

Stability and threat to the order of the church

Some thoughts on the personalization of the church in Late Antiquity¹

Jan-Markus Kötter

»The See of the Holy Apostle Peter has never granted the Alexandrian Peter communion, nor will it ever do so.«² When Pope Felix III used these words in conversation with Emperor Zeno to express his rejection of Peter Mongus, the Bishop of Alexandria, he was at the same time referring to a progressed personalization within the order of the church in Late Antiquity. By comparing the Apostle Peter with Peter Mongus, the Pope gave a distinctly personalized image to the two dogmatic groups of his days, Chalcedonians and Miaphysites: Felix did not confront Zeno with a choice between the Church of Rome or that of Alexandria, with the alternatives of the Chalcedonian Creed and *heresy*,³ he presented the Emperor with a choice between two persons.

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- 1 This article is based on the lecture »Der Einfluss des Todes kirchlicher Akteure auf die Entwicklung der Reichskirche der Spätantike«, given on 10th February 2010 at the 2nd Annual Seminar of the *Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology*. Whereas the paper concentrated on personalization as a threat to order, subsequent discussion of the topic made it apparent that personalization also could establish order. In the following I shall attempt a synthesis of both points of view.
 - 2 Coll.Berol.33 (81, 20-22): »sedem beati apostoli Petri Alexandrino Petro [...] communionis numquam uel praebuisse uel praebituram esse consensum«. On the letters of Pope Felix to Emperor Zeno cf. Caspar's as of yet unsurpassed analysis Caspar 1933: 26-43.
 - 3 *Orthodoxy* and *heresy* are relative terms. No protagonist of the church would ever have labelled himself a *heretic*. Both categories are depen

For the Pope, the two Peters fulfilled two entirely different functions. This transcends the mere establishment of a personalization of opinions within the church in Late Antiquity: While the Apostle Peter is seen by Felix as the guarantor of the *orthodox* tradition by the Church of Rome, Peter Mongus is regarded as betraying this *true faith*. While from a Roman point of view the Apostle Peter was an important factor of stabilization for the normative order of the church, Peter Mongus was a source of division and trouble, a factor of destabilization: His *heresy* threatened the order of the church.

What, then, did the personalization of church structures in Late Antiquity lead to: to greater stability or to a permanent threat to the church? To have it right away: A decision between these two shall not be attempted here. Historical evidence argues for personalization being capable of fulfilling both functions. However, the question arises which of the two functions prevailed in a given situation. Regarding the ambivalence of the phenomenon, the problem of the relation between the two potential effects of the personalization is still to be solved. How is it describable that concentrating on certain persons could be an element both of stabilizing and threatening the order of the church?

To solve this question, by way of example, we will look at the first phase of the reception of the Synod of Chalcedon until the start of the Acacian Schism in 484.⁴ A short chronological outline is meant to shed light on how the personalization of the order could manifest itself at all. Based thereupon, in a more general theoretical analysis, the mechanisms of the formation of normative ecclesiastical orders will be scrutinized. In the course of describing these mechanisms, personalization will be accorded its specific place within the processes of the creation/stabilization and the threat/destabilization of the order of the church. In a final con-

dent on the point of view of the person ascribing them. Thus, in the following both categories will be placed in Italics.

4 A broad overview on the differentiated history of the Acacian Schism cannot be given here. For an in-depth insight please see Schwartz 1934: 161-210, as well as my own doctoral thesis, which is in preparation.

clusion, an attempt towards a synthesis of the two different modes of functionality of personalization will be undertaken, thereby divesting them of their seeming contrariness.

Personalization and the failure of the reception of Chalcedon

A number of dogmatic-hierarchical conflicts, entangled with each other in various ways, led to controversy regarding the reception of the Synod of Chalcedon in 451, particularly with respect to the triad of the Churches of Rome, Constantinople and Alexandria. These conflicts reached a climax in the years from 482 to 484 when Bishop Acacius of Constantinople acknowledged Peter Mongus, an anti-Chalcedonian, as Bishop of Alexandria, while Rome attempted to install the Chalcedonian candidate John Talaia.⁵ It was this matter of personnel within the Egyptian church leading to the churches of Rome and Constantinople falling out with one another. This resulted in a disruption of the unity of the church, the so-called Acacian Schism, which was to last until 519.

It is telling that it was a dispute about persons, here about Mongus and Talaia, which was the cause for this disruption of unity. The dogmatic-hierarchical conflicts in the years after 451 had taken on a strong personal character: conflicts between individuals and about individuals. The Synod of Chalcedon had failed at solving the long-smoldering controversy on the description of the relationship between »God the Father« and »God the Son«.⁶ This debate was closely linked to the hierarchic

5 The acceptance of Mongus by Acacius took place on the basis of Emperor Zeno's Henoticon, which was to become one of the central topics of discussion in the following years. On the developments surrounding Mongus and Talaia, which also possessed political implications Pietri 1987: 277-295.

6 Especially Alexandria and Antioch carried out their disputes in conspicuous severity, not without repeatedly involving Rome. In the course of the contentions two – generally refuted – extreme positions emerged: Nestorius of Constantinople emphasized the separation of the two natures of Christ, whereas the monk Eutyches preached the extensive identity of »God the Father« and »God the Son«. For an overview on dogmatic history Bienert 1997: 206-224.

claims by the bishops of the different main churches of the Empire. In the continuation of the Christological controversy after Chalcedon the personalization of dogmatic and hierarchical positions within the church gained more and more prominence.

