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REVIEW

Robert B. BAÑDUR,
Il rito di benedizione delle campane nella tradizione
romana dall'VIII fino al XIII secolo.
Studio storico-liturgico-teologico
(Studia Anselmiana 190 / Analecta Liturgica 40),
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JOHN LIVINGSTON



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Reviewer

John Livingston is a graduate student (MA in Theology) at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, MO, where he also serves as the Director of Evangelization at Saint Peter Catholic Church.

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Review

Robert B. BAÑDUR, *Il rito di benedizione delle campane nella tradizione romana dall'VIII fino al XIII secolo. Studio storico-liturgico-teologico* (Studia Anselmiana 190 / Analecta Liturgica 40), Rome 2022.

JOHN LIVINGSTON

In his *Il rito di benedizione delle campane nella tradizione romana dall'VIII fino al XIII secolo. Studio storico-liturgico-teologico* – drawn from his own doctoral dissertation which was awarded the *Premio Sant'Anselmo* in 2022 – Robert Bañdur compiles an account of the origins and usage of bells from the 8th to the 13th century. More than this, however, he traces the development of their ritual blessing and argues for an understanding of this ritual blessing as a *locus theologicus* in itself. He utilizes a variety of methodological approaches to make this argument, including a close study of several medieval liturgical witnesses, an extensive historical contextualization of this liturgical study, and a theological synthesis which ultimately elaborates upon this historical-liturgical approach. After briefly introducing the project's scope and methodology, as well as the shape of the *status quaestionis* (12–19), the main body of the text follows. It is segmented into three sections: first, a historical study of the use and significance of bells across diverse cultures and contexts up to the early Middle Ages (22–113); second, a liturgical analysis of bells' ritual blessing from the early to late Middle Ages (116–226); and third, a theological synthesis of the preceding sections according to the maxim "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" (228–271).

The first section of the text comprises three chapters and traces the origins and evolution of bells' usage from antiquity to the early Middle

Ages. Chapter one, *La storia delle campane dalla loro origine e fino al XIII secolo* (23–67), explores the early origins of bells in various cultures across Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, utilizing an array of primary sources and witnesses from as early as the Bronze Age. Chapter two, *Le funzioni delle campane cristiane nell'Europa medievale* (69–98), continues, then, and accounts for the early liturgical appropriations – and even public usages – of bells in medieval Europe. Finally, chapter three, *La produzione delle campane cristiane nell'Europa medievale* (99–113), offers a glimpse into the fascinating world of bells' casting and production in the Middle Ages.

This first section, however, offers much more than a mere historical tracing of bells' early use. In adopting a comparative approach across the many regions and contexts he assesses, Bañdur demonstrates certain commonalities across these cultures and epochs. For example, he notes the widespread association of bells with a supernatural capacity to drive away evil spirits (34 f., 40 f., 51–56). This common belief in bells' mystique, he argues, lays the groundwork for their Christian appropriation in the Carolingian era and, curiously, even the codification of this capacity to cast out evil in the euchological text of their ritual blessing (89–91).

The second and largest section, then, details the development of this ritual blessing of bells from its likely origins in a 7th-century Mozarabic exorcism to its more developed form in the 13th-century *Pontificale* of William Durand. Chapter four, *La prima testimonianza liturgica della benedizione delle campane nella Chiesa occidentale* (117–130), briefly sketches an outline of the oldest extant witness to bells' liturgical blessing in this 7th-century rite of exorcism of the Mozarabic Rite. Chapter five, *Lo sviluppo storico del rito di benedizione delle campane nella liturgia romana, dall'VIII al XIII secolo* (131–170), then forms the core of the work in its tracing of various iterations of bells' blessing from the 8th to the 13th centuries. Specifically, Bañdur focuses on the 8th-century *Liber Sacramentorum Gellonensis* (132–135) and *Pontificale Egberti* (136–137), the mid-10th (or early-11th) century *Pontificale Romano-Germanicum* (137–141), the late-10th or possibly early-11th century *Pontifical of Roda* (141–147), the 11th-century *Pontificale Cracoviense* (147–153), the 12th-century *Pontificale* (153–155), the 13th-century *Pontificale Romanae Curiae* (155–158), and the 13th-century *Pontificale* of William Durand (159–162). The chapter

