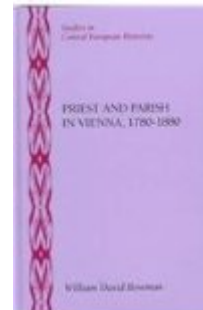


William David Bowman. *Priest and Parish in Vienna, 1780-1880*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
xxiii + 268 pp. \$60.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-391-04094-6.



Reviewed by Joseph F. Patrouch

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William D. Bowman's book on the parish clergy in Vienna developed out of a Johns Hopkins University dissertation that was awarded the Austrian Cultural Institute's Best Dissertation Prize for 1990-1991. The book is based on research in various Vienna-area archives, including the Dioezesanarchiv Wien, the Priesterseminar Wien, the Niederoesterreichisches Landesarchiv, the Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv and the Stiftsarchiv Klosterneuburg. Published in the Humanities Press series "Studies in Central European Histories" edited by Thomas A. Brady, Jr. and Roger Chickering, Bowman's book complements the series' offerings on Roman Catholic workers and political parties in the modern period and offers a detailed overview of the shifting social landscape of the Vienna archdiocese and parish priests' responses to it.

In five chapters densely documented with nineteen tables and five figures, Bowman sketches the newly-expanded Vienna archdiocese, (the archdiocesan boundaries were redrawn under the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II, 1765-90), the social origins of the priests, their ed-

ucation, their incomes, and their relationship to sacraments and feast days. In so doing, he takes his reader from the famous era of reform under Joseph II and his mother, Maria Theresa, to the world of party politics and the development of the still-important Christian Social movement. Bowman argues that the background and training of Viennese clerics did not prepare them well for the urbanizing and industrializing world of nineteenth-century Vienna and the province of Lower Austria.

Much of the book reads like a prelude to the later, twentieth-century political reactions of the Viennese clergy and seems very influenced by the works of John W. Boyer on the subject: Bowman ends his final substantive chapter with the line, "(m)any Catholic priests were ready to be politicized into the Christian Social movement" (p. 204). The chapters on the origins and training of the secular clergy offer important information about just who these clerics were. As Bowman points out, his work fits into the general literature on "religion as a subject of social and cultural analysis, as opposed to strict studies of church institu-

tions or ecclesiastical or theological debates" (p. 7). The book is also related to milieu studies and the analysis of the development of a Roman Catholic milieu as "a response to the process of modernization and the coming of cultural modernity to Central Europe" (p. 11).

Building on the influential works of the early modernists Anna Coreth[1] and R.J.W. Evans[2], Bowman repeats the argument that Roman Catholicism could "...help unite the disparate peoples of the Austrian empire" (p. 1). In his conclusion, he continues, "(t)hrough its front-line representatives, parish priests, Catholicism in the nineteenth century was supposed to provide the foundation for a cohesive Austria culture..." (pp. 218-19). According to Bowman, however, the clerics of the Vienna archdiocese were not able to serve this unifying function. They became increasingly frustrated and anxious; by the end of the nineteenth century they "...felt themselves to be under siege..." (p. 212).

The sources Bowman uses, particularly the matriculation records of the Vienna seminary that he analyzes in detail in Chapter III, are better able to provide a description of the priests than information about their "siege mentality." The strength of Bowman's book is to be found in the depth of descriptive information rather than in this aspect of its overall argument.

After an introductory chapter that surveys the new archdiocese and lays out the geographic and demographic challenges facing the Viennese clergy, Bowman dives into an excellent, detailed analysis of the 1017 men who were recorded to have been ordained in the archdiocese in 1804-15 and 1822-65. He places his analysis within the international scholarship on the social history of modern European clerics. Another strength of this chapter follows Bowman's decision to incorporate records of regular clergy from the monastery of Klosterneuburg for comparative purposes. In 1866, Bowman writes, 26.5 percent of the priests

in the archdiocese were regulars, and many of these led parishes.