Hereby the Church of Rome distinguished itself by a particular interest in the dogmatic decisions of Chalcedon, particularly as their content and form had to a large extent been directly taken from a letter of instruction from Pope Leo to his colleague Flavian of Constantinople.⁷ Thus, it is by no means astonishing that in the discussion on Chalcedon this so called *tomus Leonis* – and with it Leo himself – virtually became synonymous with the synod. At least it was him who provided the foundation of the decrees of faith in 451. Furthermore, he was particularly responsible for the ascription of *heretical* tenets to prominent members of the Eastern church, especially to Bishop Dioscorus of Alexandria who, as a result, had been relieved of his office at Chalcedon.⁸ As the Chalcedonian dogma served a Roman tradition, one was hardly to expect that Leo's successor would depart from any of his decisions.

To a large extent, the Popes refused to make any concession regarding the acceptance of the dogma of Chalcedon, due to their strongly personalized understanding of their office: The fact that the Bishops of Rome consistently based their persistence on the legacy of Leo goes to demonstrate that it was not possible for them to recede behind the positions of

7 Tomus Leonis: ACO II,2,1: 24-33; *definitio fidei* of the Synod of Chalcedon: ACO II,1,2: 128-130. The main Chalcedonian tenet of »one [...] Christ [...] in two natures« explicitly conforms to the Roman positions voiced by Leo.

8 The acceptance of Chalcedon included that of the *tomus Leonis*, the rejection usually its condemnation. So, ecclesiastic discussion is often only, or mainly, concentrated on the *tomus*, e.g. in some negotiations between Rome and Alexandria in 497: Coll.Avell. 102. In the course of the Acacian Schism, for Rome the explicit acceptance of Leo and his *tomus* became a prerequisite for ecclesiastical communion: Coll.Avell. 60,7; 116b,4.

any given precursor in office.⁹ The Popes saw themselves as standing in a chain of episcopal succession going back to its founder, the Apostle Peter, and connecting all of his successors and thus all of their own predecessors: It was this chain that guaranteed the unbroken transmission of the *true faith* by the Popes, from the time of St. Peter down to the present.¹⁰ In this view, it was simply impossible that any predecessor had been partisan to *heretical* doctrine. Thus, Leo's profession of faith was also that of St. Peter and, subsequently, that of the Church of Rome itself. Leo's successors had no choice but to defend Chalcedon and, in consequence, their predecessors in office.

This also served the Bishops of Rome to support other bishops defending the Leonian-Roman doctrine of Chalcedon. This was particularly important in Alexandria, where the council encountered massive opposition, leading Chalcedonian patriarchs Proterios, Timothy Salophakiolos and John Talaia to being dependant on the support of the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, as well as on imperial power.¹¹ Domestic Egyptian opposition made their position tenuous: Proterios was murde-

9 As demonstrated in 514/5 in a letter of Pope Hormisdas to Emperor Anastasius, in which he defended the Roman position of the previous years in general and his predecessor Symmachus in particular, under whom the relationship with the purple had sunk to a new low: »hoc opus supernae clementiae, haec et decessorum nostrorum fuit semper oratio, quos etiam rerum actus paternae traditionis ministros et rectae fidei declarat fuisse custodes« (Coll.Avell. 108,2 [500,14-17]).

10 This led to the impossibility of any criticism of any predecessor in office, as it was the position of these predecessors that avouched their own *orthodoxy*. Within such common ecclesiastical notions the Church of Rome was additionally distinguished by the fact that its bishops styled themselves as »haeres Petri«. It was under Pope Siricius at the end of the fourth century that this term virtually became part of the papal nomenclature.

11 On the relationship between Rome and Alexandria see Blaudeau 2006. Rome forbid its allies to make any concessions towards their mutual enemies, cf. Ps.Zach.h.e.4,10 and Coll.Avell.61,3. However, the papacy hereby hardly contributed towards a détente of the situation in Alexandria; cf. also Grillmeier 1990: 8-38.

red in 457, Salophakiolos was interim defrocked and Talaia was forced into exile in 482 after having lost imperial support.

A particular problem for the Chalcedonian bishops lay in the establishment of opposing anti-Chalcedonian hierarchies: In Egypt the expression of dogmatic dissatisfaction with Chalcedon was given voice in a personal form by the investiture of own bishops Dioscorus, Timothy Aelurus and Peter Mongus. Both groups used their opponents' debilities to gain influence for their own respective hierarchies. Thus, Proterios had succeeded Dioscorus, who had been condemned in 451. After the murder of Proterios, the anti-Chalcedonians appointed Aelurus as bishop, who failed to gain Emperor Leon's recognition and was duly replaced by the Chalcedonian Salophakiolos. In the course of troubles in the wake of Emperor Leon's succession, Salophakiolos was temporarily deposed from his see from 475 to 477 in favor of Aelurus, but on the latter's death succeeded in regaining office. However, even before his return to Alexandria his opponents had consecrated Mongus as Aelurus' successor. Mongus then remained in hiding until Talaia, who had succeeded Salophakiolos, on his part lost the support of the capital in 482 and was forced to flee Egypt.¹² So it was obviously situations of personal upheaval that lead to accelerated dynamics concerning church-unrest in Egypt.¹³

Not only the respective own *orthodox* positions were tied to particular individuals, but also divergent positions of doctrine. Hereby, the personalization followed principles similar to those of *orthodoxy*, thus *heresy* being inheritable. Peter Mongus, whom Pope Felix had identified as the opponent of the Apostle Peter – and in consequence also of Pope Leo and of Felix himself – had to be regarded as a *heretic* simply by the fact

12 The state of the sources is fragmentary. Cohesive accounts can be found in Zacharias Rhetor and – partly depending on him – Evagrius: Ps.Zach. h.e.3,10-5,7; Evagr.h.e.2,8-11; 3,11-13.

