

Timothy J. Johnson, ed. *Franciscans and Preaching: Every Miracle from the Beginning of the World Came About through Words*.

The Medieval Franciscans 7. Leiden: Brill, 2012. xv + 526 pp. \$261. ISBN: 978-90-04-23129-0.

*Franciscans and Preaching* is a great addition to an already great year of academic publishing on the Franciscan Order. The year 2012 saw the appearance of such titles as *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint* (A. Vauchez), *Francis of Assisi: A New Biography* (A. Thompson), *The Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi* (ed. M. Robson), *The Poor and the Perfect: The Rise of Learning in the Franciscan Order, 1209–1310* (N. Senoçak), and, early in 2013, *Order and Disorder: The Poor Clares between Foundation and Reform* (B. Roest). *Franciscans and Preaching* is also a great addition to an already great series at Brill, The Medieval Franciscans, with such titles as *Defenders and Critics of Franciscan Life* (ed. M. Cusato and G. Geltner), *Franciscans at Prayer* (ed. T. Johnson), and *Music in Early Franciscan Thought* (P. Loewen). What makes *Franciscans and Preaching* particularly outstanding is its internal coherence as well as its historical-theological balance. The volume has seventeen articles in five sections: “Gospel Life and Preaching,” “The Academy and Preaching,” “Perceptions of Holiness in Preaching,” “Medieval Society and Preaching,” and “The Art and Craft of Preaching.” A strong hermeneutical account in the introduction precedes this intelligent arrangement, and the structure of the book supports an internal development of the theme with many references to preceding articles.

According to Johnson, with an appeal to Wittgenstein’s famous insights into “family resemblances,” the studies in this volume are intended to serve “the recognition of similar themes, approaches, and concerns in Franciscan preaching without creating a premature synthesis” (9). Consequently, the volume’s “more inclusive, albeit ‘weaker’ hermeneutic” delineates contours and contents while leaving room for further investigation and discussion (10). In the foreword, Beverly M. Kienzle rightly observes that “each essay joins the others to speak individually and as a whole to readers” (xv). The homiletic theme of the preacher’s own humility as explained by C. Colt Anderson (“Polemical Preaching at the University of Paris”), for example, recurs in the same section in Joshua C. Benson’s article (“Matthew of Aquasparta’s Sermons”). The exemplary use of St. Anthony as a model preacher in this article is echoed in the next contribution, where Patrick Nold uses the saint as a starting point for dealing with the issue of poverty in the sermons on the saints by Bertrand de la Tour. Nold’s article is followed by another treatment of *sermones de*

*sanctis* in the next section, by Alison More (“Clare of Assisi and Elisabeth of Hungary in Franciscan sermons”), who again refers to Aquasparta. The famous preacher Berthold of Regensburg features in both More’s article and that of the next author, Stephen Mossman (“Preaching in Medieval Germany”). In this way, the theme of Franciscan preaching and identity is propelled forward with much historical detail and an analytical dynamism clearly initiated by the volume’s editor.

Another strength of the volume is its mix and mutuality of historical and theological perspectives: historical accounts include important theological issues securely anchored in their historical and textual contexts, and vice versa. The tone of theological openness and interdisciplinary richness is set in the introduction, where Johnson explores the Franciscan fascination with the word and the theological intuitions of Francis of Assisi, for whom “proclamation was holistic performance” requiring both the body and the moral integrity of the preacher (5). For medieval Franciscans, all words were grounded in the Word made flesh (12) and preaching was a potential dialogue of delight between humanity and the divine (5). “Word” references a relationship to the one speaking, the message conveyed, the voice, and the knowledge produced in others (according to Bonaventure), and “every miracle from the beginning of the world came about through words” (according to Roger Bacon). Not all authors continue Johnson’s programmatic approach, but the combination of historical theology and theological history is generally fruitful and methodological tensions are few. Thus, when C. Colt Anderson states that “the unconscious or conscious attempts of scholars to pacify Bonaventure . . . has had a distorting effect on our ability to truly encounter a saint who never lost his salty taste,” thereby concluding that Bonaventure “is not just a mystic” (113), whereas Nicholas W. Youmans observes that “it seems that Bonaventure’s entire career as an author was fueled by one notion: the soul desires a loving union with God, which can only be accessed by means of a mystic’s awareness and care” (119), the irony here is less proof of some flaw in scholarly judgment than of a sound hermeneutical sense in dealing with the breadth and the depth of medieval Franciscan preaching.

KRIJN PANSTERS

Tilburg University