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## REVIEW

Arthur WESTWELL,  
Roman Liturgy and Frankish Creativity.  
The Early Medieval Manuscripts  
of the *Ordines Romani* (Cambridge Studies in  
Palaeography and Codicology),  
Cambridge 2024

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### *Reviewer*

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### *Reviewed Book*

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## Review

Arthur WESTWELL, *Roman Liturgy and Frankish Creativity. The Early Medieval Manuscripts of the *Ordines Romani** (Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology), Cambridge 2024

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The excellent study of Arthur Westwell is part of a general “movement” of revision in contemporary liturgical scholarship: that is, a re-evaluation of standard interpretations by re-reading the sources.<sup>1</sup> McKinnon (1998) questions the theories of Chavassee concerning the relationship between the ancient sacramentaries, lectionaries and antiphonaries.<sup>2</sup> Martelli (2003) challenges the interpretations of Chavassee concerning the nature of the Gelasianum Vetus.<sup>3</sup> Parkes (2015) calls into question the principles used for the Vogel-Elze’s edition of the so-called Roman-Germanic Pon-

<sup>1</sup> This is not a movement in any organized sense of the word, but rather a common phenomenon of re-evaluation, manifested in different places and at different times.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. James W. MCKINNON, Antoine Chavassee and the Dating of Early Chant, in: *The Temple, the Church Fathers and Early Western Chant*, Aldershot 1998, 123–147.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Alfio M. MARTELLI, *Sacramentario Gelasiano* (Cod. Vat. Reg. 316). *Primo testimone completo dell’esperimento della Liturgia Romana nella Gallia Precarolingia*, Trento 2003.

tifical.<sup>4</sup> Menke (2018)<sup>5</sup> and Folsom (2023)<sup>6</sup> point out the weakness of Van Dijk's theories about the thirteenth-century Missal of the Roman Curia. Most recently, Taubitz (2025) does a complete revision of Leroquais' edition of the *Ordo Missae* of Amiens,<sup>7</sup> and Folsom (2025)<sup>8</sup> and Phan (2025)<sup>9</sup> correct and update the hypotheses of Luyxk about the development of the *Ordo Missae*. The book of Westwell, challenging the theories of Andrieu about the nature of the *ordines romani*<sup>10</sup> is a welcome addition to the growing body of contemporary scholarship on disputed questions of liturgical history.

This phenomenon in the world of liturgical scholarship is important. While it is almost inevitable that hypotheses are based on pre-conceived ideas, it often happens that such hypotheses are then treated as if they

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Henry PARKES, *The Making of Liturgy in the Ottonian Church. Books, Music and Ritual in Mainz, 950–1050*, Cambridge 2015; ID., *Questioning the Authority of Vogel and Elze's Pontifical romano-germanique*, in: Helen GITTOS – Sarah HAMILTON (eds.), *Understanding Medieval Liturgy. Essays in Interpretation*, Farnham 2016, 75–101; ID., *Towards a Definition of the Roman-German Pontifical and Back*, in: Andrew J. M. Irving – Harald Buchinger (eds.), *On the Typology of Liturgical Books from the Western Middle Ages / Zur Typologie liturgischer Bücher des westlichen Mittelalters* (LQF 115), Münster 2023, 275–301.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Andrew MENKE (ed.), *A Rubricated Sacramentary of Thirteenth-century Rome: Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottoboniani latini 356 with Avignon, Bibliothèque municipale, Manuscrit 100* [unpubl. dissertation Pontificio Istituto Liturgico, Rome], 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Cassian FOLSOM, *The Liturgical Books of the Roman Rite, vol.1: Books for the Mass* (Ecclesia Orans. Studi e Recherche 7), Naples 2023, especially 145–147.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Georg TAUBITZ, *Der Ordo Missae des Sakramentars von Amiens. Edition und liturgiehistorische Einordnung* (Ecclesia Orans. Studi e Recherche 10), Naples 2025.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bonifaas LUYKX – Cassian FOLSOM, *L'Origine dell'Ordinario della Messa. Nuova traduzione e aggiornamento della ricerca di Bonifaas Luyxk* (Ecclesia Orans Studi e Recherche 12), Naples 2025 [in preparation].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. D. K. PHAN, *L'Ordo Missae di tipo franco. Teologia e spiritualità* [unpubl. lectio coram, Pontificio Istituto Liturgico, Rome], 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Michel ANDRIEU (ed.), *Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen âge*, 5 vols. (*Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense* 11. 23. 24. 28. 29), Louvain 1961–1985.

were facts. In this way, errors are handed down from one generation to the next. Westwell's new conclusions are based on a re-reading of the manuscripts, paying close attention to all the clues that are to be found there.

What is the standard interpretation that Westwell is trying to correct? It is the theory that the *Ordines Romani* were documents of Roman origin, imposed on the Gallican church by Pepin and Charlemagne as part of a top-down liturgical reform (2–3). The common narrative (represented by Andrieu) is that “the ‘reformers’ really wanted a complete adoption of the ‘Roman rite’ wholesale [...] but were forced to make compromises that were not in line with their real goals by the parlous state of clerical education” (7). Andrieu develops this theory by organizing the manuscript evidence into two groups: the Roman Collection and the Frankish Collection. The Roman manuscripts would be the faithful description of liturgical actions which took place in Rome itself, while the Frankish Collection would be an adaptation of Roman practice according to Frankish needs. Westwell argues that “this understanding plainly projected the characteristics of modern liturgical books back onto medieval liturgical manuscripts which have a much more complex relationship to practice” (9).