13 It was by no means incidental that just contended episcopal elections so often led to bloody conflict within respective parishes. The Church of Rome was not except from such altercations, as witnessed by the elections of Damasus (366), Boniface (418) and Symmachus (498).

that he had succeeded Aelurus. The latter was reckoned the successor of Dioscorus, who had been condemned at Chalcedon for supporting the *heretical* teaching of Eutyches, who had opposed the *orthodox* teaching of Leo. Therefore, just as Felix in his role as Bishop of Rome was per se a representative of Leo's *orthodoxy*, in the eyes of Rome Mongus stood for *heresy*. Analogous to the episcopal succession within the Church of Rome, seen as the guarantor of the *true faith*, there arose a genealogy of Eutychian *heretics*, reaching from Eutyches over Dioscorus and Aelurus to Mongus.¹⁴ Persons thus served to dissolve the temporal boundaries of dogmatic-hierarchical controversy.

Thoughts of this type guided the actions of all parties: In a similar manner, the enemies of Rome traced the Roman position back to the second *arch-heretic* of the time, Nestorius. It was his christological teaching on the separation of the natures of God they allegedly retrieved in the *tomus Leonis*, resulting in them regarding anyone who argued for its acceptance as being a follower of Nestorius and thus a *heretic*.¹⁵ Consequently, the fact that the restoration of the unity between Rome and Constantinople in 519 was accompanied by Leo's inclusion into the diptychs of Constantinople must be regarded as a success for Rome. Simultaneously, we have a condemnation of Rome's opponents, of the opponents of Leo and, in consequence, of the opponents of St. Peter himself. This did not at all take the shape of a concrete refutation of deviant teachings, but rather of simply anathematizing the individuals in question.¹⁶ Through

14 For a classic example see Coll.Berol.34 (83,30-33): »quia dum per synodum Calchedonensem [...] Eutychem atque Dioscorum constet esse damnatos et eorum sectatores plurimis illarum partium documentis Timotheus et Petrus extitisse monstrentur«.

15 Cf. the assessment of Chalcedon – and thus of the *tomus Leonis* – by the moderate (!) anti-Chalcedonian Zacharias Rhetor. He declared that the council in 451 had exacerbated the Nestorian *heresy*: Ps.Zach.h.e.3,1.

16 A good example of extent to which dogmatic positions became personified is to be seen in the Constantinopolitan parish in 518. After the death of anti-Chalcedonian Emperor Anastasius and the succession of Justin, a Chalcedonian, voices were raised demanding Patriarch John to throw the Miaphysite Bishop of Antioch, Severus, out of the church and include

the genealogical transfer of the concepts of *orthodoxy* and *heresy*, the judgment against the Eutychian anti-Chalcedonians had already been pronounced and justified in 451.¹⁷

In the notion of succession included also a hierarchical component of the disputes on dogma and personnel, concatenating the two levels. It was not merely accidental personal-constellations or historically barely tangible tensions between individual bishops that let these phenomena of personalization gradually gain influence on the level of hierarchy pertaining to the stability and instability of the ecclesiastical order. It is, indeed, hardly deniable that personal tensions between Simplicius of Rome and Acacius of Constantinople contributed to the fact that the estrangement of the two churches could actually result in the schism of 484.¹⁸ And the dynamic changes in the personal situation in Egypt further influenced the course of the reception of Chalcedon. However, the actual structural problem of the personalization of hierarchic claims lay aside of such contingent constellations.

The Church of Constantinople was to feel the effects of this structural problem in form of the Acacian Schism. Acacius had admitted Mongus to the communion. Although the Constantinopolitans so far had been

Leo in the diptychs in his stead. Cf. Coll.Sabb.27 (ACO III: 72,5; 75,3). Neither here nor in the subsequent fulfillment of these demands did a discussion of dogmatic positions play any extensive role.

- 17 One of the fundamental tenets of Rome was to fall back to synodal decisions once these had been taken. As early as 475, Pope Simplicius had ascertained that any renegotiation of the subjects raised by Chalcedon was not only unnecessary, but downright dangerous, as it would open the door to a deluge of new negotiations, only leading to a growing obfuscation of doctrine: Coll.Avell.56,10.
- 18 Even early on Acacius had shown no particular enthusiasm in relating any proceedings in the East to Rome. In the beginning, Simplicius merely showed himself to be irritated by this fact: Coll.Avell.58,1. However, after having only found out about the acknowledgement of Mongus by a letter of the Emperor and, thus, having only been able to prevent a premature recognition of Talaia at the very last minute (Coll.Avell.68,2-3), the relationship of Acacius with Rome became irrevocably poisoned.

regarded as being Chalcedonians, this provided the Church of Rome with the possibility of declaring Acacius, a hierarchic competitor for the leadership of the church, a *heretic*. Mongus was considered to be a successor of Eutyches; with Acacius now associating himself with Mongus, it was a simple task to brand Acacius on his part as a partisan of Eutyches, too.¹⁹ This engendered a problematical situation particularly for Acacius' successors, as Rome demanded their predecessor's removal from the diptychs of the church. In the personalization of doctrine, the bishops of the capital were now regarded as *heretics* by Rome until they had dissociated themselves from their predecessor Acacius.²⁰

It was entirely legitimate to accuse Rome of the fact that the Acacian Schism was merely a controversy on names.²¹ In this respect, the dogmatic-hierarchical personalization of positions within the church not only accounted for the *casus belli*, but also for the duration of the schism. For, just as Rome refused to denounce Pope Leo, the successors of Acacius were not the least inclined to abandon their predecessor. The deletion of Acacius' name from the diptychs would have amounted to an admission of his *heresy*. And within the concept of episcopal succession it was obvious to the bishops of the capital that the burdening of their own episcopal list with a *heretic* would mean a setback for the already contested hierarchical claims of the Church of Constantinople.²² The main

19 Accordingly, the genealogy of *heretics* from Coll.Berol.34 (cf. note 14) continued up until Acacius.

20 In Coll.Berol.44 (111,27-29) this was made clear to Phrabitus of Constantinople as follows: »ut si mallent beati Petri apostoli communionem fideli corde suscipere, responderent uel se uel dilectionem tuam ab Alexandrini Petri Acacique deinceps recitatione futuram modis omnibus alienam«.