then concludes by briefly noting two 12th-century versions of the *Rituale* – that of St. Florian (165–166) and of Biburg (166–167). Asserting, however, that William Durand’s final iteration of the rite of bells’ blessing remained largely intact until the Second Vatican Council (162), the final chapter of this section – chapter six, *Analisi liturgica del rito di benedizione delle campane nel Pontificale di Guglielmo Durando* (171–226) – analyzes this “definitive form” (171) of the rite in some depth, thus exploring not only its ritual action but also the symbolic significance it conveys.

Again, Bañdur’s keen eye for comparative analysis and synthesis in this particularly rich section must be noted. He offers more than a sterile treatment of various liturgical witnesses; rather, through a close reading and analysis of these witnesses across the centuries, he draws out the dynamic evolution of a certain “original nucleus” of this rite (170). In thus tracing the threefold action of the bell’s *washing*, *anointing*, and *incensing* within the various versions of this blessing (167–170) – along with this threefold action’s profound symbolic significance – he successfully demonstrates an arc of continuity and development across these otherwise diverse liturgical witnesses. This, he argues, reveals the rite to be a *locus theologicus* in itself (224–226), an assertion which sets up the final section’s concluding argument.

This third and final section of the text reevaluates the preceding analyses in light of their theological implications. Beginning with the allegorical tradition which arose through such figures as Amalar of Metz, chapter seven – *I significati simbolici delle campane cristiane nel Medioevo* (229–244) – catalogues the symbolic significance of bells and their blessing within this long tradition. For example, Bañdur details the long-held association of bells’ resounding with the Levites’ blowing of silver trumpets in ancient Israel (230–234; see Num 10:1–10), along with the understanding of their resounding with the *vox Dei* (241 f.). However, chapter eight – *Aspetti teologici del rito di benedizione delle campane nel Pontificale di Guglielmo Durando* (245–271) – then pivots to Bañdur’s own analysis of William Durand’s developed form of the rite as a *locus theologicus* in itself. For example, Bañdur finds that its euchological texts clarify the missions of the Persons of the Trinity (245–252) and demonstrate the sovereignty of the *vox Dei* over creation (254 f.). Ecclesiologically, Bañdur points to the ritual event itself as a gathering of the “people of God” into a

templum sanctum (264–267). He even notes the ritual's eschatological overtones in highlighting the allegorical association with the “trumpet of God” as an anticipation of the in-breaking of the reign of Christ (269 f.; see 1 Thess 4:16). In a word – articulated most explicitly in the text's brief general conclusion (273–277) – Bańdur concludes that the *lex orandi* of bells' ritual blessing rings with a certain resonance of the Church's *lex credendi*.

Ultimately, for scholars of liturgical history, the text provides a thoroughly researched analysis grounded in primary sources and supported by robust secondary conversation. Its particular strengths lie in Bańdur's precision in assessing a variety of sources from across centuries and contexts, along with his ability to synthesize these sources so as to highlight continuity and development. If weaknesses are to be noted, the text lacks any discussion of cultures of the western hemisphere or global South; however, given that its aim is to assess those more direct influences on the Roman tradition, this omission is more than understandable. Similarly, one could fault the final theological section for its relative thinness, but this assessment can only be drawn in comparison with the rich detail of the preceding sections. Indeed, Bańdur still successfully argues for the rite of blessing bells as a *locus theologicus*, albeit with a relative economy of words. Overall, the text's ostensibly narrow focus on a particular blessing from a particular time period need not deter one's reception of the work: any scholar interested in liturgy, history, or the cultural milieu of the Middle Ages will find a welcome home in Bańdur's impressive project and its resounding conclusion that bells continue to ring with theological resonance.