

Verschiebung von Versammlungen, Amtseinführungen o.ä., aber ebenso die willkürliche Deklaration von Festtagen sowie – wenn auch in geringerem Rahmen – Maßnahmen des Pontifex Maximus boten sich zur Behinderung oder gar Ausschaltung des politischen Gegners an. Damit einher geht die Aufwertung und Politisierung der relevanten Priesterkollegien, aber letztlich auch ihr Verfall.

Trotz der sichtlichen Beschränkung auf deutsch- und englischsprachige Literatur hat die Autorin mit ihrer Betrachtung des politisch relevanten Stellenwertes des Staatskultes in Rom am Ende der Republik einen wichtigen Aspekt der Krise ins Diskussionsfeld gerückt.

*Uta-Maria Liertz*

G.W. BOWERSOCK, *Martyrdom and Rome*. The Wiles lectures given at the Queen's University of Belfast. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995. 106 p. ISBN 0-521-46539-7. GBP 19.95.

G.W. Bowersock has published a highly interesting and inspiring book about early Christian martyrdom. In Chapter I the author sets out to explore the historical context of martyrdom, discussing the concept, its origins, its appearances in early sources. He emphasizes the Graeco-Roman background of Christian martyrdom. Its roots were closely linked with the Graeco-Roman world, its traditions, its language, and its cultural tastes. The early martyrdoms were inconceivable without the traditional pagan institutions of Graeco-Roman urban life. He argues that early Christian martyrdom had nothing to do with Judaism or with Palestine.

The pre-Constantinian Martyr Acts contain precious documentary material and shed a bright light on the dark space between the Gospels and hagiography. Bowersock analyses the martyr accounts, e.g. the Martyrdom of Pionius and the Martyrdom of Perpetua and demonstrates how the written record for the early martyrdoms places the martyrdoms in the context of the Roman empire.

The most important part of Bowersock's book is Chapter III which concentrates on the civic role of martyrs. Martyrdom is placed in the everyday life background of the Graeco-Roman world. The early martyrdoms were a conspicuously urban affair. Martyrdom in a city provided the greatest possible visibility for the Christian cause. Bowersock emphasizes the important role of some martyrs as teachers and leaders of the Christian communities. Martyrs are compared with sophists. Cyprian, Pionius and Polycarp were the Christian equivalents of the teachers and sophists in the intellectual and social life of the second and third centuries. The culture from which both martyrs and sophists came was largely one and the same, the Graeco-Roman culture. Martyrdom was solidly placed in the civic life of the Roman empire, in the great urban spaces such as the agora and the amphitheater and in the bureaucratic institutions of the Roman state.

The author ends his book with a discussion of the relationship between martyrdom and suicide. Emphasizing again the particularly Roman character of martyrdom, Bowersock argues that the glorification of suicide in the Roman tradition effected the development of martyrdom. The debate about suicide and martyrdom among the early Christians (Tertullian, Clement, Origen, Augustine) is surveyed and is followed by four appendices on special subjects concerning martyrdom.

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