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Review of *Ambrosianum Mysterium: The Church of Milan and its Liturgical Tradition*, by Cesare Alzati. Trans. George Guiver

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commission to build the Jubilee Church? Certainly Vatican II is not reflected in Meier's winning entry.

The new churches featured in this book certainly justify Heathcote's pessimistic outlook on the future of church architecture. It seems that Artmedia Press Ltd. in the U.K. was responsible for the design of this expensive book. The type font is so minuscule that the text is tortuous to read. Furthermore the illustrations, especially those accompanying Heathcote's essays, are printed in white on a silver background, giving the impression that they were not really meant to be studied.

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R. Kevin Seasoltz O.S.B.

Ambrosianum Mysterium: The Church of Milan and its Liturgical Tradition.
By Cesare Alzati. Trans. George Guiver. Vol 1: Alcuin Club 44. Cambridge, England: Grove Books 1999. Pages, 52. Paper, \$3.95. ISBN 1-85174-421-5.
Vol 2: Alcuin Club 47-48. Cambridge, England: Grove Books 2000. Pages, 96. Paper, \$9.90. ISBN 1-85174-444-4.

My doctoral thesis studied the development of Christian theology in relation to the emergence of the liturgical year in the place and time of Northern Italy between the years 365 and 450. Like many enthusiastic dissertators, I began to interpret my own experience with the narrow methods I was using to read and interpret sermons and theological tracts of a number of bishops, among them Peter Chrysologus of Ravenna and the august and prolific Ambrose of Milan. Though my lens has widened to see with a wider scope the world, and the church and its worship, I remain convinced that the witness of these leaders of late antiquity for appreciating inculturation is underrated toward understanding ecumenism and Christian worship.

During those graduate-student years, I ate lunch most days with graduate-student friends. Among them was a man working on a Ph.D. in engineering. Born and raised in Milan, he was a committed atheist, yet he perked up when I talked about St Ambrose or about the liturgical tradition of a millennium and a half ago.

Piecing together snippets of our exchanges over a long span of time, I grew to appreciate how much my friend appreciated Milan as the liturgical "other" of the Catholic Church in the West. The baptized there were *not* like other Roman Catholics, and what they do in church is indeed unique and likely as or more ancient than some of what the Roman Church prescribed for its liturgies. The ritual traditions of the ancient Ambrosian Rite of the Diocese of Milan were instinctively reflected in the pride of my friend, who had lost his faith but waxed at length about *caro*

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Ambrogio and the rites named after the courageous bishop who led his church 374 to 397.

Ambrose had been elected bishop by the people before he had been baptized, and seen the church of Milan through a tempestuous period of the Arian crisis, much of this on record from letters he wrote to his sister, Marcellina, as the events were actually taking place. (See Letters 20 and 22, *Patrologia Latina* 16:994-1002, 1019-1026.)

More than a third of the first of these Alcuin Club volumes on the origins and traditions of the Ambrosian Rite (#44 of the series) is dedicated to its rites at the time of Saint Ambrose himself, and in it Cesare Alzati highlights daily prayer, the Mass, the readings for the seasons of the liturgical year, initiation, ministry, matrimony and consecrated virginity, penitence, rites for illness and mourning, the cult of the saints, and the rite for the dedication of churches. The first half of the second Alcuin volume (#47-48 of the series) is dedicated to the Milanese traditions in the Middle Ages, in the Carolingian age and later (covering the eighth through twelfth centuries), where the author highlights the roles of the ordained clergy, initiation, pastoral ministry, daily prayer, the Mass, the liturgical year, and the readings of the seasons. Alzati demonstrates how the Milanese tradition evolved from the fourth-century rites for the next half-millennium.

In addition to his concise depiction of the Ambrosian ritual traditions, the author supplies succinct bibliographies for study of the other "other" rites of North Italy, of Aquileia and Ravenna especially, churches whose traditions have not received as much critical study as the Milanese tradition has. The former tradition, *Il Rito Patriarcato* of Aquileia, languished early because the city and church themselves were vanquished in the barbarian invasions, while study of the church of Ravenna is helped by the beauty extant in its magnificent buildings, but little of its liturgical and theological heritage is available in English.

Because these non-Roman traditions are rarely considered today in the study of worship, the two Alcuin-Grove volumes on the *Ambrosian Mystery* by Cesare Alzati are welcome, for they succinctly highlight the ritual uniqueness and heritage of the Milanese tradition, "the most populous Roman Catholic diocese in the world," as the author reveals in the opening sentence. As Alzati's work describes the Milanese tradition, its oddness is manifest more in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and calendar than in the celebration of the Mass. (The Milanese office indicates why George Guiver would have taken up the translation of Alzati, for Guiver is an expert in the Liturgy of the Hours; see his *Company of Voices: Daily Prayer and the People of God* [New York: Pueblo 1988].)

