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Katholische Kirche in Bayern 1945–1960. Religion, Gesellschaft und
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Still today Bavaria is regarded as the most Catholic region in Germany. Surprisingly though, very little is known about the history of Bavarian Catholicism in postwar Germany. For the first time this topic is presented in a thoroughly researched and scholarly work.

Modernization and a changing society have not been without effects on the Catholic Church and its members. The transformation of traditional Catholic attitudes, however, differed significantly in urban and rural areas. The book examines this phenomenon as it occurs in the rural district of Ebersberg, the tourist region of Berchtesgaden, and the city of Munich. It is able to demonstrate how modern society, religious rites, and pastoral were mutually influential during this time.

In the postwar years the people in the rural district of Ebersberg were confronted with an unprecedented influx of refugees. This fundamentally changed what had been a religiously homogenous landscape. At first the local residents tended to dissociate from and to marginalize the newcomers. These tendencies also found expression in the area of religion, and only slowly various forms of integration were established. In the 1950s the agricultural sector in Bavaria underwent significant changes. The German economic miracle began to impact rural Bavaria and led to an ever faster mobilization, the establishment of a consumer society, and significant changes in moral values. This process was connected to the loss of various forms of traditional religious customs. Nevertheless, the church cannot be seen merely as a loser in the modernization process. Owing to the fact that the fundamental changes in their environment evoked strong feelings of uncertainty, there was a remarkable surge among rural residents to reaffirm their traditional norms and values by moving closer to the church and its institutions. The Catholic Rural Movement which was established at that time, tried hard to satisfy these needs by organizing numerous seminars on urgent topics. A similar example comes from the so-called motorist pilgrimages, which tried to come to terms with the invasion of the modern world by creatively using traditional endowments of meaning.

For the alpine region of Berchtesgaden, which faced an ever more expanding tourism sector since the early 1950s, the question of conserving one's identity was of utmost importance. An essential element in constituting identity came from old religious customs.

There were fierce discussions, however, about how originality could be claimed while putting these customs on display in front of tourists. In this area there was a continuous search to find a proper balance.

In the first postwar years in the city of Munich rebuilding the religious infrastructure was of overwhelming importance. Then, in the 1950s two areas were in the spotlight of church efforts. Firstly, the city centre had been affected by depopulation. The church thus urged local parishes to look for new concepts and means of establishing and articulating their identity. Secondly, there was an ever growing periphery with its heterogeneous population.

Furthermore, the study puts a strong emphasis on illuminating the relationship between the central office (ordinariate) and the periphery (parishes). In general a strong impetus towards professionalizing matters of pastoral care can be observed. Crucial in this regard was the establishment of a pastoral department in the ordinariate. For the first time far-reaching concepts regarding pastoral activities were developed in order to centralize, coordinate, and mobilize church forces. The apparent culmination of these efforts were two mega events in Munich in 1960: The Eucharistic World Congress and the preceding City Mission. These two events can also be seen as a preconciliar intermediary balance concerning the Liturgical Movement and the active involvement of Catholic laymen in pastoral affairs.

By and large a remarkable symbiosis emerges in this analysis of how the Catholic Church successfully preserved elements of their tradition by merging them with modern Bavarian society. This built the foundation for a relatively stable Bavarian Catholicism in the coming decades of conciliar redetermination and radical changes in society.