

“Modus vivendi” (1878)

Abstract

The caption to this cartoon is slightly ambiguous, as is the German phrase uttered by the Pope, “geniren Sie sich nicht,” which can be translated variously as “make yourself at home,” “speak quite frankly,” or “don’t trouble yourself.” When Bismarck replies that the Pope should do the same (with a similarly outstretched boot), the point is clear: neither side will have to abase itself to come to a “modus vivendi” (that is, a practical compromise that bypasses difficulties) allowing the *Kulturkampf* to wind down. The leader of the Catholic Center Party, Ludwig Windthorst (1812–1891), who peeks through the curtain, is skeptical about a permanent reconciliation between church and state: Will it lead to his party’s loss of influence? The cartoon originally appeared in the satirical magazine *Kladderadatsch* in 1878: a time when political insiders were already aware of Bismarck’s desire to abandon the *Kulturkampf* and draw Windthorst’s party into a future Reichstag majority. At the time, “modus vivendi” was a widely-understood term referring to an accommodation between church and state.

Source



Source: “Modus vivendi” (1878). Caricature of Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf* with the Catholic Church and the Pope. Wood engraving from *Kladderadatsch*.

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