Bowman's analysis reveals that only 56.2 percent of the priests came from the province of Lower Austria or the city of Vienna. Many of the priests had roots in Bohemia or Moravia (approximately one third of the total), and few came from Hungary. Their fathers were most commonly skilled artisans or well-off peasants. This social composition of the clergy did not change much with time, so while Vienna and parts of Lower Austria were increasingly industrialized and urbanized, the parish clergy remained tied to the rural world. This fact would have important consequences for Bowman's argument concerning the widening gap between priest and public over the course of the period he studied.

Chapter IV on the priests' education is, like Chapter III, firmly and effectively based on contemporary sources, sources such as the qualifying examinations to become a parish priest, the textbooks employed in university theology study in Vienna, and the circulars periodically distributed to parish priests throughout the archdiocese. Bowman concludes: "(t)he concentration of priests' education was... upon the bureaucratic relationships of church to state and priest to parishioner" (p. 129). This emphasis on regulations, Bowman argues, was at the expense of training in dealing with the complex shifts in the political and economic worlds of the city and the province.

After clearly laying out who the priests were and of what their education was composed, Bowman turns to probably the best chapter in his book, on the analysis of parish finances. Readers familiar with the intricacies of the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II will appreciate the uses to which Bowman puts the ample evidence. Famous across Austria for shutting down monasteries and convents that would then be used as prisons, hospitals, firehouses, warehouses, etc., this eighteenth-century reshaping of religious organizations also reorganized the parishes. This

was meant to ensure access to churches for as many Roman Catholics as possible. How these new parishes were to be financed was a problem. Bowman points out that many were underfunded. The differences between monastery parishes, old parishes with a variety of endowed funds to support the priests, and the new government-created parishes created splits within the clergy. The large number of clergy in insecure financial situations, Bowman argues, contributed to their sense of anxiety in the shifting social worlds of modernity.

The final chapter discusses topics such as the priestly administration of Baptism and Holy Communion. Bowman succumbs to the temptation to generalize and enter into "the priests' minds"(p. 187), minds about which Bowman seems to have at least some scepticism. His work emphasizes material conditions and administrative responsibilities and incorporated concepts such as faith or belief only rarely into the analysis. His use of quotation marks around the concept of being called to be a priest underlines the difficulties historians of religious life often face when confronted with the fact that many of the people they study were actual believers.

Bowman's substantial contribution to the comparative study of Roman Catholic clerics and the social history of the Vienna archdiocese in the nineteenth century is only slightly weakened by his materialist emphasis (which may be forgiven in a work of social history) and his tendency to explain something (clerics and Christian Socialism) that is to a large extent outside of the chronological limits of his study. His work would have been strengthened by a structured treatment of women. While it may seem that a book about Roman Catholic priests is justified in excluding women from its analysis given the modern emphasis on clerical celibacy, it hardly needs to be pointed out that in the parish -- which is half of Bowman's title -- a substantial number of the people with whom the priests would regularly interact were women and girls.

Almost the only mention of women in the book is as sexual partners for priests, who were then subject to ecclesiastical punishment. In the chapter on education, Bowman mentions in passing the strict regulations concerning prospective priests' contacts with women. This aspect of the priests' education could have had striking consequences when the clerics left their homosocial world to take over a parish and were suddenly confronted with the extremely different world outside the seminary. The priests' education as bureaucrats did not provide training in relating to the economic shifts of the nineteenth century. It also could not have prepared the young cleric for the social world in which he would be expected to live the rest of his career. To leave women out of the analysis of parish-priest relations seems to leave out another important aspect of the shifting social landscape of the nineteenth-century Viennese and Lower Austrian worlds.

Notes

[1]. Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca: Oesterreichische Froemmigkeit im Barock* (Second Edition: Vienna, Verlag fur Geschichte und Politik, 1982).

[2]. R.J.W. Evans, *Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550-1700: An Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

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