e.} 9.4). This probably was the center of an Eunomian community.

\textsuperscript{63} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 8.2 (GCS 21:105.5–6): καὶ ἐπισκόπους καθίστασαν. Poimenius and Florentius are bishops of Constantinople.

\textsuperscript{64} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 8.4.

\textsuperscript{65} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 9.18.

\textsuperscript{66} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 9.18.

\textsuperscript{67} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 6.3, 9.4 (GCS 21:71.15–22, 117.11–14): after he left Cyzicus, Eunomius did not practice \textit{hierourgia} anymore, i.e. he did not celebrate the Eucharist anymore nor did he administer sacraments.

\textsuperscript{68} Philost. \textit{b. e.} 3.19, 7.6.
list, and a mere omission is unlikely: all the major provinces of the East are covered, including the two heartlands of Eunomianism, Cappadocia and Constantinople. If omission is not the explanation, it must have been a deliberate choice to locate supreme authority outside the episcopal system. One can only speculate about the reasons for this choice (a will to avoid the disputes about supremacy that characterize the early church?) and notice its effect: it meant that in the Eunomian community the bishops were subject to a final, higher authority outside the hierarchy. In Claudia Rapp’s terms, Eunomius pitched “pragmatic” authority against “spiritual” authority and even subordinated the former to the latter. Such an attitude can be understood in the light of the insistence on doctrinal purity in Eunomius and Aetius’s thought: those who defined the doctrine stood on a higher level than those who administered the community. This was maybe not as wise a choice as it seemed in the short run: it did not allow a proper establishment to develop that could provide leadership after the death of the two leaders. Indeed, soon after their demise, the movement started to fall apart and split into various factions.

A further oddity of the Eunomian episcopal system can also be understood in the light of the tight control exercised by the charismatic diarchy. The Eunomian bishops are usually not assigned to a particular city but to entire provinces or groups of provinces. The apparent exceptions, Antioch and Constantinople, may not be exceptions at all: their surrounding provinces do not crop up elsewhere in the list of 363 and the presumption must be that the bishops of both cities directed the surrounding provinces as well. The decision to ordain bishops for entire provinces must have been at least partially determined by practical needs. Whatever their theological importance as reflected in the polemic they attracted, the number of Eunomians was never very great. A bishop in every city may simply not have been needed. Moreover, given the small nature of the community, suitable candidates may also have been hard to come by. Eunomius and

69. Eunomius’s supreme authority whilst not being a bishop is underscored in Philost. b. e. 9.4. Vaggione, Eunomius, 279, includes Aetius and Eunomius in the Eunomian episcopacy, as “general bishops” (κοινοὶ ἐπίσκοποι), a term used for Theophilus the Indian in a passage from Suidas that draws on Philst. b. e. 3.6a (GCS 21:36.25). This cannot be excluded, but one should notice that whereas Theophilus takes up Antioch as his province, Aetius and Eunomius are not assigned to a region or city. If they were “general bishops,” they were different from Theophilus: without a geographical limitation and with supreme authority.

70. Aetius’s reason for refusing the episcopacy in the first instance was that the ordaining bishops had been sullied by contact with Homoousians: Philost. b. e. 3.19.

71. Socr. b. e. 5.24.1–6; Soz. b. e. 7.17.2–3, 8.1.6.
Aetius had to draw on the limited pool available, which may also explain why some provinces receive more than one bishop. The three bishops assigned to Egypt and Libya, for example, were already bishops in that area. To demand them to transfer to other provinces would have been an unwise tactic, as it possibly meant handing the see over to bishops from other sects. But whatever the practical considerations, this system allowed a tight control of the hierarchy: a limited number of bishops who reported directly to Eunomius were more easily directed than an elaborate structure. Moreover, three groups of provinces were run by two or even three bishops: the division of authority must have weakened the position of each individual bishop.

We do not know how long the settlement of 363 lasted: neither Socrates nor Sozomen refer explicitly to contemporary Eunomian bishops in Constantinople, although they do know of Eunomian communities and their leaders.72 Does this mean that the episcopal structure was abandoned? Or are the church historians simply imprecise in their designations? Whatever the answer to these questions, even as a short-lived alternative to the episcopal system as it was elaborated by all other churches in this period, the Eunomian episcopal structure merits our attention. Just as the innovations in baptism were justified by theological considerations, the oddities in the system can be explained for practical reasons. But whatever the precise reasons, the innovations in both ritual and episcopal structure had the effect of creating a community that attempted to maintain its distance from its surroundings. Control was clearly highly important: control of who would enter the community, but also control of the actions of subordinates. It is remarkable, but given the focus of the community on a charismatic leader understandable, that Aetius and Eunomius decided to remain outside the episcopal system, in order to remain the uncontested spiritual leaders and the ultimate source of authority.

