

The Eucharist in Medieval Canon Law. Thomas M. Izbicki.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xxiv + 264 pp. \$99.99.

The body and blood of Christ: in Thomas Izbicki's new book on the Eucharist, this familiar sacramental theme receives its first detailed study in medieval canon law. Drawing on the "major normative texts, conciliar, papal, and patristic" (x) included in various collections of canons, the author explores the discipline of the Eucharist across many centuries, "including enactments about sacramental practice, interpretation of those texts, diffusion of their instructions to clergy and laity, and their enforcement" (x). The goal is clear and effective: to understand "how norms were not just received but enforced down to the parish level, even in the face of dissent" (xii).

Medieval canon law provides an excellent historical framework for examining fundamental questions of Christian liturgy, education, belief, and doctrine. Izbicki negotiates his subject in both theory and practice for medieval prelates, pastors, teaching canonists, and the laity. The book's five chapters explore the establishment, transmission, enactment, enforcement, dissent, and acceptance of Eucharistic norms, addressing the real presence of Christ (chapter 1); the form of the sacrament and elevation of the Host (chapter 2); communion (chapter 3); custody of the Eucharist and communion of the sick (chapter 4); and the feast of Corpus Christi and wonder hosts (chapter 5).

The influence, construction, and use of medieval canon law is richly illuminated through such a focused study. We come to learn, for example, how theological interpretations on the real presence of Christ were given increasing attention in the canonical teachings/writings of Ivo of Chartres, Rufinus of Bologna, Huggucio, Johannes Teutonicus, Popes Innocent III and IV, and Hostiensis. The language of transmutation or transubstantiation in commentaries on consecration is similarly revealed through such comparative and chronological analysis, showing how the Decretists and Decretalists mapped out emerging ideals of Christian (and church) unity. In every chapter of this book, Eucharistic discipline is identified and traced through patristic, Carolingian, Gregorian, and later canonistic thinkers to the time of John Wyclif, Jan Hus, and the Protestant Reformation, offering an undeniably comprehensive treatment of the subject in medieval canonical thinking.

Commentaries, glosses, and literature on pastoral care are interwoven in this study. The administration and materiality of the Eucharist are given lengthy and necessary exposition. It quickly becomes apparent how subsequent generations of canonists contributed to refining and sometimes complicating medieval sacramental practice.

Where the law was meant to provide a guiding principle, it could also be convoluted and misinterpreted on both sides of the Alps. This factual implication was potentially hazardous to all Christian faithful. Regulating Eucharistic practice, Izbicki shows, especially through greater and more frequent instruction to medieval clerics and laity, was thus considered deserving of constant clarification. Canonists gave ample treatment in their writings to liturgical observation, expressing concern, for example, for persons who vomited up the sacrament; correct posture for, and frequency of, its reception by the laity; norms for its custody, care, and preparation; viaticum processions; and the regulation of Corpus Christi observance.

Izbicki shows the discipline of the Eucharist as more than just a complex theological and liturgical phenomenon. It is represented here as a historical process, whose meaning developed under generations of medieval canonists. The law itself also gains significant perspective in these pages; it is positioned as more than written provisions and statutes in the archives of time, but rather more poetically as construction blocks for medieval religious thought and behavior. Through this detailed study on the Eucharist, we can appreciate the conduct and concerns of the clergy, the expectations and practice of Christian faithful in religious observance, and the central preoccupations of numerous canonistic elites between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. Powered by contemporary canonical writings, Izbicki ultimately shows Eucharistic practices entering into mainstream canon law, as accepted and universal Christian authority. His conclusion, moreover, on the Protestant challenges posed to these medieval practices, is a sober reminder of the Eucharist's impact on the religious history of the Western world.

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