

## THE FREEDOM OF GLORY AND THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

*Innocent Smith, O.P.*

*Then the priest and the others return to their own affairs. The priest returning to his own place is Christ, who, having finished His mission, ascended to the Father in glory; the faithful, too, will return and will be freed from the exile of their imprisonment and be carried off into the freedom of glory.*

—*William Durand, Rationale IV.59*

**T**he difference between a book and a person, according to Plato, is that a book can only offer one answer, no matter what question is asked of it. On the other hand, a book has this advantage: it can keep on offering that same answer, even centuries after its more versatile counterpart is no more. Ever since the invention of writing, books (whether preserved on skin, paper, or screen) have allowed the insights of individuals to be conveyed to countless generations that have succeeded their authors—provided, that is, that individuals in each succeeding generation have taken the bother to reproduce or preserve the book in question. It is staggering to realize the effort that has been expended simply in passing down the answers preserved in the books of previous generations, from the monastic scriptoria of the Middle Ages to the printing presses of modern times and down to the critical editions, scholarly translations, and popular printings of the present day. We are grateful to have the opportunity to encounter these books which pass on the answers of their authors, particularly because our new context and questions shed light on and are illuminated by the single answers that their authors committed to writing.

In considering the history of a particular book, it is striking to notice the individual life cycles of individual books. One volume

might have created something of a stir in its author's lifetime and yet be entirely forgotten today—at times with good reason. (I once had a job of cataloging rare books at a university with a preoccupation for Irish studies, and had to trawl through dozens of editions of the 1796 bestseller *The Children of the Abbey*). Other books have lain dormant in the Big Chief tablets of their authors, only to bound to glory after their creators could appreciate the fruits of their future fame. Some books have remained unappreciated by the many due to the relative obscurity of their original languages; others have leapt forth upon the world's stage, translating themselves into all the languages devised at Babel. Whatever the circumstances of their origins, books that have managed to be passed down through the centuries are like objects of destiny, plotting their influence upon the world with careful consideration—or at times reckless abandon.

Sometimes a book can make a reappearance after a long sojourn in obscurity. This can happen due to a variety of circumstances: a determined effort by an industrious editor, a calculated wager of an enterprising publisher, or a welling desire on the part of the book purchasing populace. For a long dormant book to make a reappearance, at least two of these conditions are usually necessary.

In this context, it is interesting to note the nearly simultaneous appearance of modern English translations of two of the most seminal treatises on the medieval liturgy. In December 2013, Brepols Press published an English translation of the section on the Mass from the thirteenth-century *Rationale divinorum officiorum* of William Durand (c. 1230–1296), and in October 2014, Harvard University Press published a Latin-English edition of the ninth-century *Liber officialis* of Amalar of Metz (d. c. 852). Each of these texts was immensely popular in its own day, and yet neither book has hitherto been able to reclaim the level of influence and attention it enjoyed at its inception. Now, perhaps, that will begin to change. For each of these new productions we can thank industrious editors and enterprising publishers; only time will

tell if the book purchasing populace will commit to restoring the books to their former stature. If we are to take full advantage of the wisdom they offer, however, we will have to learn to ask them the right questions.

#### AMALAR OF METZ

**B**orn in Burgundy towards the end of the eighth century, Amalar of Metz had an influential but tumultuous life as a missionary, diplomat, bishop, editor and author. Serving as archbishop of both Trier and Lyon but deposed from both sees on account of a variety of political motivations, Amalar found solace in sharing his insights into the liturgy, whether in correspondence with Charlemagne about baptism or in the form of commentaries on the liturgy, founded on insights that came to him like “rays of light” from God concerning the meanings inherent in the liturgical rites (*Liber officialis*, Preface). Intrigued by the differences between the liturgy of Gaul and the liturgy of Rome, he attempted to reconcile them in his (now lost) *Antiphoner*. In addition, Amalar sought to explain the diversity and significance of the liturgical rites.

Amalar’s most famous work was a treatise known as the *Liber officialis* or the *De ecclesiastico officio*, a four part exposition of the Mass and Divine Office of the early ninth century. Surviving today in more than seventy medieval manuscripts that convey three distinct recensions, Amalar’s *Liber officialis* was the most popular and widely available exposition on the liturgy written in the Carolingian era. Despite provoking ferocious criticism from certain individuals who objected to some of its allegorical readings of the liturgical rites (objections which were sometimes intermingled with political considerations related to Amalar’s role as bishop of Lyon), Amalar’s adaptation of the methodology of patristic scriptural exegesis to the study of the liturgy had a decisive impact on the history of liturgical exegesis, setting the tone for the next four centuries of liturgical commentary and serving as

an implicit or explicit inspiration for successors such as Rupert of Deutz, Jean Beleth, Sicard of Cremona, and Innocent III.