THE NICENES

Imperial intervention has been described as the “decisive influence” in the succession of the eastern capital, with the emperor aiming at securing a “safe pair of hands” on the see of Constantinople.73 Indeed, the Nicene

72. See n. 71.
church of Constantinople owed everything to Theodosius I: he expelled the “Arians,” appointed Nectarius when Gregory of Nazianzus gave up in the face of contestation in 381, and supported the church throughout his reign—a pattern imitated by his son and grandson. In my opinion, however, such an analysis ignores the internal dynamics of the church of Constantinople: as I hope to show, soon after Theodosius’s settlement a church establishment was formed that would attempt to control the see in the face of imperial intervention and internal dissension.

The following table summarizes what we know of episcopal succession in Constantinople after the council of Constantinople in 381, i.e., after the expulsion of the “Arian” Demophilus by Theodosius I and Gregory of Nazianzus’s resignation as Nicene bishop in that year. I include the bishops to the close of the fifth century. Although bishops after Anatolius fall outside the scope of this paper, I shall occasionally refer to them.

Looking at this table, the succession from Nectarius to Proclus seems split between two groups. On the one hand, there is what one can call the establishment of the church of Constantinople, characterized by close personal ties: Arsacius was the brother of Nectarius and protopresbyteros, and a collaborator of Atticus in the downfall of John Chrysostom; Proclus was a protégé of Atticus, having been his secretary, and was in 425, 427/8, and 431 a thrice unsuccessful candidate for the succession. As such, all three came from the inner circle of power in the church before becoming bishop. A parallel to such an establishment can be noticed in the latter half of the fifth century with Gennadius, Acacius, and Macedonius, all of who were linked to each other by blood or collaboration.

On the other hand, this establishment was confronted by a number of outsiders, the first of whom was John Chrysostom, chosen by the imperial palace to succeed Nectarius. His stiff character and his attempts at reform may have been the reasons for his later conflict with large parts of the church of Constantinople, but the sources also make clear that he was resented as an outsider and intruder, “usurping” the see of Constantinople,

75. See Dagon, La naissance, 455–73, 488–93.
76. Pall. v. Chrys. 11.18–30; Socr. h. e. 6.19.1; Soz. h. e. 6.23.1; Phot. Cod. 59.
77. Socr. h. e. 7.26–28, 7.40–43.
78. There are no indications that this “second” establishment is related to the “first,” but it is not impossible either.
79. On his election, see now Tiersch, Johannes Chrysostomus, 31–41, 104–44; Liebeschuetz, Barbarians, 166–67.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bishop</th>
<th>Allegedly chosen by</th>
<th>Relationship with establishment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nectarius (381–398)</td>
<td>emperor</td>
<td>outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Chrysostom (398–404)</td>
<td>emperor</td>
<td>outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arsacius (404–405)</td>
<td></td>
<td>old man, brother of Nectarius; anti-John establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atticus (406–425)</td>
<td></td>
<td>anti-John establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisinnius (426–427)</td>
<td>lay people</td>
<td>compromise candidate, from Constantinople but outside the city itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nestorius (428–431)</td>
<td>emperor</td>
<td>outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximian (431–434)</td>
<td></td>
<td>compromise candidate, old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proclus (434–446)</td>
<td>emperor</td>
<td>collaborator of Atticus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavian (446–449)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anatolius (449–458)</td>
<td>Dioscorus (Chrysaphius?)</td>
<td>outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gennadius (458–471)</td>
<td></td>
<td>support of Acacius⁸⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acacius (472–489)</td>
<td>supported by future emperor Zeno?</td>
<td>ordained priest by Anatolius?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fravita (489–490)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euphemiou (490–496)</td>
<td>deposed by emperor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonius (496–511)</td>
<td>emperor; deposed by emperor</td>
<td>nephew of Gennadius</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁸⁰ Thdr. Lect., b. e. 2.376 (GCS NF 3:106.9): Ἀκακίου τοῦ ὀρφανοτρόφου συμψήφου καὶ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένου. Norton, *Episcopal Elections*, 89, deduces from this that Acacius was also a candidate. But *sumpsephos* can mean either “being of the same opinion” or “elected by a joint vote.” The context implies that Acacius supported Gennadius, and the later historian Evagrius agrees that Acacius was elected after the death of Gennadius (b. e. 2.11).
on which many local clergy had set their eyes. Moreover, John did not manage the feelings of the Constantinopolitan clergy well.\textsuperscript{81} His ouster, crowned by the return of the see to representatives of the local establishment in the persons of first Arsacius and then Atticus, caused a major schism in the church of the capital that would not be healed until Proclus became bishop, after initial attempts at reconciliation by Atticus.\textsuperscript{82} The Johannites were initially chased from the city, but soon a large number reintegrated the church. That group fielded a candidate of its own, Philip of Side, at every election from 425 onwards.\textsuperscript{83} His following was such that they could bring the election process to a stalemate and avoid Proclus being elected as the candidate of the establishment. After months of deadlock, a compromise candidate was put forward, allegedly by the laity: Sisinnius, significantly not from a parish within the city but from outside the city walls.\textsuperscript{84} In April 428 Nestorius was chosen by the emperor, again to overcome the deadlock between Proclus and Philip, which had lasted from December 427.\textsuperscript{85} There are several signs that Nestorius identified himself, as an outsider to the church of Constantinople, with John: he was the first to celebrate a commemoration of John,\textsuperscript{86} and later sources tend to see him in the light of John, ascribing similar measures to both bishops.\textsuperscript{87} This open sympathy for John may have been the result of their common

