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Jahreszeiten



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Akademische Jahre folgen dem Rhythmus der Jahreszeiten, wenn auch in ihrer eigenen Form. Das Jahr beginnt im Oktober mit dem Frühjahrsgefühl der grenzenlosen Freiheit, zehn, wenn nicht gar elf Monate "leave" voll unendlicher Möglichkeiten, aber schon im Dezember setzt der Herbst ein: spätestens im Januar erstarrt man, gemeinsam mit den Berliner Seen, angesichts des Unausweichlichen in nur noch sieben Monaten. März bringt dann allmählich das nötige *laissez faire, laissez aller* —, all das, was man sich vorgenommen hat, kann man ohnehin nicht tun, aber dann hat man ja auch allerhand erlebt und erfahren, was man gar nicht erwartet hatte, und das war ja auch der Sinn des Ganzen. Zum Beispiel, wer hätte geahnt, daß Reiher am Grunewald-See überwintern, und im Sommer an den Halensee übersiedeln? Vorgefaßte Ideen (etwa, daß Reiher im Winter in Ägypten leben) bleiben eben im Wissenschaftskolleg selten ohne Revision, Gott sei Dank.

My research, too, followed the rhythms of the academic year: the "spring-cleaning" of odds and ends; the transition to the "real" project at hand; the terror that the sources might not yield what they should be yielding ... and then the relief when they do and the writing fever sets in. All things considered, I accomplished much of what I set out to do. Paraphrasing a former Fellow, I had described my principle aim in my *Arbeitsvorhaben* as attempting "to write a short and clear book about a complex subject"; what has emerged during my year at the Wissenschaftskolleg is a partial draft and an outline of a book that might be clear but certainly will not be short.

This nascent book has the current working title *The Cross on the Forehead: Stigmata, Slavery and the Bishop in Late Antiquity*, which sounds better than the title that would describe it more aptly: The "aristocratization" and "ascetization" of the clerical office in the Theodosian age. My research at the Wiko has yielded concrete ways to demonstrate how the political elite of the later Roman Empire, in all its variety from the country gentlemen in rural Cappadocia (Central Turkey) through the ambitious up-starts from Illyricum and North Africa to the scions of the Italian senatorial elite, absorbed and adapted Christianity. As a result, the notion of a Christianity "triumphing" over paganism in one short century cannot be maintained; it ought to be replaced by the idea of a complex yet straight forward process in which certain carefully chosen elements of the Christian faith were subsumed into an already existing political and social code of elite conduct, in itself governed by a set of highly nuanced internal regulations. This process of adaptation was manifested in numerous ways. It affected the way in which members of the clergy dressed, how they walked, what their gestures were supposed to look like, in short, how they physically represented their office. It governed the choice of literary genres through which clerical leadership was discussed and codified, as well as the selection of the metaphors of governance, and of the categories defining inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, once approached from the vantage-point of elite decorum, even fundamental theological developments, mostly notably the post-Nicaean development of the Trinity, gained a different dynamic and force: an understanding of the Son as consubstantial with the Father was much more readily acceptable to a Roman upper-class man, trained in strict codes of lineage, patronage, honor, and friendship, than that of a Son adopted or differing from the Father in degrees of substance.

My initial foray into this entire topic emerged out of prior studies concentrating on a second-century prophetic movement known as Montanism. During the fourth century, that is 200 years after its heyday, attacks against this movement suddenly intensified: the Montanists were

now accused of ritual child-murder through the use of *stigmata*, that is through tattoos. The peculiar nature of these newly intensified charges first caught my attention, and led me to ask why fourth century bishops, flush in their newly gained authority and power, would suddenly feel the need to accuse a mostly vanquished prophetic movement of such a bizarre act (while "killing children" is a fairly common accusation, killing children by pricking them with bronze needles is not).

From there, the project has evolved. It has become obvious to me that the intensification of charges against the Montanists reflects a far more deeply rooted and indeed very serious conflict between competing models of authority. As did their second-century antecedents, the Montanists of the fourth century represent a long-standing tradition within Christianity that attributes authority to wandering figures of preachers, teachers, and prophets, who base their charisma on a life-style reminiscent and indeed grown out of that of the Apostles.

