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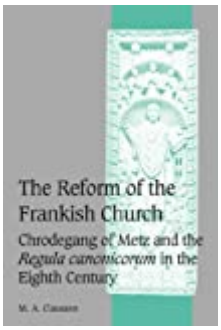

M. A. Claussen. *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz and the Regula canonicorum in the Eighth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xiv + 342 pp. $80.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-83931-0.

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Published on H-German (November, 2005)

Chrodegang, the underrated eighth-century church reformer, through his Rule for canons, his synodal legislation, and other projects, sought nothing less than a "spiritual ethnogenesis," the creation of a Frankish *gens christiana* (p. 46). Rather than slavishly imitating Benedict's Rule, Chrodegang appropriated the core text of western monasticism to define a different kind of community, one of clerics who were active in pastoral care and therefore responsible not just for their own salvation, but that of the laity as well. Claussen shows that Chrodegang did not intend his canons to be monks. Rather, the reformer sought to re-impose the ancient, and recently blurred, division between monks who live a contemplative life apart from the world and clerics who are active within it.

In all his works–from the distribution of relics to the care of the indigent–Chrodegang sought to create communities, based on the model of the apostolic church, which were united by "unanimitas, concordia, and pax" (p. 282). He established provisions for communities characterized by both hierarchy and equality (for example, priests were allocated more wine than the other cathedral canons, but otherwise received little special treatment), and emphasized humility and obedience as the key virtues that allowed such communities to flourish beneath the bishop's authority.

The Reform of the Frankish Church is based on a sensitive and painstaking reading of Chrodegang's *Regula canonicorum*, his Rule for the canons of St. Stephen's cathedral in Metz, where he was bishop. Claussen's book is divided into *tres partes* of two chapters each. The first section locates Chrodegang (d. 766) in the historical context of Frankish reformers and bishops, and draws out the central themes of his Rule: community, hierarchy, and eschatology (p. 59). Chrodegang aimed to forge a community of canons who would teach the laity through word and example thus "incorporating all the people of Metz into his own version of the city of God" in preparation for the imminent last days (p. 113).

The second part, chapters 3 and 4, examines Chrodegang's use of his sources. Claussen shows how Chrodegang manipulated his main source, Benedict's *Rule*, to make its traditions relevant to his present purpose. In chapter 4, Claussen examines how Chrodegang used other texts: Gregory the Great, Caesarius of Arles, and Pomerius. In this chapter Claussen draws on theories of intertextuality to argue that Chrodegang used allusion to send his canons scuttling to read the source texts, which would flesh out and provide theological justification for his *Rule*, as well as giving it extra depth and meaning (at least for a perceptive reader taking an active role in his own conversion). For example, Claussen

argues that while Chrodegang prescribes only a moderate asceticism for his (mostly) noble-born canons, his allusion to Gregory the Great's sermon (Hom. in evang. 2.8), which preaches a harsher asceticism, implies that they should go beyond the letter of the Rule and adhere to the spirit of Gregory's more rigorous text embedded within it. According to Claussen, Chrodegang "has used Gregory's text furtively, or, rather he has used the text openly to make a furtive point" about the value of voluntarily embracing a harsher discipline than the Rule mandates (p. 176). Claussen argues that Chrodegang used Caesarius's sermon on humility (p. 233) and the *de Vita contemplativa* of Pomerius (misidentified in the *Regulum canonicorum* as Prosper) in equally complicated ways. In neither case did Chrodegang simply accept and reiterate his source; rather, he quietly modified each to underline the non-monastic character of his new religious order. Thus Chrodegang put authoritative texts to his own uses, demonstrating "a boldness … characterized by the reverence due the past, and yet by the realization that the past offers no infallible guide for the present, and so demands both correction and a certain aggiornamento if it is to be anything other than a historical relic" (p. 201).

Claussen's discussion of the intertexts is based on assumptions about readers and reading practices. It is likely, as Claussen claims, that manuscripts of Gregory the Great, Caesarius, and Pomerius were available to the canons, but that does not mean that Chrodegang's *Rule* inspired them to seek them out. Claussen seems to assume that Chrodegang's canons, a group bound by a relatively relaxed Rule and, in Claussen's formulation, allowed to choose their own paths within it, were as careful and assiduous readers as he himself is.