\begin{itemize}
\item The history of the schism is set out in Van Nuffelen, \textit{Un héritage}, 30–36.
\item Philip’s links with John and the Johannites are discussed by Van Nuffelen, \textit{Un héritage}, 32–33.
\item Socr. \textit{b. e.} 7.26.2. If he is identical with the Sisinnius mentioned by Palladius (\textit{v. Chrys.} 17.25), Sisinnius may have had contacts with one of the Tall Brothers, a fact that may have made him acceptable to the Johannites.
\item The dates are given by Socr. \textit{b. e.} 6.28.4–6.29.4. In the \textit{Bazaar of Heracleides}, Nestorius himself reports a fictional justification by Theodosius II of his choice of Nestorius: the emperor had left the choice to the clergy, monks, and people, but they did not manage to agree on a candidate (F. Nau, \textit{Nestorius: le livre d’Héraclide de Damas} [Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1910], 243–44).
\item Marcellinus Comes, \textit{Chronicle} a. 428.
\end{itemize}
descent from Antioch, but may also have been influenced by the resistance he felt from the establishment. After Nestorius’s condemnation, another compromise candidate was chosen: the presbyter Maximian, again after a show-off between Philip and Proclus. 88 Only in 434 did Proclus succeed in his ultimate ambition: immediately after the death of Maximian and before the election process really could start, Proclus was put forward by the emperor. Well aware of the fact that episcopal elections since 404 had been directed by the antithesis between the establishment and the supporters of John, Proclus worked hard at reconciling his erstwhile enemies, efforts that culminated in 438 with the triumphal return of John’s relics to the capital, accompanied by both emperor and bishop. 89

This overview suggests that, even when faced with internal opposition and imperial intervention, the establishment managed to have a firm grip on the see of Constantinople: of the forty-two years after John’s death until that of Proclus (from 404 until 446), they held the see for thirty-three years, with just nine years shared by the two compromise figures, Sisinnius and Maximian, and the outsider Nestorius. Significantly, the reigns of Atticus and Proclus were long and stable, whereas the other lasted each only three years. This may be due to accidents of health, and in the case of Nestorius strong and determined opposition, 90 but it may also reveal shrewd tactics: Maximian is explicitly described as old, and the same may have held for Sisinnius. 91 Contrary to Socrates’ praise of their piety, 92 advanced age may have made them decisively attractive as compromise candidates.