This type of charismatic, wandering teaching expanded dramatically towards the end of the third and beginning of the fourth century through the ascetic movement (partly traced in my previous book). Now, however, these charismatic teachers and wanderers were no longer simply competing with "middle of the road" managers (i.e. the bishops of old), but with the "new Christians", i.e. the highly trained, highly status-conscious, and highly traditional Greco-Roman imperial elite, to which a good number of these charismatic ascetics themselves now belonged.

What does this mean for the image and the "job description" of the bishop in the Theodosian age? One of the central tenets of Christianity is the notion that the Christian is the "slave of Christ," and the Christian leader in particular, in the words of Paul, "a slave of God's slaves." This notion, the devotee as the slave of an omnipotent God, has its roots in the Old Testament, but equally so in the Greco-Roman religious tradition. All three, Christianity, Judaism, and especially Greco-Roman religious traditions, share the concept of expressing this relationship in the way customary for slaves: through a stigma or tattoo with the master's symbol on the slave's forehead. (Indeed, this is the concept underlying baptism, at least its interpretation within the Greco-Roman tradition: to be marked with a "seal" symbolizing adherence to Christ).

At the same time as they began to accuse Montanists of ritual tattooing, bishops also outlawed the practice of religious stigmatization in legal codes. Also, at the same time, bishops began to adopt the term *servus dei*, slave of god, as their official title. Simultaneously, the same bishops, all members of the elite such as Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom of Constantinople,

Ambrose of Milan, Augustine and many more, increasingly used the metaphor of enslavement to redirect traditional political theory, i.e. traditional notions on how to govern, towards a more "Christian" interpretation. When analyzed closely, it becomes clear how, through the notion of priesthood as "slavery as well as government" (Gr. of Nazianzus, *Oration 2*), Christian leadership, namely the office of a bishop, is re-interpreted in a two-fold way. First, metaphors of slavery are carefully selected and their visual expression clearly prescribed: only such expressions of humility and "slavery" that do not conflict with aristocratic notions of decorum are permitted (i.e. no physical stigmata, nor any other overt sign of low-class behavior such as a "slavish" way to walk, a low class accent, nor, of course, true slave origin), resulting in an elite definition of ecclesiastical leadership as well as an elite definition of asceticism. Second, this elite definition of "asceticism", clearly modeled on classical notions of philosophical retreat (*otium*), is then merged with equally traditional notions of leadership, such as the Ciceronian concept of *otium cum dignitate*, to result in a new understanding of clerical office: by becoming the sole acceptable expression of "slavery to Christ," the "elite ascetic" lifestyle of the bishop first distinguishes him from and thereby elevates him above all other secular forms of office without any need to contest the intrinsic links to precisely these modes of authority, and, second, permits him to embody and hence claim the charismatic attributes of the ascetic teacher for the episcopal office and for it alone.

This interpretation challenges a number of historiographical assumptions. 1. The preoccupation with distinctions between ranks of clerical office (i.e. the so-called *cursus honorum* leading up to the office of the bishop) is largely a concern of post-Reformation scholarship, not that of the earliest sources. 2. The scholarly tradition that has posited asceticism as being opposed to priesthood has fallen prey to the rhetorical mastery of these authors. Authors such as the Church Fathers mentioned above oppose a certain "low-life" asceticism as incompatible with but claim their own as the only fitting prerequisite for clerical office. 3. Age-old controversies regarding the conflict between Christian and pagan *paideia* (educational traditions) miss the point by asking the wrong question: what divides ancient authors are not so much questions of pagan versus Christian learning, but those of fit versus unfit literary and Scriptural language. 4. Attempts to exonerate Christian Fathers who did not challenge slavery as an institution suffer from the same shortcoming: the new Christian political theory of office and all that it entails could only be formulated as it was because it took the institution of slavery for granted. Only a society that knew slavery intimately could distinguish clearly between aristocratic and "slavish" expressions of

slavery. To rephrase it, Christian notions of priesthood are based on the existence of slavery, or in the words of Augustine: "We are all slaves of Christ, but there are slaves who obey and slaves who command" — any physical impairing that would reflect actual slavery, such as stigmata, is outlawed, quite contrary to Paul's saying: "I bear the stigmata of my Lord Jesus on my body." (Gal. 6: 28).

