

Theology and slavery from antiquity to Early Modern Age

Slavery was practised not only in America until the 19th century but also in Christian Europe till the Early Modern Age. In the past decades, socio- and economic-historical research have proven this fact, and in turn refuted older and often ideologically infused opinions of a gradual demise of this institution since the end of antiquity. How could this practice be reconciled with Christianity, which considers each human being as an image of God, but at the same time legitimised slavery? To answer this question, a theologico-historical access to this long history of slavery is required, which so far has been completely neglected.

In which contexts do theologians reflect on slavery? Exegetical and systematic drafts of the creation, the tenet of original sin and salvation history, as well as debates of the public (international) law are revealing. Furthermore, the spiritualised discourse about slavery (inner lack of freedom through sin) had an impact on the understanding of the real slavery.

A *longue-durée* perspective from antiquity to the Early Modern Age will allow new insights into the perception processes and into legitimisation and overcoming strategies. This is of highest relevance in view of the current debate about reasons for the abolition of slavery and the question of the humanising influence of Christianity.