

FINAL REPORT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROJECT

Parish Priests in Late Medieval Germany

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This final report addresses the results of a research project funded by an ATU Professional Development Grant. I received \$5000. This report follows the instructions provided in the Guidelines for Professional Development Grants.

A. Title Page (see above)

B. Restatement of Problem Researched

Research in the religious history of Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries has long moved beyond studies of kings, popes and reformers to study the roles played by various social groups in embracing or resisting religious change. One group that has attracted recent attention is the lower clergy, made up of common parish priests, simple pastors, lowly local ministers, and village vicars. Historians have especially focused on how early-modern clerics—whether Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist or Anglican—redefined their religious and professional identities in the light of the changes brought by the Protestant and Catholic Reformations and the so-called ‘confessional age’ (the period 1500-1700).

Less understood is the professional identity of the parish priest in the previous century: in many ways the ‘base-line’ from which to understand the changes of the 16th and 17th centuries. My dissertation and subsequent research has sought to fill in this gap by studying the expectations placed upon parish priests in southern Germany during the 15th century and how these clerics negotiated their duties and status: that is, how these priests at the bottom of the ecclesiastical hierarchy interacted with the episcopal hierarchy above them and the patronage, parish and civic networks around them.

C. Brief Review of Research Procedure Utilized

I have signed a contract to publish in 2008 an updated version of my dissertation. In order to complete the manuscript, the publisher and I agreed that additional research needed to be done, and the literature review and bibliography needed to be brought up-to-date. In May and June 2007, I traveled to Germany to pursue research in order to accomplish these requirements. My work proceeded along two tracks:

1. A review of recent and regional scholarship on my theme, published between 1996 and 2007. This consisted of database research, systematically paging through suitable bound journals, and reading appropriate articles and monographs. This allowed me to acquaint myself thoroughly with recent scholarship on my topic, seeing where work has been done, new questions asked, and likewise, noting areas where research has not advanced.

2. The collection of additional examples of two types of documents.

- A. Manuals for pastoral care: guidebooks written by and for parish priests. These detail in simple language the liturgical and sacramental duties of the common priest. Often shortened and simplified versions of academic treatises, these manuals poured off the printing presses of the late-15th century but none of them exist in modern editions.

- B. Endowment agreements: contracts between wealthy patrons and local priests to

endow new clerical positions or to finance new priestly duties, whether sermons, memorial masses, or visits to a filial chapel. These agreements not only define the tasks to be carried out, but they also reveal characteristics desired in the priest as well as any demands raised by the clerical candidate. They are, in effect, job descriptions and negotiated contracts.

I sought and collected these additional sources—both primary and secondary—while working at the University Library in Tuebingen and the Wuerttemberg State Library and Archive in Stuttgart.

D. Summary of Findings

I had a very successful trip. I am fully confident that my library work will result in a book that addresses the current state of scholarship. I did collect sufficient primary sources to add a new chapter to my book and enhance another chapter. I will rewrite my introduction (state of the question and literature review) to address current trends and questions in scholarship. Likewise, I will rewrite various sections throughout the book. My comprehensive literature review also revealed to me those chapters and sections that do not require any rewriting at all. I am now actively involved in the task of writing what will become the final draft of the manuscript.

I also made and strengthened contacts with historians in Germany. I met with both Professor Bernd Hamm of Erlangen and Dr. Henning Ziebritzki of the publishing house Mohr-Siebeck in Tuebingen. Together, Hamm and Ziebritzki publish the series “Late Middle Ages and Reformation.” Most of their titles are written in German but they are interested in expanding the series to include English-language works. Although my current book will appear with another publishing house, both Hamm and Ziebritzki expressed interest in working with me on future projects.

Finally, 40 days and 40 nights in Germany provided plenty of experiences and digital photographs to enhance my teaching of European history.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

The funds I received from the ATU Professional Development Grant will allow me to publish a top-rate historical monograph with a publishing house serving a wide international network (Brill Publishers, the Netherlands). My appreciation to Arkansas Tech will be stated prominently in the acknowledgments.