My work thus approaches the development of the bishop and its literary as well as actual iconography during the fourth and fifth century from a different angle. In particular, it clarifies the mechanics of the process by which the clerical office became in effect celibate, which was by no means a route to be anticipated, took several of centuries to accomplish, and remained highly controversial throughout. It furthermore demonstrates precisely the degree to which the new theoretical and practical foundations of Christian authority were Roman aristocratic, and where and how "Christian" notions of humility were integrated. The first part (chapters 1-3), detailing the anti-Montanist attacks and placing sacred slavery and ritual stigmatization (tattooing) into its Christian (*Book of Revelations*) and Greco-Roman context, is completed. The second part, discussing the vocabulary of slavery as well as its legal and economic-practical ramifications, focusing in particular on the internal hierarchy of slavery (the gradations of rank separating the *vicarius/oikonomos*, i.e. the managerial slaves, from the lowliest of the low, and identifying every slave in between), has been sketched. Chapter 5 will be devoted to the physiognomy of the slave and the master, respectively, leading into part 3, the analysis of Christian writings on the theory of governance (Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Salvian of Marseilles and Gregory the Great, whereby the latter three will function as an "epilogue"). The chapters dealing with Gregory of Nazianz and Basil of Caesarea have been drafted, the one on John Chrysostom sketched, and the rest has at least been researched. All of this will take time to complete, but my time at the Wiko allowed me to survey the sources, "finish" most of the initial research, write a good chunk of the draft, and generally feel that, given another year of leave, I could finish this... in short, I am leaving content and happy. In addition, I also plied my wares at a number of universities in Germany, Spain and Rome, went back to California for a conference on "Charisma and the Holy Man" honoring Peter Brown, which I had organized at Berkeley, and edited the proceedings, which will be published by Johns Hopkins Press.

Ein Jahr Berlin hatte für mich jedoch noch eine ganz andere Dimension, die der Rückkehr in eine Heimatstadt, die sich trotz aller Beharrlichkeit and trotz allem Beharrenwollen, unweigerlich and geradezu

stündlich vor aller Augen verändert. Die Rückkehr nach Berlin war eine Rückkehr in ein fremdes, doch merkwürdig vertrautes Land. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* hatte von einem anderen Land gehandelt — jetzt wurde es zum Stadtführer. Potsdam, Rheinsberg, Chorin waren Namen aus der Literatur, die nun in den Alltag übergegangen waren: unglaubliche Veränderungen, deren Dramatik mir um so bewußter war, da ich das Vorher besser kannte. Und gerade hier erwies sich das Wissenschaftskolleg als der platonisch-idealtypische Mikrokosmos des Makrokosmos Berlin: das Tagtägliche, der Alltag, bot die größten Überraschungen und war Anlaß tiefster Freude. Mit dem Fahrrad nach Potsdam, mal eben in die Humboldt-Universität, das Café Einstein Unter den Linden, der besondere Parkplatz vor der Komischen Oper, mit Christine, Ezra, György, Mona, Nilufer, Renate, Srini und Svetha — all dies als *partes pro toto*. Das ganz Besondere im scheinbar Normalen, wo könnte man das besser erleben und empfinden als im Wissenschaftskolleg? Frühstück, Schwimmen, Bücher besorgen, Videos anschauen — alles Dinge des täglichen Lebens. Aber hier sind die Videos Ron Inden's Hindi-Filme, die Bücher das Reich der Magierin Gesine Bottomley, und was das Frühstück angeht... Und Barbara Sanders will ich erst gar nicht erwähnen. Wie gesagt, der Idealtypus.

From Berkeley to Berlin hat seine unzweifelhaften Vorteile — der Alltag ist weder hier noch dort je ganz alltäglich. Gerade auch in dieser Hinsicht hätte mein Berliner Jahr nicht idealer sein können: Mein tiefster Eindruck ist der einer unentwegten Entdeckerfreude, vom Einstein Unter den Linden über den türkischen Hip-hop und den Winter-Reiher am Grunewaldsee bis hin zu den Kreuztätowierungen auf der Stirn. Mein Dank gilt allen, it was a wonderful year.