

Ulrich Pfister, *Konfessionskirchen, Glaubenspraxis und Konflikt in Graubünden, 16.–18. Jahrhundert*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2012 (*Religion und Politik* 1), 543 p. – ISBN 978-3-89913-838-2.

Ulrich Pfister's broad new study of confessional institutions, politics and life in Graubünden in the early modern period offers an impressive combination of original research and thoughtful synthesis. *Konfessionskirchen, Glaubenspraxis und Konflikt in Graubünden, 16.–18. Jahrhundert* provides one of the most multi-faceted approaches to the religious history of any single political region in Europe during the confessional era. Pfister's contribution not only represents a new standard work for historians of Graubünden and of religious culture in early modern Switzerland, but will also become an important point of reference for all comparative studies of religious change under various political, economic and social circumstances in this period.

Although Pfister profitably incorporates a wide range of older literature – much of it overtly confessional but valuable for its close engagement with local history – a clear methodological framework unifies his book, namely the confessionalization model that has predominated in post-Reformation scholarship for the last generation (as articulated in the work of Wolfgang Reinhard and especially Heinz Schilling). Pfister carefully incorporates various critiques of Schilling's »strong« confessionalization thesis with its primary focus on state-formation, however, and offers his study of Graubünden – mixed in confession and lacking effective state institutions – as way to reestablish the value of a more nuanced (or »weak«) confessionalization model. Pfister identifies four primary features of his approach (19): (1) He redefines confessionalization in terms of the sociology of knowledge (*wissenssoziologisch*), with particular attention to »Veränderungen in der Struktur des Glaubenspraxis«. Pfister argues that verbal discourses gained in importance after 1500 across Europe, transforming religious conflict and emphasizing individual knowledge and discernment among clergy and laity alike. Not surprisingly, therefore, Michel Foucault and especially Norbert Elias appear among his theoretical points of reference. (2) He explains changes in church institutions not primarily in terms of dysfunction or abuses, but rather in terms of

these institutions' ability to transmit and construct new religious practices (for both confessions) that had positive social functions, thus attracting individual and community support. (3) He analyzes religious conflict in terms of broader changes in »mentalen Konfliktcodes«. And finally (4), he analyzes an area of mixed rather than unitary confessional adherence, thus including comparison between Catholic and Protestant developments in every aspect of his analysis. As these points show, Pfister remains firmly attached to structural-functional modes of explanation. His book thus represents a nuanced defense of both confessionalization and structural history in general against the hermeneutic and cultural turn of the 1990s (although he readily draws on recent cultural historiography in his analysis.)

One benefit of Pfister's rigorous orientation to the structural background of events and actions is that he is able to provide a remarkably coherent narrative of Graubünden's religious history during the nearly three centuries from the early Reformation to the Enlightenment. Two features of this narrative are noteworthy. First, Pfister reveals that religious change in Graubünden largely conformed to patterns observable across Europe, despite the region's anomalous politics and social organization. Specific developments might have been precocious or modestly delayed, but Graubünden's overall path through the confessional era hewed closely to European norms. Second, within this relatively familiar narrative, Pfister succeeds in explaining the nature and tempo of specific events by connecting them to particular features of Bündner politics and society. The strength of his arguments testifies to the effectiveness of well-executed political sociology based on extensive evidence.

Pfister's exposition of the early Reformation and its aftermath in the Three Leagues generally follows the picture found in the more recent literature. Chapter 1 addresses the region's institutional framework on the threshold of the Reformation, concentrating on a pattern that he calls »pre-confessional reform«. The shift of advowsons (*Kollaturen*) from clerical or noble hands into the control of communes – beginning in the fifteenth century and greatly accelerated by the 1526 Second Ilanz Articles – enabled an anti-clerical movement of church reform to predominate in Graubünden

by the 1540s, with only limited references to specifically »evangelical« theological or ecclesiological claims. Building on the fine work of Immacolata Saulle-Hippenmeyer and Oskar Vasella, Pfister confirms that local congregations readily seized control of church endowments and the power to appoint pastors, whether or not they also adopted Protestant teachings. In an appendix, Pfister also provides a comprehensive description of the number and adherence of all Bündner congregations through the eighteenth century – no small feat given Graubünden’s tangled ecclesiastical geography.

In chapter 3, Pfister focuses on the emerging Reformed church in Graubünden and its institutions. Although early religious unrest was directed against the Bishop of Chur’s jurisdiction, evangelical ideas flourished where a humanistically educated elite cooperated with communalist populism, as in the lower Rhine valley and the Engadine. Both the theological discourses in European circulation and Graubünden’s geo-political neighborhood created pressures that eventually welded the early evangelical *Gemeindekirchen* into a theologically orthodox and systematically organized Protestant movement – even though local congregations long showed little interest in such a path. The founding of a Reformed Synod in 1537 was an important step, but Reformed orthodoxy confronted powerful challenges from a homegrown Anabaptist movement and the irenic ideas of the Italian *exuli* who found refuge from persecution in the Republic’s Italian-speaking valleys. Not until the 1580s were the Synod’s leaders able to examine candidates for the pastorate, finally allowing them to exclude heterodox preachers from parishes. A more uniform clergy enabled the encouragement of new forms of moral and behavioral discipline among the clergy and population. Despite Graubünden’s stunningly early adoption of a *cuius regio* approach to religious adherence in 1526, therefore, the formation of a confessional Reformed church took longer than in most of the Empire, and was not fully in place until the early seventeenth century.

