

**Alain Rauwel, Rites et société dans l'Occident médiéval, Paris (Éditions A. et J. Picard) 2016, 152 p. (Les médiévistes français ... et d'ailleurs, 13), ISBN 978-2-7084-1013-8, EUR 30,00.**

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**Geoffrey Koziol, Berkeley, CA**

All but one of the essays presented in this volume have appeared elsewhere; yet rarely have I been so grateful for the publication of such a collection. Not only do the articles cohere remarkably well, but their importance deserves the kind of broad audience only a book can bring. Rauwel's subject is liturgy, primarily between the eleventh and early thirteenth centuries. As the author states (in a masterful introductory essay), liturgical studies have traditionally been the province of believers. Although their scholarship was often impeccable, their approach usually remained descriptive, philological, and phenomenological. Especially since Vatican II such scholarship has often not been impeccable at all but vitiated by attempts to use the history of liturgy to legitimize and criticize positions in contemporary debates about the nature of the church. As for anthropological approaches, these, Rauwel notes, were »etic« interpretations written by outsiders uninterested in how liturgy was actually perceived, explained, and valued by contemporaries themselves. In contrast, Rauwel takes contemporaries' own valuations of liturgy seriously. And he consistently places liturgy within a »total« context, both in terms of the church as a social institution and with respect to its sights, sounds, and movement through space.

Rauwel's preferred source materials are liturgical commentaries, especially expositions of the mass, a genre that began with Amalarius of Metz but only took off in the later eleventh century. Particularly prominent in his accounts are Bruno of Segni's »De sacramentis ecclesiae«; Rupert of Deutz's »De officiis«; Honorius Augustodunensis's »Gemma animae«; Lothar of Segni's »De missarum mysteriis«; and Guillaume Durand's »Rationale divinatorum officiorum«. Rather than simply combing such sources for evidence, Rauwel tries to recover their logic and their authors' intelligence. He denies that the commentaries were rote compilations of past exegeses and that their treatment of liturgy was static and monologic. Particularly impressive is his demonstration that their understanding of liturgy was profoundly historical, in at least three overlapping ways. First, Amalarius established what became axiomatic: the mass was a »representation« of the historical Passion of Christ, to the point that the priest's intoning of *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* corresponded to Longinus's cry at the crucifixion. Second, the logic of the mass unfolded as the historical fulfillment of the Old Law by the New – leading to constant nervous questioning of the relationship between Christian and Jewish rites. Third, liturgical commentators were well aware that the Mass bore traces of its own historical development, as when Lothar of Segni used the names of the saints invoked before and after the *Hanc igitur* to prove that the invocation had been established under Sylvester I.

Rauwel delights in this exegesis, a prolific and varied *hortus deliciarum*. He emphasizes that interpretations were never systematized or forced into a unified, hierarchizing treatment. Commentators were perfectly happy to allow multiple interpretations of the same action, prayer, or vestment to stand



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alongside each other. But always, historical (*ad litteram*) interpretations of elements of the liturgy laid the foundations of moral interpretations, because the commentators' ultimate aim was the spiritual education of the clergy. Thus, for Isaac of Stella and Bonaventure the unfolding tripartite structure of the Canon of the Mass corresponded to the successive stages of compunction, devotion, and contemplation within the mind of the faithful. For Richard of Prémontré, the three elements of the Eucharistic offering (bread, wine, and water) corresponded to the three persons of the Trinity, but equally to the three theological virtues or to chastity, piety, and right intention.

The author is especially good at evoking the sights, sounds, and movements of the Mass: the processions from altar to altar or through stations in a city; the burning of incense; the bright colors of tapestries; the metalwork altar fronts and *retables*; the glimmering *coronae* of candles surrounding the altar. As for crosses, Rauwel maintains that no good evidence supports the existence of large stationary crucifixes permanently placed on altars during the period. In Italy and Germany large crucifixes might be suspended behind the altar from the vault; but the norm was for one or more of the large processional crosses to be placed in a stand near the altar during the Mass or to be held by an acolyte.

This last argument comes in a discussion of whether there was a change in the priest's position vis-à-vis the faithful during the Mass over the course of the Middle Ages. It is widely believed that at least until the Carolingian period, priests faced the faithful when performing the acts of consecration. Rauwel argues that the evidence supporting this conclusion is inconsistent and often involves idiosyncratically sited altars. The norm was always for the priest to face east, towards the rising sun – towards Christ. Statements in expositions mentioning that the priest turns »towards the people« merely indicate a change in position for a specific liturgical purpose. As the author concludes, it is impossible to imagine priests facing the faithful during the consecration, for that would have meant turning their backs on God. After all, the cult was not anthropocentric but theocentric.

Readers will discover much of value in all these chapters, both luminescent details and major arguments. One learns that commentators gave a great deal of thought not just to the east-west axis of the church (from altar to narthex) but also to the north-south axis, corresponding to Old Testament and New, male and female, gospel and epistle. The names of the saints invoked at the *Hanc igitur* is the subject of a splendid chapter, demonstrating, among other things, that Frankish churches freely added the names of locally and regionally important saints to the Roman core, Rauwel adding, intriguingly, that when the names of the apostles were listed in non-liturgical texts, their order followed that of the Canon, not the gospels. A fascinating chapter discusses the difference between consecrated wine and purification wine, the taboos that applied to the former and the different uses of the latter. Here he also notes what is never mentioned: that in the later Middle Ages white wine was preferred to red, probably because its stains did not show on altar cloths, corporals, and vestments. One learns the consistency of »Gregorian water« used to asperge churches and altars (water, salt, ashes, and wine). One learns to puzzle over the fact that there was no particular sacralization of fire in the liturgy. An excellent chapter on the replacement of the Mozarabic and Ambrosian rites by the Roman rite in the later eleventh century argues that the decisions were imagined in later narrative texts as the outcome of quasi-judicial ordeals because the rite was interpreted as a *lex*.

However, the finest chapters concern the changing importance and meaning of the altar. The arguments are again rich and far-reaching. Rauwel

Mittelalter – Moyen Âge (500–1500)

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states that the idea of the altar as a place of sacrifice became more important during the ninth century (again raising concerns among contemporaries about Judaizing) and especially after the eleventh century, a result of the establishment of the doctrine of the Real Presence. Altars had already been placed on elevated ground (though not as elevated as one might assume). But now the space around the altar became more closed off. To be sure, towering altar screens were not yet being built; but the altar was still marked off performatively by the positioning of processional candles before and around it. Thus, the division of the church into clergy and laity was liturgically and spatially defined in terms of access to the altar and the ability to participate in the act of sacrifice performed on it. An unintended consequence of the change was the dilution of the unique sacral power of bishops, since all priests had the ability to perform the central act of ecclesial communion.

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