With the distance of time, one can smile at the irony of Milanese uniqueness, for the Ambrose after whom the *mysterium* is named was so desperately intent on straight-jacketing Milanese customs to conform with

Rome: "We are not unaware that the Church of Rome does not have this custom," Ambrose wrote in his work "On the Sacraments" (3.5; *Sources chretiennes* 25bis: 73), "whose example and style we follow in everything." Moreover, in the church of Milan in the year 387, Ambrose baptized Saint Augustine, which we know from the first-person account of Ambrose's influence on Augustine in *The Confessions*. It is amazing that neither of them, Ambrose or Augustine, was a native of Rome, yet they are the leaders of its earliest supporters. An irony in the reverse direction is how much nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship of liturgical history (mostly in German) was dedicated to providing how ancient and Roman the "Roman Canon" (now Eucharistic Prayer I) was, yet the figure they raise up to push the dates as early as possible was not a pope or Roman bishop, but the Romano-ophile of Milan, Ambrose. Ambrose and the Augustine he baptized were, as the cliché goes, "more Roman than the Romans," a posture and tradition carried on today by Catholics who long for the liturgical strictures and hegemony of the Roman Missal of Pope Pius V (in use from 1570 to 1969) even though they had not been raised in the church when it was the only missal of the church.

The work of Cesare Alzati shows not only that he is prolific, but that he applies what he knows of the churches of antiquity and the Middle Ages to advocate for a more diversified state of Christianity in Europe today. Of the churches of late antiquity, he has written on Rome and Milan; of the Middle Ages, he has written about the problems in the centuries of the Roman-Christian Empire; and of the Reformation era, he has a magisterial work on the "great reform" of Charles Borromeo, of sixteenth-century Milan, and Charles's influence on culture, faith, and art in the Counter-Reformation.

Through the centuries there have been various attempts to abolish the alternative, non-Roman rites and traditions of the Milanese. Eleventh-century Pope Nicholas II was among the enemies of the Milanese traditions, and again in the fifteenth century efforts to abolish its customs emerged again. Perhaps the tenacity of the rites in the experience of the people (and, no doubt, the power place that Milan bishops and archbishops had in the administration of the church) saw the tradition's survival against its detractors. There was another close call after Vatican II, for many were inclined to bring the Milanese worship under the umbrella of Roman rites rather than do the work for a revised Ambrosian Rite. Fortunately, Cardinal Giovanni Colombo, Archbishop of Milan from 1963 to 1979, worked to maintain the Milanese tradition, and its vernacular missal was promulgated in spring 1976. The Ambrosian liturgy survives still, even though in Milan, as elsewhere in Europe, church attendance is not strong.

The applicability of what Cesare Alzati reveals of the diversity of rites in earlier centuries is evident in his writings about the church today, for,

though not widely distributed, one senses in his *L'unità multiforme* ("unity in plurality") that he considers the diversity of earlier local traditions as central to the health of the faith as a communion of communions, having some traditions universally in common, and some born of the native cultures into which the faith's societies are incarnate. In the same vein, but with a wider scope, he has written about the legacy of Pope John Paul II's work and writings on relations between the churches of the East and West.

A final commendation to Grove Books for publishing the translation of Cesare Alzati on the liturgy of Milan, for the English version is distributed more numerously than the original work was distributed in Italian.

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Life of Jesus in Icons: From the "Bible of Tbilisi." With a preface by Giuseppe Pasotto and an introduction by Francis J. Moloney S.D.B. Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press 2008. Pages, 143. Cloth, \$34.95. ISBN: 978-0-8146-3237-6.

Praying the Word: Illuminated Prayers and Wisdom from The Saint John's Bible. Donald Jackson, Artistic Director. Collegetown: Liturgical Press 2008. Pages, 76. Cloth, \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0-8146-9093-2.

In the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption in Tbilisi, Georgia, in Eastern Europe, there are one hundred and thirty icons of scenes from the New Testament elegantly mounted along the cathedral's side walls. For the faithful, they make present remarkable images of the invisible God. Thirty of these icons, which portray the life of Jesus, his Mother, and Saint John the Baptist, are reproduced in *Life of Jesus in Icons* together with the relevant biblical text in the New Revised Standard Version, along with a commentary written especially for the English-language edition by Francis J. Moloney, the distinguished Australian biblical scholar who is currently the provincial superior of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Australia and the Pacific. Also included are extracts from early church fathers which shed light on the significance of the events portrayed in the icons.

Moloney has included an extended introduction to the icon in the bible, icons of the Lord Jesus, icons of the Mother of God, the icon in the tradition of the church, and the icon in the liturgy. In this volume the icons are reproduced in brilliant colors. They are not simply "holy pictures" that arouse pious feelings of devotion; rather, like all authentic icons, they make a transcendent divine reality present to the viewer who quietly contemplates the images. They certainly do not invite voyeurism but demand that viewers open their lives to the reality made present. It is active engagement that leads to participation in the reality of the mystery. The subject matter of the icons in this volume follows the chronology of the



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