21 Cf. e.g. Coll.Avell.101,10. The appellation of the schism as the *Acacian* expresses precisely that – »nicht mit Unrecht«, as Schwartz (1934: 161) observes.

22 The importance of maintaining the purity of the own succession is demonstrated in the example of Antioch: As the greatest *heresies* of the church seemed continuously to originate from this city, the Church of Antioch had to cope with a significant loss of influence in the course of

impediment for a rapprochement of the two churches was thus to be found in the person of Acacius – and led to some absurd situations: As the Chalcedonian Bishop Euphemius of Constantinople remained loyal to Acacius, he was not recognized as a bishop by the Roman church – although Rome acknowledged him as being *orthodox*.²³

The reception of Chalcedon was strongly personified. This was true both for opposing doctrinal positions and for the closely connected question of leadership within the church of the Empire. It should be obvious that the category *person* was one of the fundamental categories of Late-Antique ecclesiastical thinking: The church thought, argued and acted on a personal basis. Insofar, actual individuals as well as the personalization of dogmatic-hierarchical positions strongly influenced both the stability and the instability of the order of the church.

Personalization as stabilization of the church order

The personalization of ecclesiastical positioning not only stabilized the order of the church but, rather, was elementary for such orders to be able to develop at all. The church in Late Antiquity was entirely established on individuals. The fact that it thought, argued and acted in personal categories was closely connected with the outstanding status of the bishops: The ecclesiastical system of Late Antiquity was undoubtedly an Episcopal one.²⁴

Though a continuous episcopal succession from the apostles to the present was fictitious – with the moniscopate only developing in the course of the second century – it had still achieved in permeating ecclesiastical thought in Late Antiquity so completely that the office of a bishop had become a capstone within the church. In the segmentation of

the last decades. It was heavily burdened by the condemnation of a number of churchmen it had produced, cf. Grillmeier 2002: 187-192.

23 Cf. Theod.lect.Epit.442.

24 The synodal system of the time did not make any fundamental change to this conclusion, as a synod was dependant on the reception of the individual churches and thus of the bishop.

the ecclesiastical landscape the bishop personified his respective parish, a respective church within the Empire. In principle, he was sovereign in his actions, both internally and externally:²⁵ Internally, the bishop's leadership within the parish was so uncontested that his church could virtually be equated with his person, respectively his office.²⁶ Externally, this led to the contact of two churches being identical to that of its two bishops.

The importance of this clearly defined élite for the stability of the order of the church becomes obvious when observing the process of the creation of ecclesiastical communion. This communion represented the actual core of all church order, constituting order per se, as it created the generally aspired unity between the churches of the empire.²⁷ In spite of its importance, the creation of the *communio* was not itself complicated: It was based merely on the professed unity of the bishops involved, finding its performative expression in an inter-episcopal sacral community, extended to mutual intercession prayers. The communion was so obviously concentrated on the episcopate that even secession from the union of the church did not establish the *heresy* of a parish, but only of its bishop.²⁸

25 Certain hierarchical statuses had developed, such as the metropolitan structure sanctioned at Nicaea in 325. Further differentiation culminated in the establishment of the five patriarchal churches in 451. However, such hierarchization did not correspond to the genesis of mechanisms of assertion within the church. Besides, even the pentarchy of patriarchal churches merely constituted a segmentary system of five independent great churches, cf. Martin 1979: 456-457. Thus, the hierarchization diverted the problem of segmentation to another ecclesiastical level, without fundamentally altering the individual bishops' independence.

26 On the sources of this episcopal authority Rapp 2005.

27 In the aspiration to achieve *una ecclesia*, even the goals of the church and the empire converged. Conflicts between emperors and churchmen, but also between different churchmen, arose from the fact that this goal was fed from different sources – the actors were not led by the same guiding differences.

28 This, at least, is true for the time examined here, when neither Egypt nor Syria had yet become characterized through specific and enduring ec-

As contact between churches could only be produced and communicated through their respective bishops, and with the entire order of the church pertaining to the episcopate, it is understandable why the Egyptian anti-Chalcedonians set such great store by establishing their own hierarchy. Every church needed a bishop.²⁹

Independent of the fact that a non-episcopal system was never even up for discussion in Late Antiquity, the episcopal personalization of the ecclesiastical order had stabilizing effects even beyond its just described mere technical aspects: The personalization of order within the church led to a reduction of ecclesiastical complexity. This was responsible for the establishment of ecclesiastical orders in the first place.³⁰ Additionally, it was responsible for orders, having been established and founded, to be stabilized and secured.

The personalization of church positions created a frame of reference for the respective positions of the successors in office. Initially, this personalized reference system merely had an internal effect: By way of the episcopal succession, every bishop stood in a direct line with his predecessors. As this chain of succession had the ideological function of perpetuating the *true faith*, the direct relationship with his predecessors engendered in the bishop a responsibility for any position once taken by

clesiastical developments. Regarding Peter Mongus, Pope Felix determined that it was not possible for a heretic to be the Bishop of a catholic church: Coll.Berol.33 (81,22-23).

29 This is made obvious by the polemical labeling of the rigorous anti-Chalcedonians, who refused to seek communion with their former leader Mongus after his reconciliation with Acacius: They appear as *akephaloi*, as *headless ones*.