Chapter 4 turns to Catholic institutions – above all the see of Chur – which faced enormous challenges during the sixteenth century. The bishops’ already modest income was devastated by communal seizure of church resources in the 1520s and 1530s, while

the see's awkward division between the Swiss and Habsburg spheres of influence weakened it politically. For most of the sixteenth century, control of the see became a political football among Graubünden's elite clans, culminating in the catastrophic disputed election of 1572. Implementation of Tridentine reforms was entirely beyond the bishops until after 1600; such modest efforts as took place came almost entirely from the sees of Milan and Como, which had claims over some southern valleys. Real reform occurred only after a nuntial visitation in 1598–99 and the election of a strongly pro-Tridentine bishop, Johann V Flugi, in 1601. Tridentine practices spread quickly while the cohesion the Three Leagues was disrupted during the Thirty Years' War: in addition to reorganization of the episcopal curia, the resumption of canon law court jurisdiction and renewed control over parochial appointments, the advent of Capuchin parish clergy in much of the see initiated thoroughgoing Catholic reform among the laity. The outcome followed patterns observable elsewhere in the Holy Roman Empire, including the emergence of a lively Baroque piety among Graubünden's Catholics. A brief review of the literature on the major cloisters, particularly Disentis, ends the chapter.

Chapters 5 and 6 turn from formal institutions to the clerical office as it evolved among Protestants and Catholics, and to the pious practices and cultures that became characteristic for each. Chapter 5 focuses on the professionalization of the clergy of both faiths, and its growing separation (largely imposed from above) from the everyday life of parishioners. The relative poverty of both institutional churches limited such separation, however, since clerics depended on local actors not only for their appointments but also for material support. Graubünden's Catholic church had an easier time, since it drew on outside personnel to staff the parishes with Capuchins, while Feldkirch Jesuits trained secular clergy for the see, along with Colleges in Milan and Rome. Pfister brings both a fresh perspective and fresh evidence to the place of the local clergy in Bündner society and culture, showing how they became a distinct professional group.

Chapter 6 focuses on pious practice and discipline, and rests on extensive original archival research into central and local records. Pfister argues that an increasing orientation to faith through words

rather than through collective practice characterized both faiths, though in distinctive ways. For the Reformed, Pfister identifies the regional colloquies as key sites for self-control of the clergy and for shaping the verbally-oriented faith and practices of the laity, until the church's interest in lay discipline faded in the later eighteenth century. Turning to Catholics, Pfister shows that quite different issues connected institutions to clerics to laity. For example, he makes the fascinating observations that cleanliness of liturgical paraments was a prominent concern in Catholic visitations, and that visitors systematically sought to separate sacral from profane space, for example by demanding that a manure pile be moved away from a church's walls. Pfister's discussion of piety and practice ends with concise reviews of vernacular sacred literature as it evolved (notably in Romansh), of schooling, and of the particularly virulent witch crazes that affected Graubünden.

The book's final section, dedicated to confessional conflict, is a masterpiece of systematic and structural analysis that links together the multiple elements that shaped the course of post-confessional struggles in Graubünden from their full onset around 1580 to their ebbing in the mid-eighteenth century. Local cultures of conflict; the spiritual and institutional interests of the two churches; the complex institutional landscape of parishes, neighborhoods, communes and Leagues (not to mention powerful outside instigators or mediators): all played a part in how confessional conflict – in essence a Europe-wide phenomenon – played out in this one bi-confessional corner of the continent. Pfister discusses not only the relatively well-studied conflicts that began in Bergün and the Vier Dörfer in the 1570s and 1580s and continued through the instability of the Thirty Years' War, but also analyzes the much less familiar but equally bitter struggles after 1648 in Samnaun, Poschiavo, Bivio, Sagogn, Ortenstein, and elsewhere. Particularly in the later period, such conflicts could take on two aspects: either confrontations of principle on which no compromise was possible, and which thus threatened to divide not only the communes involved, but the entire Republic; or confrontations over resources that could be solved by agreements about allocation and distribution (often negotiated in part by powerful outsiders). By the eighteenth century, elite actors had developed a repertoire of tac-

tics to avert confrontations over principles, helping to defang the destructive potential of these conflicts.

After a brief overview of the end of the confessional era, connected with new modes of piety among the Reformed (Pietism) and the eventual collapse of the traditional see of Chur for the Catholics, Pfister concludes with an overview of his main contributions. These include the following: (1) a new periodization of confessionalism in Graubünden – one ultimately synchronous with European patterns, but inflected by local conditions; (2) a demonstration that confessionalization in Graubünden took place separately from political consolidation (*Staatsbildung*), thus allowing insights into the non-political dimensions of confessionalization across Europe; (3) a characterization of the new forms of piety that emerged, largely through willing appropriation by the autonomous congregations of Graubünden, that emphasized universalist and verbally-oriented practices – processes that (4) took place in parallel among Catholic and Reformed communities, often generating intense conflict along the way. Pfister thus asserts that his analysis of Graubünden allows (5) a more precise and empirical delineation of the »conceptual, material, and chronological borders of confessionalization« (462). Indeed, *Konfessionskirchen, Glaubenspraxis und Konflikt in Graubünden* not only provides a magisterial analysis of one region's religious and cultural history, but also represents a major empirical contribution – notable for its sociological logic and structural orientation – to our understanding of how the Reformation schism and the subsequent ecclesio-political landscape fundamentally shaped European history. While debate will continue over many of Pfister's specific conclusions as well as over how to balance empiricist and hermeneutic approaches to large-scale phenomena like the »confessional era«, every student of Graubünden and early modern Switzerland, and every theorist of religious conflict and accommodation in Europe, stands to benefit from Pfister's contribution.

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