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(Review) Monastische Reform zwischen Person und Institution: Zum Wirken des Abtes Adm Meyer Von Gross St. Martin in Kön (1454-1499)

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Fried, in opposition to the received scholarly opinion that he himself had once shared, maintains that the oldest vita of St. Adalbert was written not in Rome but in the diocese of Liège, perhaps by Bishop Notker of Liège, immediately after the missionary's martyrdom. (I am a bit skeptical whether if Notker was really the author, he would have styled himself a "summe discretionis vir," a man of the greatest modesty [p. 257].) Moreover, the Gallus Anonymous was probably a cleric from Liège, and the now lost account of Adalbert's martyrdom he cited as his source for the events at Gniezno almost certainly drew on the same body of information as the vita. Thus, Fried's ascription of the vita to Notker buttresses his arguments for the reliability of the Gallus Anonymous as a source. In contrast, Althoff, an expert on Ottonian conflict resolution and the staging of rituals, insists that the Gallus Anonymous's account of the meeting violated the rules for such encounters and would probably have struck its twelfth-century audience as comic. Althoff cites the statement in the *Quedlinburg Annals* that Otto refused any gifts to refute the Gallus Anonymous's account of Boleslav's lavish gift giving, but it is worth noting that Thietmar, the oldest source, wrote that "the duke honored Otto with rich presents" (4.46). Ultimately, I would concur with Dormeier's conclusion that in studying what really occurred at Gniezno, historians must recognize the limits of their knowledge (p. 188).

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Monastische Reform zwischen Person und Institution: Zum Wirken des Abtes Adam Meyer von Gross St. Martin in Köln (1454–1499). By Elke-Ursel Hammer. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 2001. Pp. 636. EUR 128.00. ISBN 3-525-35300-6.

This study is a typically dense German dissertation, focusing on the monastic reform movement of the fifteenth century. Hammer concentrates her attention on the activities of Adam Meyer, who was Abbot of Gross St. Martin in Cologne and one of the leaders of the *Bursfelder* congregation, an influential collection of reform-minded Benedictine monasteries. As the title suggests, this study aims to understand the importance of the individual, in this case Meyer, in a wider movement. Despite this interest, Hammer remains imbedded in the German tradition of church history, with its strong emphasis on institutions. Much of the book consists of detailed case studies of the efforts to reform various abbeys, highlighting the clashes among the reformist *Bursfelder*, the various Benedictine provinces, bishops, and secular lords. The unsurprising conclusion

is that local conditions determined the relative "success" of attempts to reform particular convents and monasteries.

Hammer describes a general pattern of monastic reform in the Benedictine abbeys of northwestern Germany in the fifteenth century. Monastic reform targeted monasteries that evidenced a "collapse in regular discipline as well as spiritual and economic decline" (p. 11). Evidence of such decline included neglect of monastic hours, the division of a monastery's property into personal holdings of individual monks, a lack of respect for the authority of the abbot, and widespread violation of monastic vows. Reformers (like Meyer) armed themselves with episcopal and papal authority and moved into such monasteries for extended visits. Ineffective or recalcitrant abbots were removed from office and resistant monks disciplined. Communal meals and regular liturgy were "reinstated." Meyer was also especially intent on "restoring" the finances of the abbeys, seeing financial strength as the key to a proper monastic lifestyle. Finally, new abbots were installed and a "reform colony" of monks from already reformed houses was left behind to maintain discipline.

Hammer recognizes that this process was contested in various ways. Most obviously, many monks and nuns actively resisted such reform, sometimes violently. In a number of cases they succeeded in driving off or frustrating the reformers. The concept of reform itself was also open for debate. The *Bursfelder* certainly worked to promote the idea that reform aimed at returning monasteries to a condition closer to the original aims of St. Benedict. Opponents of reform accused outsiders and reformers like Meyer of violating tradition through illegal innovation and by changing the original aims of monastic endowments, for example when he reorganized monastic finances. The picture is not of the uncontested march of reform, but rather of a confused and contested range of local and regional monastic traditions and cultures.

Despite conflicts and setbacks, many Benedictine monasteries and convents were transformed in the late fifteenth century. Monastic life in reformed houses was more rigorous, with a more disciplined attention to monastic duties. The finances of reformed monasteries were stabilized and often strengthened. Hammer also identifies distinct trends in the social makeup of these abbeys. Meyer and his allies had often targeted aristocratic abbots and monks in their reforms, criticizing their ties to local families and their propensity to live an overly secular lifestyle. The reforms halted a trend toward the conversion of monasteries into aristocratic collegiate chapters, which operated with much less attention to the strictures of the Benedictine rule. The members of the "reform colonies" planted in the monasteries were usually of middle-class background and natives of fairly distant regions. An important impact of reforms, at least in the decades before 1500, was a detachment of monasteries and (to a lesser extent) convents from local society.

Princes, bishops, and their officials all tended to support this attempt to break

the tight ties between local society, especially the local aristocracy, and the monasteries. In fact, Hammer points out repeatedly that the success or failure of the effort to reform depended above all on the support of secular authorities. If a prince opposed reform of a monastery, or even if he just failed to support it, it had little chance of success. In important ways, then, monastic reform was part of the trend toward greater secular domination of the church, despite its stated goal of restoring the independence of the monasteries from noble domination.

Hammer has provided a very complete description of monastic reform in this corner of Germany. She is attentive to a range of issues, for example the different pace and style of reform in the female houses (as opposed to the male houses) of the region or the conflicts over ecclesiastical jurisdiction among bishops, the *Bursfelder* congregation, and the provincial structure of the Benedictine order. Historians of the period will find much of value here. Her goal of using Adam Meyer to reconceptualize the role of the individual reformer is somewhat less successful. Meyer comes across as an active reformer, but the sources do not really show what was innovative or especially influential about his ideas or efforts. He serves much more as a good example of the mainstream of this reform movement rather than as evidence of the decisive role of the individual.

Historians of the sixteenth century will find little about the long-term consequences of this reform movement. In what ways did these reform movements change the character of monasticism in this part of Germany? Did the social composition of the monasteries remain middle class or did the regional and local nobility reassert their power after 1500? Did this reform movement have wider consequences for German religious culture or for the *Reichskirche*, the imperial church? Perhaps later studies can draw on the extensive materials found here to illuminate these issues.

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Tugend, Vernunft und Gefühl: Geschlechterdiskurse der Aufklärung und weibliche Lebenswelten. Edited by Claudia Opitz, Ulrike Weckel, and Elke Kleinau. Berlin: Waxmann. 2000. Pp. 366. EUR 25.50. ISBN 3-89325-844-2.

Once upon a time, the significance of the *Aufklärung* for women seemed depressingly clear. Scholars (and particularly feminist scholars) queried "Did women have an Enlightenment?" and the answer was "no" or "hardly at all." The fine sounding phrases proclaiming universal equality had in fact a far more limited meaning. "All" did not even include all men; slaves, for example, were

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