30 For a church order to be created it was necessary to overcome the rift between two possible supporters of the communion. This rift, among other things, consisted of a theological complexity making an actual *communio* of the church improbable. It was the personalization of doctrines that gave order to the diversity of potential positions, prohibiting the theoretical limitlessness of theological statements. Personalization curtailed the number of maintainable positions, thus providing individual protagonists with the possibility to invoke the same traditions at all.

them. How important such traditions pertaining to specific sees were, can be observed in the *tomus Leonis*. The position of the predecessors guided the successors' choices, thus limiting – if not inevitably, then at least with greater probability – their potential courses of action.³¹ The succession made bishops primarily into office holders who, through their commitment to their predecessors, were more reliable in finding their specific positions than if they would have been at liberty to do so individually. Thus, the personalization of church structures fortified the order of the church against potential proliferation of individuals trying to shape it, thereby providing it with greater reliability.³²

These internal guidelines, imparted in personalized form, also exerted influence on the external inter-episcopal level. The personalized reference system of episcopal predecessors entailed a prestructuring of the contacts of bishops among one another. This found its expression already in the fact that the phenomenon of personalization facilitated a general denotation of dogmatic-hierarchical opinions – these having been accepted or rejected. As a result, the personalization was capable of establishing an orientation along common basic principles within the

31 Luhmann 1984: 194: »Sinn läßt keine andere Wahl als zu wählen. Kommunikation greift aus dem je aktuellen Verweisungshorizont, den sie selbst erst konstituiert, etwas heraus und läßt anderes beiseite.« As within the predecessors' line of tradition the possible updating of certain alternatives will be more probable than that of others, the freedom of individual bishops' positioning is limited.

32 Already in the fourth century, Pope Liberius justified his actions in a dispute in the matter of Athanasius of Alexandria with the position of his predecessor Julius: »ego Athanasium non defendi, sed, quia susceperat illum bonae memoriae Iulius episcopus, decessor meus, uerebar, ne forte in aliquo praeuaricator iudicaret« (Ep.pro deifico, in HIL.coll.antiar. B VII,8,1). Similar references to predecessors can be found with Popes Simplicius (Coll.Avell.60,7) or Gelasius (Coll.Avell.95,56-57). This phenomenon will hardly have been restricted to Rome, as demonstrated by the defense of Acacius by his successors. Thus, any freedom of choice between given positions was constricted by predecessors.

fragmented nature of the minutiae of ecclesiastical discussion.³³ Moreover, the simple conjoint invocation of a previous authority meant a release from the necessity of entering into the debate regarding the actual content of any specific theologumenon. Thus, personalization in many cases precluded any forthright theological dissent, as, according to experience, differing positions in doctrine often only became discernible after having been elucidated.³⁴

Simultaneously, personalization structured the order of the church: Everyone involved was able to relate this order to commonly known individuals and positions, thus enabling everyone to gauge himself and his counterparts in reference to these individuals and positions. As a result, certain mutual expectations originated regarding respective positioning. This reduced the risk of any arbitrariness of dogmatic and hierarchical statements of individual bishops. For the individual protagonist, the personalization of positions in the church constituted an interlacing of tradition and expectation, limiting the otherwise basically unlimited choice in positions. On the one hand, after all this guaranteed the establishment of a consensually perceived order. On the other hand, it guaranteed that this order did not simply dissolve directly after its emergence.³⁵

33 Traditions differed to such a degree that not even the Synod of Nicaea – invoked by all groups – would have been capable of achieving any deeper agreement as far as content is concerned. Moreover, the continuous exhibition of the palpable contents of respective *orthodoxies* would quickly have overtaxed the church.

34 It was precisely this argument that Simplicius brought forth against plans of the East for a new imperial synod: »nullus ad aures uestras perniciosis mentibus subripiendi pandatur accessus, nulla retractandi quippiam de ueteribus constitutis fiducia concedatur, quia, sicut saepius iterandum est [...]« (Coll.Auell.56,10 [128,8-11]). On the other hand, the opponents of Chalcedon accused the synod of 451 of introducing illegitimate reforms to the traditional creed, as can be witnessed in 475 in the Encyclical of Basiliscus (Euagr.h.e.3,4) or in 482 in a petition by Egyptian monks on behalf of Peter Mongus (Coll.Veron.1 [3.17-21]), see also note 17.

35 The perpetuation of order was achieved by invoking certain past authorities. Contrary to ever new debates on content, this remained possible at

As personalization in tradition, denotation and expectation allowed for a constant self-reference of the order within the church, this constituted the actual factor of stability. It was the continuous referencing – both expected and implemented – of episcopal statements to traditional and personalized positions that enabled any construction of order. And this is what stabilized it by a repetition of the request for and the granting of communion within the fold of the church. Via an expected reference to personal authority, working with the codes of personalization, these repetitions reduced the complexity of difference within the church. This took place to such an extent that slight deviations in single positions did not necessarily lead to a disruption of the conjoint order, as long as it was stabilized by personalized patterns of expectation. Thus, marginally different positioning could still be perceived as expected repetition of order, could still be integrated into the order of the church, as long as they referred to the right personal authorities.³⁶

As unstable and fragile the church in Late Antiquity may appear: Without the multi-layered effects arising from the phenomenon of personalization expounded above, even an order with a limited scope would scarcely ever have occurred.

Personalization as destabilization of the church order

Still, a general unity within the church in Late Antiquity was never achieved, as this would be highly dependent on a general consensus. And,

all time, being less susceptible to dissent. On the reduction of possible positions cf. additionally note 31.

36 Neither a synod as a collective personal authority nor a bishop as a palpable personal authority could generate order by themselves. According to Coleman, order is rather generated by individuals on a micro level: Coleman 1994: 1-23. On this individual micro level the perception of those positions supported by the authorities was per se subject to mediation, with positions being subject to interpretation. Thus, recipients could hardly ever mean exactly the same thing. In this respect, only the displacement of differences through the invocation of a commonly approved synodal-personal macro level made any ostensible common ground possible.

although the personalization of both structures and opinions enabled and advanced the achievement of such a consensus, it was by no means a guarantee for it.

