CHAPTER FOUR

GLACIER AND ICE-AGE THEORIES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1830S

4.1 Professor Bernhardi’s Polar Caps

In 1832 an article appeared in the reputable *Jahrbuch für Mineralogie* under the somewhat long-winded heading: “How did the rock fragments and drift one finds in northern Germany and in the neighboring countries come to their present locations?”

Its author was Reinhard Bernhardi. A few months beforehand he had been invested with a professorship in forestry at the small forestry academy in Dreißigacker, Thuringia. His foregoing career had been quite multifacette: Bernhardi was born 1797 in Ostrau in the Province of Kurhessen. Soon afterwards his family moved to Zierenberg near Cassel, where Bernhardi’s father accepted a new curacy. He taught his two sons himself until they were able to enter university. The parsonage included a “not inconsiderable farm” (“nicht unbedeutende Landwirthschaft”), the upkeep of which became Reinhard’s and his brother Sigismund’s responsibility. Reinhard thus began wrestling with agricultural problems early in life. In 1814 under pressure by his family he started studying theology at the University of Marburg. He graduated in 1818 and was ordained into priesthood. To be able to assist his sickly father in the exercise of his duties in the parish, Reinhard accepted a post as private tutor with relatives living only an hour away from the small town of Zierenberg. He also helped out with tending the land there and was “actively” involved in the newly founded provincial Agricultural Club for Hessen. In 1824 the local government appointed him

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1 Wie kamen die aus dem Norden stammenden Felsbruchstücke und Geschiebe, welche man in Norddeutschland und in den benachbarten Ländern findet, an ihre gegenwärtigen Fundorte?: Bernhardi 1832a, 257–267 and 419.
2 Karl Christian Sigismund Bernhardi (1799–1874) studied theology, like his brother, in Marburg. Afterwards he worked as a tutor for a count in Brussels. He later became a librarian and linguist at the Universities of Leuven and Cassel. At the same time he wrote articles for various periodicals as a liberal activist for social reform. He was one of the elected members of the Frankfurt Assembly that convened in St. Paul’s Church in 1848 and from 1867 to 1870 in the parliament of the Northern German Federation as well as the Prussian house of representatives.
3 Anonymous 1849, 204.
4 “lebhaft”: ibid., 205.
on a committee to study the drop in prices of produce. It was around this time that Berhardi decided against following a career in the clergy. In an obituary in 1849 an anonymous biographer took pains to emphasize the profundity of Bernhardi’s religious feelings and his firm faith in the fundamental truths of Christianity. It had been difficult for him “to acknowledge everything that church conventions demanded of a clergyman.”\textsuperscript{5} Taking up a career in science had become his preferential course. In 1825 Bernhardi rematriculated at the University of Marburg for one semester, after which he transferred to the University of Göttingen.\textsuperscript{6} In the early 19th century this university had developed into a center for actualistically oriented geosciences within continental Europe.\textsuperscript{7} There Bernhardi attended courses by the physician and vertebrate paleontologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840) and by the mineralogist Johann Friedrich Ludwig Hausmann. Agriculture was the special emphasis he chose to place on his scientific studies. Supplemental to this academic education Bernhardi left on various trips between 1825 and autumn 1827. They took him to western Germany, the Netherlands, where his brother was living at that time, as well as to Switzerland. In autumn 1827 he was offered the teaching position in the forestry academy in Dreißigacker. According to the writer Ludwig Bechstein (1801–1860), he had been “warmly” recommended there by his teacher Blumenbach.\textsuperscript{8} From 1832 to 1843 he worked in Dreißigacker as professor. He taught physics, technology, plant physiology, soil chemistry, and geology. Bernhardi devoted particular attention to supplementing and organizing his large collection of minerals.\textsuperscript{9} Evidently a quite keen traveler, he maintained contacts with other scientists at that time by attending various meetings and conventions. Articles in different journals made up a large fraction of his publications. They were mainly reviews of agricultural works as well as ones in general science.\textsuperscript{10} Bernhardi’s own larger work, an “Essay on that which is now (1830) known about geology,”\textsuperscript{11} appeared in 1832 in the Netherlands, where he probably had contacts since traveling there. This treatise was in response to a prize question posed in 1828 by the Teylers Tweede Genootschap, a foundation for the promotion

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\item[5] “alles anzuerkennen, was die hergebrachte kirchliche Form von einem Geistlichen erforderte”: ibid.
\item[6] Ibid.
\item[7] Bülow 1960, 166.
\item[9] Anonymous 1849, 205.
\item[10] Ibid., 206.
\item[11] Abhandlung über das, was man von der Erde jetzt (1830) weiß: Bernhardi 1832b.
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