

Computus at court

Rauf de Lenham's *Kalender* (1256) and the transmission of technical knowledge

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- (a) De geste ne voil pas chanter
Ne veilles estoires cunter
Mun sen, ceo crem, pas ne savereit
Lur valor descrivere a dreit [...]
E, de autre part, ausi redut
Ke tant preisasse lur valor,
Ke tenu fusse a mentur,
Kar mult i ad cuntes e fables
Ke ne sunt pas veritables.
Pur ceo de tele chose dirrai
Dunt verité vus musteraï
E proverai de mun dité
Par reisun la vérité. (1-4, 8-16)

I do not wish to tell of great deeds or old stories, as I would be incapable of doing them justice, or lest I be taken for a liar, since many old stories are untrue. For this reason, I will tell of something whose truth I can prove to you: I shall prove it to you through reason.

(a) Who was Rauf de Lenham?

- (b) Je qui cest petit treté
De latin vus ai translaté
Rau de Linham ai a nun. (935-37)

My name is Rauf of Lenham, and I translated this little treatise from Latin for you.

- (c) ... mun seignur,
Pur ki amur cest overe enpris ... (18-19)

... for my lord, for love of whom I undertook to produce this work ...

- (d) ... cest art saver voleit
E pas de latin ne entendeit
Kar il n'esteit for poi lettré ... (1299-1301)

... for he wished to know this art, but did not understand Latin, as he was not well-educated ...

- (e) ... mil e deus cenz e cinquante sis
Ke je, Rau, cest treté fis. (1305-06)

... twelve hundred and fifty-six, when I, Rauf, produced this treatise.

(2) Teaching methods

- (f) La reisun peç'a vus dis,
Pur quei tele nuns lur furent mis.
[...]
Les nuns des jors oi avez,
Mes pas la reisun ne savez
Pur quei tels nuns lur furent mis,
Mes ore vis ert ici apris. (223-24, 289-92)

I will tell you later why these names were given to them. [...] You have heard about the names of the days, but do not yet know the reason why these names were given to them. Now, though, I will tell you.

- (g) Ore devez tant entendre
Ke pur les set jors devez prendre
Set lettres de l'abécé,
A. B. C. D. E. F. G. [...]
E ke vus seez tut cert
Quele lettre a quel jor sert [...]
Les nuns entende ki nes set :
Faraon, Elys, Doun,
Clement, Alard e Gorun,
Felipe, Eduard, Cleophas,
Bertin, Adam, Golias,
Edmund, David, Cayphas,
Belyn, Gwy, Folke, Elyas,
Daniel, Berard, Aniant,
Gerard, Falkes e Durant,
Conan, Bertram, Adthelbert. (227-30, 237-38, 246-55)

Now you should know that for the seven days you should take seven days of the alphabet; and so that you are certain which letter corresponds to each day, hear these seven names [...]

(3) Attitudes: learning and the laity

- (h) Pus firent un kalender
Pur lur fest autorizer
En langage de latin
Dunt nul lai ne set la fin.
Mais jeo voil desoremés
Ke l'en sache tut adés
Li veil e li enfancenet
Ki ben entendent cest liveret. (55-62)

Then (the clerks) made a calendar to justify their feasts, and wrote it in Latin, which no layman knows. I, however, wish that it be known by young and old alike who listen carefully to this work.

- (i) E celes festes vus dirrai
Ke sunt en hus al puple lai,
Kar tuz dire le voil mie
Les seinz de la letanie ;
Asez suffit de meins cunter. (743-47)

I will give an account of those feasts marked by the laity, since I do not wish to give a litany; it is sufficient to say less.

- (j) Kar pur els nel fi ge mie
Ki entendent grant clergie,
Mes cest romanx a laie gent
Asez suffit plenerement
E lur aprent del kalender
Quanque as lais serra mester,
Kar cil ne pount pas tontost
Augrim saver e compost (1286-96)

For I did not produce (this work) for those who have in-depth knowledge. This work does, however, suffice for the laity, and teaches them about the calendar insofar as it is pertinent to them. The laity cannot immediately understand algorithms or the computus.

All references to the *Kalender* are taken from Rauf de Lenham, *Art de kalender : poème anglo-normand de l'année 1256*. ed. by Östen Södergård, Acta Universitatis Ludensis. Sectio 1, Theologica, juridica, humaniora, 49 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989). Translations are my own.

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