The succession pattern sketched in the preceding pages permits us to re-evaluate the importance and effectiveness of imperial intervention in Constantinople. Rather than the single determining factor, imperial intervention was one of the factors, besides the desires of the establishment, internal opposition, and the laity. Moreover, imperial intervention that went against the desires of the establishment spelled trouble and instability. The appointment of Nectarius was largely successful and could hardly encounter opposition in a Nicene church that was as yet largely non-existent in the capital. Things were different with later imperial appointees, John Chrysostom and Nestorius. Admittedly, John Chrysostom only came

88. Socr. b. e. 7.35.3.
89. See the description of Proclus’s career in Socr. b. e. 7.40–45 with Nicholas P. Constas, Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), chap. 1.
91. Socr. b. e. 7.35.3.
92. Socr. b. e. 7.28, 7.35.4.
into conflict with the emperor in his later years, from 402 onwards, but Nestorius stirred up trouble immediately after his election. Whatever the latter’s initial support in the palace,93 the emperor cannot have appreciated his talent for generating conflicts in the church. The rapid election of Proclus in 434 effectively meant the abandonment of the cavalier seul attitude that had characterized imperial intervention in the cases of John and Nestorius (or, in a more candid interpretation: the abandonment of imperial attempts to transcend ecclesiastical factionalism and squabbling): Theodosius II probably realized that only the full support of the church establishment could bring stability back to the church of Constantinople and that a new foreigner on the see would only increase the troubles.94 In this case, peace was brought about by the emperor aligning himself with the establishment, rather than by the latter obeying imperial power. Thus, the agreement of court and establishment was a necessary precondition for stability, but it was not always the latter which gave in.

Opposition by the establishment was one factor in the relative lack of success of imperial intervention. But other elements may have played a role as well. When the choice was based on reputation, as in the cases of John and Nestorius, sheer ignorance of the personality may have been the case. Indeed, the unbending character of both individuals contributed decisively to their downfall. Also, even imperially appointed bishops never obeyed the emperor’s wishes slavishly but tended to build up an autonomous power base. This is clearly the case for John and Nestorius, who resolutely went their own way, but the best example possibly is the later bishop Anatolius (449–458). He was put on the throne as a proxy for Egyptian interests, but soon turned his coat and became a defender of Constantinopolitan interests and doctrine.95 Later centuries may yield a different image, but in the fifth century the emperor does not seem to have been fully capable of controlling the bishop of the capital.

My analysis of the succession patterns in Constantinople under the Theodosian dynasty reveals a much stronger internal dynamic than is often assumed. A clearly visible establishment was undoubtedly in control for most of the time. But the Nicene church was a much more open community than either the Eunomians or the Novatians. Challenges to that control

94. See the assessment by Socr. b. e. 7.40.3–4.
were thus frequent. Some of it came from within the church: the Johannite faction, for example, was strong but never succeeded in wrestling control from its enemies. Such challenges made elections in the Nicene church a far trickier process than in one of the smaller sects. They could cause crises during elections (as in the years 425–434) which tended to loosen the grip of the establishment temporarily. This could change the dynamics of elections and open up the possibility for real influence by the people or action by the emperor. With the exception of John Chrysostom, intervention by the laity and the emperor was indeed only decisive in periods of prolonged crisis: between the death of Atticus and the election of Sisin- nius lie five months,\textsuperscript{96} between the latter’s demise and Nestorius’s arrival four.\textsuperscript{97} Theodosius’s choice of Proclus in 434, the establishment candidate, had the explicit aim of avoiding such a long interregnum and shows the strength of that establishment as the perceived guarantee of stability. Its determination to control the see is illustrated by the guerrilla warfare waged against John and Nestorius, but also in the disregard for church law at the ordination of Proclus. Sisinnius, realizing that Proclus’s ambition was the cause of the strife in the church, ordained Proclus bishop of Cyzicus;\textsuperscript{98} he was clearly betting on Nicaea’s ninth canon, which forbade translations, to rule Proclus out as a future candidate in Constantinople. When Proclus was elected nevertheless in 434, this minor legal problem had to be circumvented: he obtained letters of support from Celestinus of Rome, Cyril of Alexandria, John of Antioch, and Rufus of Thessaloniki, and his supporters produced a lengthy argument against the universal validity of that canon, which we can see reflected in Socrates.\textsuperscript{99} As ever, the Constantinopolitan establishment was well prepared to reclaim its rightful possession of the see.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the wide divergence this comparative analysis has shown up in the succession patterns of the three Constantinopolitan communities, the

\textsuperscript{96} Socr. \textit{h. e.} 7.26.4.