Our ignorance of the canons' actual reading habits points to a wider difficulty facing Claussen, which is the limited evidence for how the *Regulum canonicorum* functioned on the ground. This source problem is evident in the third section of the book in which Claussen examines how the bishop attempted to carve out a new holy community from men who already had strong worldly ties, and how he sought to use these men to christianize the town of Metz. In these last two chapters, Claussen moves from a close reading of the Rule to looking at the larger picture–how, through building projects, an emphasis on teaching and preaching, and liturgical reform (which linked Metz to its imagined Roman past), Chrodegang created a Christian community in his town. In discussing the wider project of Chrodegang's reforms, and in discussing historical realities, as opposed to the norms expressed in the Rule, Claussen has to turn to incomplete or unreliable sources, such as the scanty archaeological record and the *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium* of Paul the Deacon. In the absence of more thorough sources, Claussen must sometimes proceed by analogy and theoretical premise. Therefore, his sophisticated suggestions about the town, whose laity and clergy are integrated into a Christian "hagiopolis" through shared public rituals, and the sacred geography these rituals trace over the secular landscape of Metz are fascinating and compelling but difficult to substantiate.

Claussen's interpretation is gently revisionist. He notes that Chrodegang's reputation has suffered in comparison to that of the more famous reformer Boniface because while the latter left his letters, the bishop of Metz left only scattered writings. In Claussen's reassessment Chrodegang "no longer is the romanizing ideologue whose insufficient efforts were unsuccessful in completing the assigned task of imposing papal standards on the Franks, and whose work had to be redone by the more adept ecclesiastics in the next generations. Instead, he was actively involved in recovering and creating a new version of history for his city" (p. 287). Claussen's appreciation for the subtleties of Chrodegang's writings indeed seems to have given him a slightly idealized view of Chrodegang's plan for his cathedral chapter, in which the fairly lenient Rule allows the canons a good standard of living ("insofar as that was possible in the eighth century") while offering each individual the opportunity to choose a holy life and seek salvation (p. 243). While Claussen does not entirely abandon the prevailing view of the dysfunctional eighth century, he does appreciate the complex ways in which an author of the early Carolingian era could draw on religious traditions to produce a text that presaged the reforms of the next century.

In addition to performing close philological readings, Claussen draws on the theoretical groundwork of Hen and Innes, who examine the ways in which the Carolingians created a "usable past" by transforming models from the past to serve current needs.[1] Claussen's sensitivity to the complicated ways that Chrodegang transformed his historical sources reflects (and further supports) recent work on the "historical mindedness" (to use McKitterick's term) of the Carolingians.[2] In discussing the creation of community through liturgical practice, Claussen relies on the anthropological ideas of space, culture, and ritual of LÃ©vi-Strauss and Turner and some recent work on medieval ceremony.[3]

In making the difficult leap from close reading to historical reconstruction and speculation, Claussen pro-

vides a model for how to integrate the philological and the theoretical, for how literary analysis can serve historical inquiry, and for why a close reading of the Latin text matters. The result is a compelling book that will be of great interest to both Latinists and church historians.

Notes

[1]. Yitzak Hen and Matthew Innes, eds., *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2]. Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2004), p. 273.

[3]. Claude LÃ©vi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969); Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973). On medieval ritual specifically, Claussen mentions Constable and Paxton, although he does not draw on the work of Koziol (who deals with a very different kind of ritual) or, less explicably, Farmer (who discusses the relations of cathedral canons to a civic community). See Giles Constable, "The Ceremonies and Symbolism of Entering the Religious Life and Taking the Monastic Habit,"* Segni e riti nella chiesa altomedievale occidentale*, Settimane 33 (Spoleto: Presso la sede del Centro, 1987); Frederick S. Paxton,* Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe *(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Geoffrey Koziol,* Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France *(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Sharon Farmer,* Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

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Citation: Anna Lisa Taylor. Review of Claussen, M. A., *The Reform of the Frankish Church: Chrodegang of Metz and the Regula canonicorum in the Eighth Century.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. November, 2005.

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