#### WILLIAM DURAND OF MENDE

Four hundred years after the first circulation of the *Liber officialis*, William Durand of Mende was born in Provence around the year 1230. Like Amalar, Durand served the church in a remarkable number of modes, as a canon lawyer, papal chaplain, conciliar peritus, diplomat, bishop, and editor of liturgical books. As a papal chaplain and theological expert, Durand served alongside the Franciscan and Dominican cardinals Bonaventure and Peter of Tarentaise (the future Pope Innocent V) at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274. Having earned a doctorate in canon law at the University of Bologna, in 1276 Durand published a massive legal textbook known as the *Speculum Iudicale* [Judicial Mirror]. Ordained a priest at a relatively advanced age in 1279 after many years as a subdeacon, Durand was subsequently elected bishop of his native diocese of Mende in 1286. Alongside his duties as pastor of Mende, Durand undertook two liturgical projects of tremendous historical significance: the compilation of a *Pontificale*, a book of ceremonies celebrated by a bishop, and the composition of the *Rationale divinatorum officiorum*, a commentary on the liturgy which synthesized insights from the four centuries of liturgical commentary that had followed in the wake of Amalar's *Liber officialis*. Durand was not merely a liturgical exegete, but also played an important role in crafting the liturgy itself; his redaction of the *Pontificale* served as the major source for the post-Tridentine *Pontificale Romanum* of 1595-1596.

After a long life of service to the Church, Durand died in Rome on the feast of All Saints in 1296 and was buried in the Dominican basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where his tomb may still be visited today. In the centuries that followed Durand's death, his *Rationale* became the most popular liturgical commentary ever written. In addition to two hundred extant Latin manuscripts,

the *Rationale* was the second non-biblical book to be printed by Gutenberg in 1459 and was subsequently reprinted more than an hundred times.

AMALAR'S *LIBER OFFICIALIS*

**I**n the new edition of Amalar's *Liber officialis* from Harvard University Press, published as volumes 35 and 36 of the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series, Eric Knibbs has offered a readable English translation of the *Liber officialis* alongside a lightly adapted version of Jean-Michel Hanssens's 1948 critical edition of Amalar's Latin text. Although Western Latin writers of the Middle Ages did not use the term "liturgia" or liturgy, preferring instead terms such as "divina officia" [divine office] or "ecclesiasticum officium" [ecclesiastical office], Knibbs' slightly anachronistic translation of the title *Liber officialis* as *On the Liturgy* has the advantage of being accessible to contemporary readers who might as yet be unfamiliar with the breadth of what medieval writers included by the term "office."

Just as Knibbs has recognized that a more literal translation such as "The Book of the Office" might have proved more opaque to a contemporary reader than the title he has chosen, readers who wish to gain more than historical tidbits about ninth-century attitudes towards public worship will have to make a concerted effort to both understand Amalar's intentions and adapt his insights with regard to their own experience of the liturgy today. Although this task may occasionally seem daunting, it is one which may be richly rewarding to the contemporary worshipper. Knibbs' edition and translation will aid this process immensely, and the handsome typography and binding of the volumes is an attractive invitation to take the content seriously. It is unfortunate, however, that the notes to the translation and the single index included in the second volume are not as useful as they might be. For instance, the index does not include a listing of the liturgical texts quoted by Amalar, which renders it difficult for the reader to identify commentary

on particular texts or chants in which he or she may be interested. Strangely, the scriptural citations from most books of the Bible are included under the heading “Bible,” beginning on page 673 of the second volume, whereas the psalms are listed individually beginning on 690. It would have been extremely helpful to include a more clearly organized index of scriptural citations as well as a separate index of liturgical incipits of prayers and chants. Nor do the notes make adequate use of Dom Hesbert’s *Corpus Antiphonalium Officium* (published after Hanssens’ edition), despite an allusion to the usefulness of this collection of office antiphons in the introduction. Scholarly study of Amalar must necessarily continue to rely on the tables and indices in the third volume of the critical edition of Hanssens in order to enable a more ready analysis of the breadth of Amalar’s liturgical citations.