In reflecting on the relationship between Roman liturgical models and Frankish imitation, it is important to keep in mind the powerful symbolic value of Rome. The Frankish practice, however, was not a slavish imitation, but rather a creative adaptation for the sake of reinforcing local identity. Westwell argues that “the *ordines* are placed within a circle of elite Carolingian churchmen who venerated Rome’s sacredness and understood how to harness and use the textual and ritual reference to the city, and linked to various other efforts to import Rome to a new context” (16).<sup>11</sup> He comes to these conclusions by a meticulous re-reading of the manuscript evidence.

Westwell organizes his argument in eight chapters, distributed in three parts. Part I describes the compilation and content of the

<sup>11</sup> Other efforts connected to liturgical practice were the copying of Roman architectural forms, the desire for Roman relics, the making of pilgrimages to Rome, and the understanding of Frankish history as continuous with the history of the papal church (cf. 10).

manuscripts. Chapter One deals with Andrieu's Collection A: its manuscripts are from Lorsch, Metz and Tours. Westwell identifies some of the "movers and shakers" of the period, especially Bishop Chrodegang of Metz (r. 742–766) and his successor Angilram (r. 768–791), who could have influenced the compilation of these *ordines*. He argues that this is not a "pure Roman" collection, but already a Frankish compilation. In the chapter's conclusion he writes: "The *ordines* were not therefore seen as definitive accounts of a ceremony but admitted the possibility of the reader's contrast and comparison. Andrieu's understanding of 'Collection A' as having a single ideological function does not bear the scrutiny of manuscripts. Furthermore, the majority of the *ordines* in the Collection can be identified as significantly interpolated or written by the Franks, not the pure Roman texts they were supposed to be in Andrieu's reconstruction" (39).

In Chapter 2, Westwell deals with Andrieu's Collection B. He acknowledges that this is a revision of Collection A, but maintains that Collection A was already a Frankish adaptation of the Roman tradition. Once again, Westwell identifies prominent churchmen of the time – for example, Bishop Ratold of Verona (r. 799–840) and Bishop Baturich of Regensburg (r. 817–847) – who would have had a hand in the compilation of these *ordines*. Westwell identifies Reichenau and Northern Italy as the place of composition of Collection B and concludes: "Whether compiled in Reichenau or in Northern Italy, the 'Frankish Collection' had a strong focus on episcopal rituals [...]. This focus explains why a number of these manuscripts have been described as 'pontificals'" (51).

Chapter 3 investigates other *ordines* (found in neither Collection A nor Collection B), and attributes their compilation to Archbishop Arn of Salzburg (r. 784–821), Bishop Bernharius of Worms (r. 803–826) and Archbishop Richulf of Mainz (r. 787–813) (who was also the founder of the famous abbey of St. Alban in Mainz). Westwell calls some of these *ordines* "pilgrim or travel literature" (66). Describing Ordo 23, he writes: "It's hard to call this a liturgical context in the manner envisaged by Andrieu [...]. Because it is placed among the Einsiedeln travel writings, it is impossible not to see this text as performing a similar function by allowing the reader to imagine the ritual unfolding on the very topographical framework the pilgrim literature itself discloses" (67).

Chapter 4 serves as a summary of Part I, describing the liturgical usefulness of the *ordines* and how they were read and understood. In this chapter Westwell displays his vast erudition and acquaintance with an extensive number of medieval manuscripts. He concludes: "In all these manuscripts, therefore, there is a clear invitation to read the *ordines* more expansively. The constantly rewritten adaptations of *ordines*, and the presentation of the developments or alternatives side by side, show that the Franks were clearly not reading *ordines* as straightforward scripts to perform by rote, but as invitations to rework and revise [...]" (93–94).

In Part II of the book, Westwell presents a sample of some of the more important rites described in the *ordines*: stational Masses (chapter 5, in which the author challenges the Roman origin of the famous *Ordo Romanus Primus*), baptismal scrutinies (chapter 6), processions, ember days and ordinations (chapter 7). He concludes by emphasizing the role of Archbishop Arn of Salzburg (r. 784–821) who would have used the *ordines* as a way to legitimize his office. "It is therefore very probable", Westwell concludes, "that it was to Arn we owe the redaction of the metropolitan rite [and] the entire sequence of ordinations that precede it [...]" (202–203).

In the final section of the book, Part III, composed of one chapter only (chapter 8), Westwell deals with questions of typology, paleography, codicology and language.

The ample conclusion of *Roman Liturgy and Frankish Creativity* provides an excellent synthesis of Westwell's argument (236–256). At the risk of over-simplification, those results can be summarized as follows:

1. The purpose of the *ordines* was, in large part, to draw on the symbolic power of Rome for the sake of the self-understanding and self-assertion of an important circle of Frankish bishops.
2. These bishops included Chrodegang of Metz, Arn of Salzburg, Baturich of Regensburg and Bernharius of Worms (cf. p.248).
3. The geographical area of compilation was the Rhine/Alsace region and northern France (Collection A) as well as northern Italy and Alemannia (Collection B).
4. The *ordines* were compiled in both monastic and cathedral centers.
5. The *ordines* cannot be dated before 750.

Thus, the *ordines* “appear as a consummately Carolingian phenomenon [...] linked to personal exchanges and experiences of Rome by certain elite clergymen of the Carolingian Church” (236).

This book is an excellent example of the revisionist research mentioned earlier, in which the serious study of the manuscripts leads to conclusions different from those of the scholarly pioneers of an earlier period. Up until this point, the five-volume series of Andrieu was the only reference point for the study of the *ordines romani*. With Westwell’s contribution, we can now re-evaluate some of Andrieu’s conclusions and read the *ordines* in a new light.

The book is sometimes very technical; it is a book for specialists and the author presupposes a certain level of formation in the reader.

It is to be hoped that there might be a reprint or second edition, in which the many typographical errors could be corrected.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to my confrère and colleague, Fr. Martin Bernhard, O.S.B. for pointing out these errors to me.