In the personalization of its structures the stability of the order of the church was dependant on agreement between bishops. While the objection of a simple provincial bishop would hardly have led to the disintegration of the entire order, after 451 the mutual goodwill of the five patriarchs in Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem became all the more important.³⁷ This means that the order was concentrated on the consensus of a few essential supporters, which, in view of the segmentation of the church in Late Antiquity, was by no means to be taken for granted.³⁸ Transmitted by persons, the different regions of the empire maintained differing ecclesiastical traditions. Therefore, no positioning of the bishops was ever without an alternative. On the contrary, the number of theoretical alternative positions actually rose with every single conflict. True, the choices open to the bishop embedded in the chains of succession were not limitlessly open or even arbitrary, but remained tied to his respective predecessors. However, each bishop was individually called to decide which dogmatic-hierarchical proposal of

37 The theological debate could of course continue to be led by simple provincial bishops. The synodal-personal reception, however, was mainly focused on the patriarchal level: As the episcopate oriented itself on the patriarchs' positions, the acceptance or rejection by any of these five central bishops concerned any approving or opposing position of large sections of the church in general, see also note 25.

38 The concentration on a small number of supporters led to a great susceptibility to accidental factors. This means that dissent between the persons responsible for the preservation of order could arise at any time. This had to be all the more disruptive for the entire system, as the group acquiescent of consensus was already rather small. It is, therefore, more astonishing that the order of the church came into being at all instead of failing sooner or later.

sense he chose to actualize. As a result, a challenge of the order of consensus was possible any time.³⁹

Furthermore, the personalization of church positions also provided instruments to express the disintegration of the order. The referring of ecclesiastical notions to certain persons – the *tomus Leonis* immediately comes to mind – enabled a simplified denotation of complex theological constructs, thus opening an easily negotiable path for the understanding between bishops. At the same time, however, the same mechanisms were also capable of easily expressing dissent. As a result, the system of reference, established by way of the personalization of doctrinal positions, could be used both for integration as well as for demarcation. This likewise engendered a theological reduction which, in the positive sense of stability, had led to a bridging of minor differences in doctrine. On a negative note, however, the highlighting reduction of theological complexity resulted in theological prejudice. Thus, with the denotation now reduced and shortened to a personal level, the opposite side's actual ecclesiastical positions became increasingly irrelevant for any debate. In the same way that personalization was capable of leveling certain limited differences, it simultaneously also eclipsed potentially connecting factors.⁴⁰ As a result, any agreement became more improbable.

Additionally there was a hierarchical problem: As the process of the inheriting of church positions did not cease in times of dissent, the *heresy*

39 However, such rejection preferentially took place in situations of radical change in personnel. In such situations, the protagonists seem to have been well aware of the extent of the threat to the order of the church. In the face of his approaching death, Salophakiolos asked the Emperor to guarantee him a Chalcedonian successor: Ps.Zach.h.e.5,6; Euagr.h.e.3,12.

40 Both sides accused each other of adhering to Nestorian or Eutychian teachings, although all relevant protagonists of the time opposed both Eutyches and Nestorius. Even the anti-Chalcedonian Bishop Aelurus of Alexandria was not in *communio* with any radical Eutychian monks, cf. Ps.Zach.h.e.5,4. Grillmeier concludes that in fact there was still a basis for a common theology which, however, became eclipsed through a *Bewußtseinsverengung* on the different views on the number of natures in Christ, cf. Grillmeier 1990: 35; also idem 1991: 107; Wirth 1990: 85-86.

of any given bishop through internal succession within his see became a threat to the rank of his diocese within the order of the church. This did not merely pertain to individual bishops, but rather to the chain of succession in its entirety. The correlation of the two levels, of hierarchical status and *orthodox* soundness, additionally aggravated schisms. This becomes particularly obvious by the fact that even the Chalcedonian successors of Acacius were not prepared to anathematize their predecessor.⁴¹

That, in the face of the stabilizing effects of personalization, fractures of the church order could occur at all is again partially the result of certain effects of personalization. The ordering power of the common invocation of certain authorities, which in turn prevented the necessity of discussing the content of complex theologumena, induced a progressive differentiation in the repetitive order of the church. The bishops professed the upholding of similar positions, without actually having to defend the same content. In view of the segmentation of the church, their repetition primarily established an illusion of common positioning. Thus, the repetitive order established a variability of positions that could hardly be perceived as differentiation by the protagonists themselves, due to the personalized and reduced denotation of conjointly invoked authorities.⁴²

41 Only when John of Constantinople, probably on orders by Emperor Justin, removed Acacius from the diptychs in 519, the road was open to an end of the schism. How central the compliance to this demand was for the Church of Rome can be seen by the fact that the Roman legates emphasized that his removal had taken place in their presence when reporting to the pope: »Acacii praeuaricatoris anathematizati nomen de diptychis ecclesiasticis sed et ceterorum episcoporum, qui eum in communione secuti sunt, sub nostro conspectu significamus erasa« (Coll. Avell.223,6 [684,13-16]).

42 It was sufficient for Rome that an Alexandrine patriarch invoked Chalcedon and the *tomus Leonis* and supported the consequences in personnel of this invocation, i.e. the condemnation of Dioscurus. Growing interior reservations against the Roman-Chalcedonian radicalism in the actual situation in Egypt could hardly be noted in far-away Rome itself. However, these were also secondary, as long as the exterior semblance of accord was upheld.

