

Reviews

Adamoli, Davide. *Confraternite della Svizzera italiana*. Vol. 1: *Storia di una presenza dal 1291 a oggi*. Vol. 2: *Le 1155 Compagnie devote attive nelle parrocchie*. Lugano, CH: Ritter Edizioni, 2015. 511, 432 pp., CD, b/w and colour ill. No ISBN (hardcover) 100 CHF.

One does not think of Switzerland, the birthplace Huldrych Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger, and the adopted home of such reformers as John Calvin and Guillaume Farel, as a place rich in confraternities and Catholic lay piety, and yet at least one part of Switzerland was, and continues to be such a place—the Ticino. Here, in *la Svizzera italiana* Catholicism continued to prosper and, especially in the wake of the Council of Trent, to grow rich in confraternities and other such lay religious organizations. Though somehow overlooked by mainstream scholarship on confraternities, the Italian-speaking canton of Switzerland is clearly a fertile ground for new scholarship and new insights into early modern (and modern) lay religious piety, as Davide Adamoli's massive two-volume study amply demonstrates.

In this first extensive scholarly work on confraternities in the Ticino Adamoli documents 1155 different confraternal organizations that have, at one time or another, existed in the Ticino. The earliest dates from 1291, just a few decades after the flagellant movement inspired by the Franciscan hermit Raniero Fasani began to spread from Perugia, in central Italy, to other parts of the peninsula. The latest date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Aside from the historical analysis and documentation that Adamoli provides, there is also an extensive series of photographs, illustrations, charts, and maps to help round out the investigation.

The work is divided into two large, folio-sized volumes that reflect the two different projects that fed into it. The first is a reworking of Adamoli's doctoral thesis on confraternities in the Ticino; the second presents the documentation, gathered from about 80 different parishes, that supports the wider analysis carried out by Adamoli in the first volume and contextualizes it at the local level. In fact, the "local" factor and pride in the religious history of the Ticino are very important factors in the analysis; as Adamoli points out, citing Virgilio Gilardoni, confraternities helped to build "our ancient 'local civilizations'" (14). What is also important is Adamoli's definition of what a confraternity is, for it allows him both to gather together a variety of organizations and, at the same time, keep the focus on the spiritual intent at the root of his research on such associations of lay people. As he points out,

For our part, we believe that a confraternity can be defined as a 'social body founded on a volunteer basis, endowed with minimal internal structure (regulations, hierarchy), dedicated to broadly understood charitable and educational activities,

and with primarily spiritual ends, the *salus animarum*.' This last idea is essential: unlike other forms of association, even within the Church, a confraternity has as its primary goal to accompany, in the spirit of brotherhood, the faithful to salvation, that is to say, to a full adherence to Christ in life and after death. (14, my translation)

The definition may seem overly 'faith-based' to some historians, but it does point to an element of confraternal life that we often forget—the spiritual component.

Adamoli's first volume seeks to fulfil two very different aims: first, to present a chronological and geographical overview of the rise and development of confraternities in the Ticino; second, to offer insights into the relevance such confraternities had for both the individuals that joined them and the community that fostered them. This second aim raises a number of important considerations, such as the level of religious fervour among the laity, the participation of women and immigrants in confraternities, the degree of such participation, differences wrought by regional variants (in the case of Switzerland, variants such as those between mountain and valley communities or between Roman and Ambrosian rite Catholics). To facilitate the discussion, the first volume is divided into four main parts. The first reviews the early history of confraternities in Italy and Europe and presents the first references to confraternities in the Ticino from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. The second focuses on the post-Tridentine reforms spearheaded by reforming bishops such as the future saint Carlo Borromeo from Milan and various bishops of Como (the diocesan capital for most of the Ticino at the time). Their efforts saw the dramatic rise in Sacrament, Doctrine, and Rosary confraternities, as well as confraternities dedicated to St. Roch. In this section, Adamoli also discusses Borromeo's aims, the results of his actions, and the rise of confraternities in the two centuries that followed him. In fact, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the maximum expansion of confraternities in the Ticino. At this point, Adamoli moves to a thematic discussion of baroque confraternities by looking at their charitable activities, their incorporation of new immigrants, the arrival of new devotions, and the social and political roles confraternities played in the Ticino. The fourth part moves forward chronologically to discuss confraternities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These were difficult times for lay religious sodalities marked, among other things, by the disappearance of nearly two-thirds of Ticino's parishes. This first volume ends with a list of bishops of Como, Milan, and Lugano from 1550 to the present and with a rich bibliography of sources both on general Church history and on the history of the Church in the Ticino.

The second volume presents a systematic, parish by parish description of the various confraternities, extant and not extant, in each parish. This listing is illustrated with charts and a myriad of photographs of

processions, rituals, confraternal events, etc., from the late nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. There is also a CD with Adamoli's doctoral thesis (855 pp.) and many more charts and photographs.

This two-volume work on confraternities in the Ticino is not only a monumental contribution to the study of lay religious life in the Italian canton of Switzerland, but also a fundamental starting point for further research by future scholars.

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Desmette, Philippe. *Dans le sillage de la Réforme catholique: les confréries religieuses dans le nord du diocèse de Cambrai (1559–1786)*. Bruxelles: Académie royale de Belgique, 2010. Pp. 423. ISBN 978-2-8031-0266-2 (paperback) € 30.

Philippe Desmette's book explores the evolution and influence of rural and urban confraternities in the north of the Diocese of Cambrai between 1559, the year that Philip II began reforming Franco-Netherlandish dioceses in response to the Reformation, and 1786, the year marked by Joseph II's suppression and disbanding of confraternities. The book consists of nine chapters gathered into two parts. In the first half of the text, Desmette uncovers the foundations, day-to-day organisation, and administration of the diocese's northern confraternal network.

The period 1660–1679 saw a great number of confraternal foundations. However, a decline in interest in confraternal culture occurred shortly thereafter and very few confraternities were established in the eighteenth century, especially after 1750. Although previous scholarship has attributed the decline to the reforms of Joseph II, Desmette argues here that it came about with the rise of individualism and the development of personal piety.

The eighteenth century's emphasis on personal devotion over collectively piety negatively affected the creation of new confraternities and damaged already established confraternities. Participation was episodic throughout the century and many general assemblies were plagued with low attendance rates. Some confraternities even experienced high rates of absenteeism. A study of confraternal finances underlines how this issue posed a serious threat to the stability of confraternal institutions. It was the responsibility of the general assembly to finance a confraternity's day-to-day activities, either through the collection of membership fees or annuities. Without support from the general assembly, a confraternity ceased to function and its future became uncertain.