**I**n the *Rationale*, named in honor of the “rationale iudicii” or “breastplate of judgment” of Jerome’s Vulgate translation of Ex. 28:15-30, Durand, like Amalar, offers an extensive commentary on the variations and inner meaning of the medieval liturgy. In the new volume from Brepols, Timothy M. Thibodeau offers an English translation of Book IV of the *Rationale*, “On the Mass and Each Action Pertaining to It.” Thibodeau, who coedited the three-volume *Corpus Christianorum* critical edition of the entire *Rationale*, has previously published translations of the first three books of the *Rationale*. In 2007, Columbia University Press published his translation of the Prologue and Book One, which focuses on the church building and its ornaments, and in 2010 the University of Scranton Press published his translation of Books Two and Three, which treat of the clerical ranks and liturgical vestments.

Of the three volumes, the latest enjoys the most pleasing layout, offering source identifications and helpful notes on the translation at the bottom of the page and containing marginal references to the pagination of the critical edition. In addition, the Brepols volume presents an exemplary set of indexes at the end of the volume,

allowing the reader to quickly assess and identify individual instances of Durand's use of the Bible, theological and exegetical sources, legal sources, and liturgical texts. The translation on the whole is good, although one notable weakness is the apparent lack of recognition that the antiphon commonly known as the "Introitus" was also known in some liturgical traditions (such as the Dominican and Sarum rites) as the "Officium." This leads to a somewhat convoluted translation of the word "officium" in the chapter "On the Office or the Introit of the Mass" (see especially IV.5.4, p. 87). In addition, there are occasional typos or awkward moments in the translation, such as text presented as a quotation from St. Augustine that lacks a subject for the verb (p. 60), or the addition of an inappropriate article (p. 65), but these occasional deficiencies do not diminish the tremendous value of the book.

**T**he translations that Knibbs and Thibodeau have published will surely be of great assistance in helping many readers to encounter the liturgical exegesis of Amalar and Durand. Aside from the inherent historical interest in coming to know more about the liturgical context of another time and place, however, of what value are these volumes today? Are they mere academic curiosities, or could they be helpful in the spiritual lives of contemporary Christians who participate in the liturgy of the Church?

#### AMALAR, DURAND, AND REFORM

**I**would contend that the writings of these two medieval bishops are of great relevance for contemporary Christians. Both writers exemplify a form of spiritual exegesis of the liturgy based on the texts and actions of the Church. Each was an individual who allowed himself to be formed by the liturgy of the Church, but each also played an important role in reforming the liturgy. In this sense, they are important role models for the authentic liturgical renewal called for by the Second Vatican Council. Amalar and Durand were both faithful recipients of earlier traditions of

liturgical practice and exegesis; Amalar was heavily indebted to the patristic tradition of scriptural exegesis and mystagogy, whereas Durand had, in addition, both the witness of Amalar as well as



RATIONALE — FRENCH TRANSLATION CA. 1380

developments within monastic and scholastic liturgical exegesis of the tenth through the thirteenth centuries. Amalar and Durand thus exemplify the process of synthesizing received traditions while contributing to their development through their own insight.



In addition to this more general aspect of serving as role models for a faithful synthesis of tradition and innovation, many of the topics that Amalar and Durand treat remain of fundamental importance today. For example, Amalar takes particular care to consider why the liturgy exists at all: why is there something rather than nothing? In other words, why do the liturgical rites of the Church seem more complex than the simple words and gestures of the Last Supper? In the preface to the commentary on the Mass in Book III of the *Liber officialis*, Amalar acknowledges that “in ancient times among the apostles, merely the blessing of the bishops or the priests, without the cantors or lectors or the other things that we do during Mass, would suffice to bless the bread and the wine, which refresh the people unto the salvation of their souls.”

While acknowledging this primitive simplicity, Amalar believed that the development of ceremony within the liturgy has been a salutary development undertaken by the leaders of the Church. Amalar possessed a sophisticated understanding of the fact that the liturgical texts and rites have been developed and modified by individuals and groups throughout the history of the Church, but at the same time he understood this development to have been guided by the Holy Spirit. Because Amalar recognizes the rites to be something both humanly composed and divinely guided, he is eager to understand the human purposes behind the rites as well as the mystical significance with which they have been endowed by the guidance of God. Likewise, in the preface to Book IV of the *Rationale*, Durand recognizes that the Apostles and their successors developed the specific rites of the Mass on the basis of the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, first by adding the Lord’s Prayer and then by further developments. In the context of discussing the Canon or “Secret” of the Mass, Durand notes that, although careful scrutiny of the text reveals that it “was not composed all at once by one person, but rather, that it was composed part by part by many,” he nevertheless understands that the liturgy of the Church has a deeper synthesis that transcends

the roles and intentions of the individual humans who played a role in its development (cf. Book IV, c. 38). In the midst of the controversies that surround the practice of the liturgy today, it is helpful to reflect on both the legitimate liturgical development and diversity recognized by Amalar and Durand as well as their steadfast understanding of the divine institution of the sacraments and their trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the development of the liturgy of the Church.