Therefore, both due to and in spite of personalization, the order of the church was never rigid – though it often appeared so to contemporaries and historians alike, because the expectational structure of the church order covered differences for a long time and therefore was capable of integrating them into the repetition.⁴³

This also explains the fact that a disruption of the order of the church was repeatedly capable of surprising contemporaries and, in most cases, may be supposed to actually have hardly been intended by them in the first place. The cause for a disruption of the order was to be found in the – mostly unilateral – ascertainment of a failure to repeat mutual basic tenets of order: The inter-episcopal contentions in the invocation of mutual norms and names had grown to such an extent that some of the bearers of church order deemed to no longer detect any common basis. As the threshold for this conclusion could occasionally be quite high, at least the date for a disruption of the order was accidental.⁴⁴ Additionally, it was mostly not even comprehensible for one of the two sides, as all of the protagonists usually reckoned to be acting within the frame of their personal systems of reference.

Such an evolutionary process of alienation, communicated in a personal form, reverting quasi incidentally into a disruption of the order, lies at the heart of the Acacian Schism. In Egypt, both Salophakiolos and Mongus were characterized by rather more moderate positions: While

43 Due to covering minor differences, dissent in the sources mostly only becomes tangible in the failure of order. Only when an action is not perceived as an expected repetition, do differing positions have the possibility of articulating themselves. The antecedent creeping differentiation is hardly visible. Thus, it is the seeming stability of the order of the church that makes its fracture seem to come as a surprise. The astonishment of contemporaries and historians in regard to this disruptions indicates how stable the previous order was regarded to be.

44 After having said this, the question of being able to claim the same for the fracture of the order itself remains to be seen. In the long run, in Late Antiquity at least, a disruption of the order of the church seems more probable than its perpetuation.

the Chalcedonian was prepared to include Dioscorus in the diptychs, the anti-Chalcedonian refrained from explicitly condemning Chalcedon after 482.⁴⁵ It is obvious that the rift within Egypt was hardly as unsurpassable as the bishops in Rome tried to make believe: There was no room for any grey areas in the Roman view of a duality between pro- and anti-Leonic stances.⁴⁶ Therefore, the settlement between the Chalcedonian Acacius and the anti-Chalcedonian Mongus was bound to both surprise and overtax Rome. The Roman perspective had provided no other criteria of assessment for Chalcedon than either the unrestricted acceptance or the rejection of the *tomus Leonis*. That such other criteria very well existed had now become plain; still, as long as the East had invoked Chalcedon and, in consequence, Leo, Rome had seen no need to look into the matter any further. Now, however, the unity between Mongus and Acacius was seen as a rejection of Chalcedon, of Leo, of St. Peter and finally of Rome itself. In the East, on the other hand, this consequence came as a surprise, with the point made repeatedly that the synod of 451 had in fact never been condemned there.⁴⁷

45 The *Henotikon* (Cod.Vatic.gr. 1431), the basis for Mongus' establishment of a *communio* with Acacius, explicitly refrains from condemning the Synod of Chalcedon. Ps.Zach.h.e.4,10 describes the inclusion of Dioscorus into the diptychs of the Church of Alexandria through Salophakiolos, leading to censure by Leo in Rome, cf. also Grillmeier 1990: 36-38. The lack of differentiation in the mental concepts of both sides' rigorist representatives found its continuation in a simplified description of dogma by the sources. The explicit antithesis of Chalcedonians-anti-Chalcedonians may accurately describe the situation regarding the reception of Chalcedon in Rome; the same can hardly be said for e.g. Alexandria.

46 The scope of Rome's unwillingness to compromise becomes apparent in the severity with which the compromising Timothy Salophakiolos was brought back in line (Coll.Avell.63). The distrust of Rome he had engendered by his willingness for reconciliation in Egypt does not seem to have been fundamentally dispelled, cf. also note 45.

47 The fact that the Emperor as well as the Bishop of Constantinople insisted on never having rejected Chalcedon was registered in Rome with some irritation: »nos ista de catholico imperatore non credimus utpote

These differences in perception were not exclusively based on the abridged personalization of doctrine, but also on a fundamental lack of information. The knowledge of actual local dogmatic developments should not be overestimated: The exchange of positions between bishops could generally only occur within the frame of mutual correspondence. In cases of ambiguity, this did not permit any direct clarification of the situation and mainly served to establish and assert the church's unity.⁴⁸ Furthermore, to come back to the phenomenon of personalization, the correspondence often merely used the code of particular individuals as templates to express dogmatic positions and to ascertain unity. However, this formulaic invocation of common authorities catering to patterns of expectation obscured the differences regarding the understanding of a seemingly common *orthodoxy*. With the outbreak of the Acacian Schism, this was further aggravated by the fact that, due to Acacius' failure to report, Rome was additionally cut off from the flow of information from the East.⁴⁹

Thus, Rome was not capable to see that the moderate representatives of both dogmatic groups in the East were not inevitably as irreconcilably pitted against each other as allowed for by Rome's dualistic perspective with its reduction of the Chalcedonian synod to Leo. The East was positioned in a different system of traditions and exigencies. As a result, the interpretation and reception of Chalcedon had taken a different route

cuius sacra retinemus, in quibus catholicam fidem et Chalcedonensis synodi definitionem se tenere testatur» (Coll. Veron. 11 [36,25-26]).

48 In general, correspondence with this functionality may be supposed to have been limited to the situation of ordination of new bishops.

