



BOOK REVIEW

## Berg, Scott. *Finding Order in Diversity: Religious Toleration in the Habsburg Empire, 1792–1848*

West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2022. Pp. 366.

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There are a few durable historical chestnuts related to the Habsburg Empire: that it was a sclerotic, tottering, ungovernable mess in long-term decline; that its inevitable decline was tied directly to the nationalism that dominated its historical trajectory; and, that it was defined by the dynasty's (and therefore society's) rigid Catholicism, which embraced intolerance and religious uniformity. Scholars have, in recent years, persuasively unraveled the first two assumptions. Scott Berg's timely work takes up the last. In a book that seeks to revise fundamentally how we view the religious history of Central Europe, Berg argues for the Habsburg Empire as a principal, indeed unique, site for toleration in the first half of the nineteenth century. That chronological framing is particularly unexpected, as he situates much of his monograph during the reign of Francis II, a monarch rarely associated with either toleration or forward-thinking policies.

Berg's monograph has a number of important interventions to make in the historiography. One involves how we view the impact of Joseph's reforms. Narrating the history of Josephism primarily through Joseph as a ruler leads us to emphasize the defeat and despair of his projects at the end of his life. Berg, instead, follows those ideas and plans through the individuals tasked with implementing them and the reasons they were so committed to seeing Joseph's ideas in action even after Joseph had left the scene. The dynasty's hold on our historical imagination has tended to obscure the complex and varied individuals who actually administered and ran the state. Berg returns them to the center of the story, as well as those outside the state who sought to revitalize Catholicism and/or prevent the visibility and practices of non-Catholics of all types. This makes for a complex, well-researched book that is simultaneously stuffed with historical details and still marvelously readable.

It is worth emphasizing what this book has achieved in terms of religious history. By seeing religious policy as only in part determined by a top-down process, Berg takes us into the streets (and publications) of not just Vienna but the wider German-speaking arena, where we can see how religiosity played out as a matter of public discourse. But he also follows religious activists, reformers, and policy-makers across the non-German Habsburg space. This allows us to rethink Habsburg history, religious history, and the ways we have chronologically framed both.

Francis II is also long overdue for an interpretive revisit, and Berg's account directly takes on the received wisdom about the emperor who has traditionally been most associated with reactionary politics in Central Europe. No doubt Francis's historical portrait was shaped by the politics of 1848 and after when nationalist historians looked back on the earlier reign to condemn the stymying of nationalist aspirations under Francis and his chancellor, Clemens von Metternich. While Francis comes across as ambivalent in Berg's work, he was a key player in allowing the religious reformers who entered administration under his uncle Joseph II to remain extraordinarily influential in setting policy in the decades after Joseph's death. In Berg's account, Francis emerges as both a product of the Enlightenment and an individual deeply affected by years of revolution and existential threat.

More dynamically, Berg's focus on the decades before the Revolutions of 1848 allows for a significant reinterpretation of what was going on in the empire during those decades. We have here, therefore, not just a reinterpretation of the dynamics of Habsburg debates about religion but also of how these issues entered the public sphere and the individuals who were engaged with them.

Berg demonstrates that the Vormärz was about more than Metternich's stranglehold on German intellectual and cultural life, and Metternich also shows up here as a more complex character. Berg's focus on Clement Mary Hofbauer is illustrative—the individual who goes from loathed persecuted Redemptorist to urban patron saint—and has so much to tell us about what happens to religious practice and policy in this period.

Berg's work underscores the reinterpretations of recent Habsburg history, in particular seeing how religious policies and attitudes, rather than being forces of reaction and retrenchment, gave the Habsburg state important tools, what he calls the "mechanisms of pluralism," for facing internal divisions of various sorts. That he follows the dynamics to the borders of Habsburg space allows him to see how interreligious dynamics were at work at different levels of administration and popular contestation. Religion was part of the way that other identities were also defined and negotiated—politically and culturally. This is a new and very welcome way of understanding how the Habsburgs and their state negotiated difference. This rich account also places the Habsburg religious narrative into a wider dynamic of both modernization and religious revival in the nineteenth century. Beyond studies of war and diplomacy, there is often a tendency to see Habsburg history self-referentially, as a matter of internal Habsburg realities. Berg demonstrates how effective it is to instead plug Habsburg history back into Europe and beyond.

No book can do everything (though in its scope Berg's comes close). The book's greatest strengths are in the post-Napoleonic sections. Likely because he was in power so briefly, Leopold II is ephemeral here, but he was simultaneously an enlightened ruler and was faced with managing the various crises that Joseph's rule had unleashed. It would have been interesting to see in more detail how the individuals occupying Berg's narrative managed that brief period, not least because Leopold's time in Tuscany had burnished his reputation as a particularly tolerant and open ruler. Berg tends to treat the Enlightenment as a singular, uncontested thing and moves uncomplicatedly between the 1790s, the Napoleonic conflicts, and the restoration. This begs the question of whether treating this with greater nuance might yield a new understanding of what was at stake for reformers. Francis similarly raises some questions. Berg makes clear how he was swayed by Josephists around him (or by the papacy and its advocates), but I would have welcomed a more sustained discussion of Francis's attitudes, religious practices, and motivations.

Berg's volume is a tour-de-force of European religious history. It draws on extensive archival research and demonstrates a mastery of published sources. This book should be required reading for anyone interested in nineteenth-century Europe.