



PROJECT MUSE®

Rathier de Vérone. Lecteur, remanieur et centonisateur by
François Dolbeau (review)

Francesco Veronese

The Catholic Historical Review, Volume 109, Number 4, Autumn 2023,
pp. 776-777 (Review)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2023.a914181>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/914181>

As with the much earlier decretals of the early fifth century and newer decretals of the late twelfth century, individual compilers seeking to amass and organize legal norms for teaching and/or administrative use more locally made copies of the texts, from which other copies were made and disseminated, resulting over time in the recognition of the texts as authoritative law. Innocent I could not legislate for the church universal, and neither could Alexander III. And, yet, somehow, through the historical forces at work, the papacy grew in centralized authority and concrete power in the church. Second, there is the issue of authority and the conditions that promote the rise of a particular authority. Both Summerlin and d'Avray are concerned with the papacy but also with particular textual manifestations of that authority, one with conciliar canons and one with decretal letters. The texts themselves hold an authority, but that authority is not just because they emanate from a figure or office that is authoritative but because the way in which they address real problems and offer well-considered solutions provided genuine guidance and assistance. Both d'Avray and Summerlin demonstrate how their sources reveal an authority backed by substance, thereby reinforcing that authority, even if it followed several years later or not simultaneously everywhere. Finally, there is the issue of textual transmission in relationship to tradition. Declarations are meaningless if they do not reach an audience and have longevity. Summerlin and d'Avray contribute to our understanding of how traditions take shape and how, over decades and even across breaks of centuries, texts carry forward ideas, norms, and argumentation that exercise formative influence in how members of a tradition think, act, and govern themselves internally.

All three works are to be commended to historians of the papacy, Catholic institutions and offices (including the hierarchy and bishops, in particular), canon law, and legal and institutional history more broadly. And for historians interested on a more theoretical level with mechanisms of historical development, these books provide a wealth of material for consideration and some salient case studies.

Saint Louis University

ATRIA A. LARSON

Rathier de Vérone. Lecteur, remanieur et centonisateur. By François Dolbeau, [mediEVI, 29] (Florence: Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo. 2021. Pp. viii, 509. \$ 75.42. ISBN: 978-8-892-90073-8.)

As François Dolbeau underlines in his *avant-propos* to this volume, Rathierus, tenth-century monk and abbot at Lobbes and (intermittently) bishop of Verona and Liège, very much enjoyed talking about himself. This was quite unusual for medieval authors, who were sometimes so silent about themselves that we do not even know their names. His troubled life and ecclesiastical career can be reconstructed quite thoroughly by means of the autobiographical remarks he included in his texts, usually as a way to justify his often-controversial choices and respond to his adversaries' criticism. Rathierus's works also distinguish themselves because they (in)famously do not make easy reading. His vocabulary and style of composition were extremely peculiar and probably looked complicated not only to present-

day readers but also to his contemporaries, as the limited circulation of most of his works seems to suggest. And yet, despite RATHERIUS's proclivity for self-disclosure and highly distinct stylistic flourishes, his written production has long been and still is the subject of debate among scholars, mostly focusing on issues of attribution and textual reconstruction. In this volume, the results of a lifetime of research on RATHERIUS and his works by François Dolbeau, one of the greatest medieval philologists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, are brought together in an outstanding collection.

The eleven contributions included in this volume, covering a chronological span ranging from the early 1980s to the present day, are structured in four subsections. After a couple of introductory chapters providing a detailed and thorough picture of RATHERIUS's life and works, three groups of contributions focus on more specific fields of his intellectual activity. The role and use of Patristic sources in his texts is highlighted in chapters 3 to 5. RATHERIUS as a writer and a rewriter of hagiographical texts is discussed in chapters 6 to 8. Finally, issues of attribution of some collections of sermons to RATHERIUS are addressed in chapters 9 to 11. Two contributions (chapters 8 and 11) are published here for the first time and present editions of texts previously disregarded by editors of RATHERIUS' works. New or revised editions of short texts are also included as appendices to almost all the chapters. This volume will thus become a necessary supplement to the previous collections of RATHERIUS' texts, such as those published by Weigle and Reid, who are sometimes the object of Dolbeau's criticism or philological readjustments.

This book also provides the chance to review some forty years of development in scholarly work on and approaches to RATHERIUS and his production. The transformations that took place in this period in philological methodologies are very clearly reflected—and reflected upon—in Dolbeau's considerations, may look quite obvious, even commonplace, to present-day scholars, but they were in fact revolutionary when they were first voiced. New tools, like the *Thesaurus Ratherii*, have been developed in the meantime and have immediately become parts of the toolkit deployed by Dolbeau—who actually played a key role in their conception and development. The evolution in his ways of thinking about RATHERIUS is one of the most interesting “subplots” of the whole collection. Another one, suggested by the huge amount of information provided on the editorial history of individual texts in early modern and modern times, concerns the scholars who edited RATHERIUS's works, their methodologies, and the cultural contexts in which they operated.

In sum, this book can be appreciated and fruitfully exploited from a wide range of perspectives. It will prove indispensable to all those wishing to work on RATHERIUS and his writings in the future.