49 The fundamentality of this lack of information becomes apparent in 482, when Rome only found out about the incidents in Alexandria when the Emperor gave notice to Pope Simplicius on him recognizing Mongus. Acacius had obviously not volunteered any information about the controversial election. Thus, Rome had seen no reason not to recognize John Talaia, who in turn had notified Rome of his ordination as a rightful bishop. The Pope was only in the last minute able to withhold a corresponding acknowledgement, when Zeno informed him about the deposition of Talaia, cf. Coll. Avell. 68,2-3.

there, with other priorities having been set within the church.⁵⁰ Rome saw its expectations towards the order of repetition ruptured, was not capable of integrating the Eastern incidents into its view of the order. Without this having actually been intended in the East, the events were seen by Rome as an apostasy of the Eastern bishops from the common doctrinal basis invoked so far.⁵¹

The stabilizing effects of personalization for the order of the church were faced with the destabilizing potential of the same phenomenon. This potential was often founded in the same elements as the stabilizing ones. Personalization had a potentially disruptive effect. This was due to the order's dependency upon the brittle consensus of the church's protagonists and the mutually hardly impartable differentiation of positions within identical frames of reference. Personalization in this case did not only have a destabilizing effect on the order but, moreover, actually prevented a simple rapprochement of the different groups after a schism had taken place: Now the effects of personalization no longer stabilized the order but rather the alienation within the church.

Synthesis: functions of personalization

The personalization of the church order in Late Antiquity is manifest in any scrutiny of the sources. The quote at the beginning of this article is only one example of many, although a rather concise one, as it demonstrates the two temporal levels of personalization: On the one hand, as exemplified in the rejection of the Alexandrian Peter, the current func-

50 Particularly the question of ecclesiastical unity was more exigent in the East in comparison to the dogmatically already more or less homogeneous West. Additionally, there were the interests of the Emperor, for whom a common theological foundation in the East had become more important than an ecclesiastical union with Rome, especially as the latter had already ceased to be part of the Empire.

51 His former anathematizing of Peter Mongus in 477 and Rome's subsequent notification thereof would yet prove to become a problem for Acacius (Coll. Veron. 4 [5,2-7]). It provided Rome with a proof of Acacius' alleged apostasy.

tional order of the church was personalized, supported by a small clear-cut group of individuals, established by bishops and dependent upon them. On the other hand, the personalization of the order developed a historical depth of dimension, evinced by the invocation of the Apostle Peter. The positions of past normative authorities continued within the church, creating a system of reference for any current positioning.

In the personalized order of repetition, this system of reference was effective on two levels: Within his own diocese, each bishop was, more or less inevitably, called to invoke his predecessors within his own episcopal line of succession. This promoted the establishment of local traditions, and both governed and limited the choice of ecclesiastic positions taken by the bishops, making them more predictable. Through the simultaneous personalization of hierarchical-dogmatic opinions, effects similar to those within the internal context of a parish can also be found outside, on the inter-episcopal level.

In all this, the personalization of church order had both a stabilizing and a destabilizing effect. First of all, the frame of reference of episcopal predecessors and personalized positions was a prerequisite for the establishment of any communication within the church. For only the possible invocation of conjoint normative references provided a controllable frame for the communication between bishops. Within the small group of key supporters of the order of the church, the personalization of doctrine generated the prerequisite for expecting a particular positioning from other protagonists and for the expression of certain positions towards them. As a result, the personalized system of reference not only stabilized the order, but also served as its foundation.

However, the same phenomena also had an opposite effect. They were capable of destabilizing the order of the church. In this respect, personalization was ambivalent, as by its mechanisms a breach of order could also be expressed and perpetuated. This ambivalence is due to the genesis of a repetitive order, which was based on the interaction of the historically personalized frame of reference with the currently personalized functional system of a continuous ascertainment of a common church order. The frame of reference in the repetitive order provided the

bishops with the possibility of deceiving both each other and themselves in regard to any mutual dissent.

Thus, agreements had to remain personally transmitted illusions. That is why the protagonists were consistently astounded by disruptions of their seemingly stable order. If one, however, realizes that the frame of reference of church positioning concealed the creeping differentiation of specific bearers of the order – making any order actually possible in the first place – this astonishment is somewhat put into perspective. The disruption merely establishes the point at which the mutual repetition of order was no longer mutually experienced as such. At this point, the previously existing, creeping, personalized and personally obscured differentiation of positions collapsed into the disruptive event. This situation was all the more probable as the church rested on the shoulders of only a few central supporters.

Thus, the stabilizing and destabilizing effects of personalization cannot be separated, as they have their basis in the same phenomena. Or, to put it differently: Within the development of a normative order there also implicitly lay the possibility of its criticism. Personalization, therefore, was not only a prerequisite and a functional mechanism for the order, but also a structural flaw and a perpetual source of dissent within the church.

In all this, the impression should not be conveyed that the ecclesiastical order of repetition was solely based upon personal factors. Thus, the frame of reference of church positions was not at all limited to persons. Places or, to be more precise, synods could acquire similar structural functions. In this respect, invoking Pope Leo was equivalent to an invocation of the Synod of Chalcedon – and vice versa. At the same time, a continuous reference to the Council of Nicaea can be noted for all groups within the church. Also synods could stand in as symbols for complex theological issues. However, in this context it must remain open if the invocation of particular synods was used synonymously to respective personal systems of references or, alternatively, to mitigate a controversial personalization. Possibly an inherent personalization formed the basis of such synodal invocations, as the synods were composed

of bishops, i.e. former ecclesiastical authorities, now collectively denoted by the site of their convention.⁵² Maybe, the individual should also quite deliberately recede behind a collective forming a consensus, to seemingly dissolve within the consensus, to strengthen the normative binding force of a position. In this context it is conspicuous that in the era after Chalcedon both variants for an appointment to the same position were used: an individual invocation of Leo and a collective one of Chalcedon.

However, even if personalization was not the only basis for order and disorder of the church, it was a particularly central form of structuring the church in Late Antiquity. Sources imply as much. An analysis of the often controversial history of the church in Late Antiquity is bound to be continuously aware of these phenomena of personalization, as in them lies one of the keys to the understanding of this age.

52 Cf. the so-called *Encyclical* of Basiliscus, referring to the »150 Holy Fathers« of the Synod of Constantinople in 381 and the »Symbol of the 318 Holy Fathers« of Nicaea in 325: EVAGR.h.e.3,4.

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