\textsuperscript{97} Socr. \textit{h. e.} 6.28.4–6.29.4. The choice for Atticus was also subject to contention: according to Soz. \textit{b. e.} 8.27.3, four months elapsed between his election and the death of Arsacius.

\textsuperscript{98} Socr. \textit{b. e.} 7.28. Nectarius had apparently tried the same thing with his brother Arsacius (Pall. \textit{v. Chrys.} 11.18–30).

first conclusion must be a warning against generalization about episcopal elections in late antiquity. Whereas regional diversity is usually acknowledged, research on episcopal elections has so far paid insufficient attention to differences between “sects”: usually the Nicene church sets the standard and evidence from other churches is integrated into this or measured against it. Such a uniform picture should be resisted. Sects did not differ from one another merely by doctrine and custom: they developed into different communities with a distinct social life and concomitant structures of power.

I have emphasized, more than in existing analyses, the control that the establishment exercised on episcopal succession. As an abstract concept, “establishment” needs to be specified in each instance: among the Novatians the church establishment was drawn from the social and cultural elite of Constantinople; it seems to have been mainly shaped by personal patronage and family relationships in the Nicene church. In Eunomianism it was defined by the spiritual authority of the founders, which did not allow a wider establishment to develop—which may have been one of the causes of its decline after the death of Eunomius. The dominance of the establishment rarely goes unchallenged, but it shows considerable resilience: notwithstanding challenges by the Johannites and imperial interference, the Nicene establishment managed to remain in control—even when it seemed momentarily to have lost that control in the years 426–434. As put by the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski, “a structure can also act like a roly-poly toy: just when it seems to have been knocked over, it pops up again.”

This emphasis on the grip of the establishment on communities should not be understood as betraying a cynical view, as if the communities of Constantinople were coerced into obedience by an external power. Indeed, one of the lessons of classical sociology is that power is not merely imposed by

100. See e.g. Martin, Athanase (on Egypt in the fourth century); Martin Heinzelmann, Bischofsheerschaft in Gallien: Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis 7. Jahrhundert (Munich: Artemis, 1976); Rita Lizzi, Vescovi e strutture ecclesiastiche nella città tarda antica: L’Italia annonaria nel IV–V secolo d.C. (Como, 1989).


a ruling elite but also inscribed in society. The nature of the community influenced the way control was exercised by the establishment. Dominance by the Novatian establishment was ensured by the identification of the laity with the aims of the establishment in the face of assimilationist pressure, illustrated by, e.g., the little support Sabbatius had for his “usurpation” of the see of Constantinople. The peculiar episcopal structure of the Eunomians can be understood in the light of the dialectic of exclusion and self-exclusion in which the community was caught, whilst one should also take into account its focus on its spiritual leader. Full integration of clergy and laity was harder to achieve in an open community such as the Nicene church, which was, moreover, of a totally different size. It is marked by conflicts between different interest groups, and had to deal with imperial intervention. Control in the Nicene church was always precarious.

In his monograph on episcopal elections Peter Norton has strongly argued against an older tendency in scholarship, which saw popular influence on elections recede after Constantine. In his view, the people retained influence in the election process until the end of antiquity. One should indeed avoid the rather simplistic dichotomy between an early church that respected the voice of the people and the post-Constantinian church in which power was monopolized in the hands of a small establishment. Enshrined as it was in canon law, popular approval remained a factor in episcopal elections throughout late antiquity. Nevertheless, the idea of “popular influence” must be seriously qualified. It is hard to see how the people could exercise influence on the Eunomian succession. The evidence from the other communities in fifth-century Constantinople suggests that elections were primarily controlled by the establishment. Moments of crisis, however, could weaken its grip and open up the possibility of independent and decisive influence being exercised by the vox populi. But it seems likely that most of the time popular opinion aligned itself with the establishment or, if need be, could be manipulated.

