

Philipp Zwyszig, Täler voller Wunder. Eine katholische Verflechtungsgeschichte der Drei Bünde und des Veltlins (17. und 18. Jahrhundert), Affalterbach (Didymos-Verlag) 2018, 468 S., 68 farb. Abb. (Kulturgeschichten. Studien zur Frühen Neuzeit, 5), ISBN 978-3-939020-46-2, EUR 59,00.

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Philip M. Soergel, College Park, MD

Today those who motor through the Engadine or the Val Müstair find few traces of the brutal struggles that characterized the region's 17th-century history. This is Switzerland's most remote and sparsely settled canton, the Graubünden, which is peopled with communities that speak three languages (German, Italian, and Romansh) and a cluster of dialects. The towns and villages of the Graubünden, or in French, the Grisons, prosper off tourism and from the ski trade at glamorous resorts like St. Moritz and Davos.

The past knew little of this prosperity. The steep mountain valleys of the area meant that little land here was suitable for farming or husbandry. The canton, known as the Drei Bünde in the late medieval and early modern periods, possessed a strategic importance that far outweighed its economic insignificance. In the 16th century, Protestantism spread in these valleys, encouraged by local traditions of communal autonomy in religious matters, and by 1620, the »Drei Bünde«, and its dominions in the Italian Valtellina, were a patchwork of Catholic and Protestant towns and villages. The canton's position as a guardian of mountain passes consequently placed the region straight in the crosshairs of the struggles of the Thirty Years' War, with France and Venice aiding Protestant forces in the region and the Austrian Habsburg's Catholic ones.

It is not these disputes that are the primary *foci* of Philipp Zwyszig's »Täler voller Wunder«. This book, a revision of Zwyszig's 2016 Bern dissertation, is instead an examination of the region's religion and its connections to the campaigns of recatholicization that the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and the counter-reforming orders, especially the Capuchins, waged there from the 1620s onward. Ultimately, these efforts helped produce a dramatic outpouring of Catholic religiosity. This florescence was evident in a resurgence of pilgrimages and their attendant miracles, the »valleys full of wonders« evoked in the book's title. It also was evident in a sacralized landscape, and in the building of numerous Baroque churches and pilgrimage shrines. These were testimony to the fervent Catholicism that developed in the canton and to its broader engagement with the curia and the missionary orders of the Catholic Reformation.



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Zwyssig divides his book into three sections, the first of which examines the contours of what he terms »translocal Catholicism« (*translokaler Katholizismus*). Here he traces the entanglements that developed in the 17th century between the Drei Bünde, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, the Roman curia generally, and the missionary orders. In 1621, the pope authorized the Capuchins to undertake the Rhaetian mission to the Protestant communities in the Drei Bünde, recognizing the place's importance as a gateway to Italy. These efforts, were by mid-century unsuccessful, and so the Capuchins turned to labor among the region's Catholics, aiming to deepen their religious commitment to Rome. The first of the work's sections, then, concentrates on the actors and practices that were vital to these missionary efforts.

In the second section of the book, »Barocke Gnadenlandschaften: Aneignungen und Deutungen eines konfessionellen Grenzraums« (Baroque Landscapes of Grace: Appropriations and Interpretations of a Confessional Border Area), Zwyssig turns to examine the ways in which the Drei Bünde's deepening ties with Italy and the international Catholic world produced a »landscape of grace«. Chief among the attributes of this new sacral geography were the many impressive Baroque churches and chapels that appeared in the region from the second half of the 17th century onward. Pious awe was the chief aim of this architectural policy, with the highly polished and ornate interiors of such structures intended to contrast markedly with the character of lives led in the rustic and rough-hewn villages of the alpine region. This outpouring of Baroque architectural achievements is beautifully evoked in the book's 68 handsome illustrations, many of which are in color and which Zwyssig photographed himself.

In the final section of the work, »Ökonomien des (Un)Heils: Religiöse Erfahrungswelten und Ambivalenzen im Umgang mit dem Sakralen«, (Economies of (Un)salvation: Religious Worlds of Experience and Ambivalences in Dealing with the Sacred), Zwyssig examines the changes wrought in Drei Bünde's religious life as a result of contact with the foreign missionaries. These included, among others, the sowing of devotions to Italians like the Capuchin Francesco Maria da Vigevano (d. 1692) and the Jesuit Luigi Gonzaga (1568–1591). The latter came to be revered through clerical promotion of the miracles worked by the oil from the burning lamp beside his image in the parish church at Sazzo (p. 309). The former had served as an experienced diplomat and missionary for the Capuchin order in a sixty-year career in the canton. On the day of his burial, a four-year-old girl was cured of partial blindness and eye pain, an event that inspired the development of a new devotion (p. 351–357). A number of other new cults appeared in these centuries as the result of clerical and lay agency as both enthusiastically sought out cures and saintly intercessions. And interestingly, while the flowering of new devotions may have helped inoculate Catholic villages from Protestant ideas, the Drei Bünde's regular clergy clearly saw themselves competing against each other for advantage as they ministered to the laity.



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Zwyssig's study reveals a vast knowledge of the folklore and ethnography of this remote Alpine region, and while the text resembles more a dissertation than a book, the methods demonstrated here provide a model for future examinations of local religions and their transregional connections. This study combines both a focus on the native elements of the Drei Bünde's religion with consideration of the changes brought to the region through external contacts. This dual attention – inspired by the methods of »entangled history« (*histoire croisée*) – stands in marked contrast to the confessionalization thesis that dominated much early modern religious historiography until the 1980s. Those studies frequently portrayed religious change in these centuries as often a top-down affair aided by an alliance between secular and clerical officialdom. Zwyssig's work also stands to caution newer strands of South German and Swiss historiography that have emphasized the great autonomy of the local *Gemeinde* in defining religious practice. As he shows, both transregional encounters and local realities must be taken into account when treating the religion of a locality. His fine study consequently provides an exemplary model for future regional work, not only in remote Alpine valleys, but elsewhere in the Catholic world.



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