**A**t the same time, these authors help us to understand that controversy about the liturgy has always been part of the experience of the Church in this world. One particularly amusing witness to this fact comes in the preface of Durand's Book IV:

Certain faithless heretics reproach us because we read small, sliced-up portions of the Gospel at Mass, and because we add on other things, beyond the Lord's Prayer, to the primitive Mass. . . . They also say that the Church of Christ neither sang a Mass nor Matins, and that neither Christ nor the Apostles instituted these, nor were they ever sung during the time of the Apostles; that the term 'Mass' was neither heard nor written anywhere at that time, but that what the Mass represents was called a 'meal [cena]' by the Evangelists...

Eager readers may have to wait expectantly for the next volume of Thibodeau's translation, however, as Durand ends this list of complaints that might seem like those of some of our own contemporaries with a laconic promise: "But we will clearly refute their error in the prologue of the fifth part." In addition to relating controversies of their own day, the witness of Amalar and Durand can also be of assistance in offering a deeper explanation for practices that may have become controversial since their time. For instance, Amalar presents several arguments concerning the practice of "ad orientem" worship (wherein the priest and people

face the same direction) that might fit well in the holster of a contemporary controversialist: “It is not appropriate for those who want to praise the Lord to turn their backs to him and their chests to his servants” (Book III, c. 8). “When we say: ‘Peace be with you,’ or ‘the Lord be with you,’ which is our greeting, we have turned to face the people. We present our face to those whom we greet, with one exception that occurs during our preparation for the hymn before the *Te igitur*. At that point we are busy about the altar, so it is more fitting for us to face one way than it is to look back, to indicate the pious intention that we have in offering the sacrifice. Nor should the plowman, occupied with a worthy task, look back” (Book 3, c. 9).

**I**n addition to offering a window into their own controversies and ammunition in our own, these authors can also help us to gain a deeper understanding of some of the liturgical ideals that the Church puts forward today as being of prime importance in liturgical renewal. For instance, Amalar and Durand help us to understand more deeply the meaning of the participation of the faithful in the liturgy. For Amalar, the participation of both men and women in the liturgical assembly is an important factor in the symbolic completeness of the liturgy: “There is a multitude of ten thousand saints in the ecclesiastical orders and their listeners. There are seven ranks of ordained clergy, an eighth rank of cantors, and a ninth and tenth rank of listeners of both genders. A thousand is added to indicate their perfection” (Book III, c. 5). Further, although Amalar is quite attentive to the differing liturgical roles of clerics and laity within the liturgy, he also recognizes that the fundamental disposition of both should be the same: “Through the bishop’s greeting and the people’s response, we understand that the disposition of the bishop and the people should be the same, like the disposition of the guests of a single lord” (Book III, c. 9). In another context, while speaking about the spiritual attitudes that should be cultivated during the opening sections of the liturgy, Amalar states that “[w]hat we said individually about the

deacons and subdeacons and acolytes, we understand as relating to every disciple of Christ” (Book III, c. 5). In a related way, Durand’s *Rationale* presents elements of a profound ecclesiology that recognizes the importance of every individual member of the Church: “Church, which is a Greek word, means ‘convocation’ in Latin, because the Church calls everyone to herself; and this name corresponds more appropriately to the spiritual definition of the Church than the material because here, men are gathered together, not stones” (Book I, c. 1). In another context, Durand displays a balanced understanding of the symbolic importance of the fixed plural formularies of the Mass being appropriately matched by the actual presence of at least several individuals who are being addressed, while at the same time he recognizes the practical necessity of sometimes celebrating Mass with only one other person present (Book IV, c. 1).

**A**malar’s *Liber officialis* and Durand’s *Rationale*, although long appreciated and studied by scholars of medieval liturgy and music, do not at present enjoy the fame that they once had. Nevertheless, the fascinating answers that they offer to the questions that contemporary readers may ask of them merit a renewed attention on the part of individuals who wish to enter into the spirit of the liturgy of the Catholic Church. The appearance of fresh English translations of both of these ancient books will allow many to approach these texts with a new interest. *Tolle, lege.*

*Innocent Smith entered the Order of Preachers in 2008. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, where he studied music and philosophy, and St. Gregory’s Academy.*