One cannot deny the importance of imperial intervention, but I wish to suggest that the grip of the emperor on the episcopal succession in Constantinople tends to be overestimated. Intervention was not systematic and had the aim of solving conflicts within the church. And when the emperor did intervene, this rarely meant, at least in the period studied,

105. This is directed in the first place against Gryson, “Les elections épiscopales.”
that he managed to impose a “safe pair of hands”: the choices for John and Nestorius seriously backfired. It can be objected that state intervention was usually indirect through the integration of the ecclesiastical and secular elite, and I have argued elsewhere that Atticus and Proclus were in close contact with prominent members of the court. Behind the scenes, then, the grip of the emperor may have been stronger than it seems. But in that case we are dealing with a different dynamic: such a close relationship was not to the benefit of the emperor alone. Apart from permitting silent state intervention, it also allowed the church establishment to shore up its support among the secular elite. Thus, the evidence studied in this paper strongly suggests that we should see imperial intervention as an important factor in episcopal elections, but not by default as the most important one. Stability was ensured by the agreement of emperor and establishment, not by the one-sided exercise of imperial might.

Finally, neither rules nor charisma (and all the qualities associated with the ideal bishop) have played any role of significance in my discussion. When they did, however, they were less the driving forces behind a given election than part of the game of power. As noted above, Sisinnius’s shrewd move to ordain Proclus bishop of Cyzicus aimed at banning him as future candidate for Constantinople by exploiting the canonical ban on translations. Proclus was elected nevertheless. Indeed, rules need to be interpreted and Proclus was powerful enough to control that interpretation. I do not wish to deny the importance of charisma: certainly John and Nestorius had deserved their call to Constantinople on that basis. But one should not forget that Nestorius was ordained only because the dispute in the church had led to a stalemate of many months, and one wonders if John would ever have been called had the clergy of Constantinople been able to agree on an internal candidate after Nectarius’s death. Charisma does not automatically lead to power, but rather is limitative: one could not put forward a candidate who failed the criteria of an ideal bishop in all respects. Charisma was rarely sufficient on its own to raise someone to a bishopric. Put in another way, a presbyter who was part of the establishment would have more chances to put his virtues on display,

106. For case studies, see e.g. Raymond Van Dam, Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); Family and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).
108. On the importance of interpretation of laws in concrete practice, see Humfress, Orthodoxy, 268.
for example by practicing conspicuous almsgiving, than someone who lacked every form of support. Again, this should not be interpreted as a cynical interpretation; I do not wish to suggest that the battle for power always went ahead without heeding rules or expectations of charisma, as if episcopal elections in Constantinople were characterized by “anomie.” In Merton’s famous analysis “anomie” refers to a profound disjunction between publicly professed values and actual actions,\footnote{Robert K. Merton, “Anomie and Social Structure,” \textit{American Sociological Review} 3 (1938): 672–82 and often reprinted in the various editions of his \textit{Social Theory and Social Structure}.} which in the case of episcopal elections would be between subscription to the legal and charismatic demands made on future bishops and the actual wheeling and dealing directed at insuring the control of the establishment. Such a situation of anomie was alleged by the supporters of John Chrysostom, who accused Arsacius and Atticus of greed and ambition under a cover of piety.\footnote{Pseudo-Martyrius, \textit{Vita Johannis Chrysostomi} 507a, 521a, 531ab; Pall. \textit{v. Chrys.} 11.31–52. Their accusations are obviously polemical and, for example, Socrates has a much more positive view of Atticus: \textit{Socr. h. e.} 7.2.} This criticism is obviously polemical and should not be taken at face value. Nevertheless, such accusations indicate that contemporaries were aware of the fact that episcopal elections were driven by a complex dynamic, which cannot be fully analyzed in terms of charisma and rules set by canon law: the social and political context of each local community, as well as man’s will for power, were at least equally important.

It is hard to disentangle the complex process that was an episcopal election, and much depends on one’s perspective. The church historian Socrates attributed Nectarius’s election, which is usually seen as the prototype of an imperial appointment, to popular wish, whereas his contemporary Sozomen emphasizes Theodosius’s role.\footnote{Socr. \textit{h. e.} 5.8; Soz. \textit{h. e.} 7.7.9.} Modern analyses, too, may prefer to emphasize one factor to the other, but it is important to remember that the balance of power between people, emperor, and establishment was tested anew at every election and that elections took place in specific communities with their own structure and history.

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\footnote{Pseudo-Martirius, \textit{Vita Johannis Chrysostomi} 507a, 521a, 531ab; Pall. \textit{v. Chrys.} 11.31–52. Their accusations are obviously polemical and, for example, Socrates has a much more positive view of Atticus: \textit{Socr. h. e.} 7.2.}

\footnote{Socr. \textit{h. e.} 5.8; Soz. \textit{h. e.} 7.7.9.}