

Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission c. 1220–1650: Cum scientia sit donum Dei, armatura ad defendendam sanctam fidem catholicam. . . . Bert Roest. The Medieval Franciscans 10. Leiden: Brill, 2015. x + 246 pp. \$142.

As the title suggests, *Franciscan Learning, Preaching and Mission c. 1220–1650* is not a monograph but rather a collection of articles written on a number of themes that have engaged Bert Roest over the last several years. Six of the articles were published previously

and, though heavily revised, retain the contours of unique contributions. While this editorial decision makes for some repetition between the chapters and unevenness in overall coverage, the collection nevertheless has a certain coherency because of its focus on learning.

For Roest, this volume is an opportunity to revisit material that he thought he had left behind when he published his important study *A History of Franciscan Education (c. 1210–1517)* in 2000. In engaging with his earlier scholarship — including some of the critical responses to it — Roest has once again significantly expanded our understanding of the place of learning in the Franciscan tradition over time, as well as the place of the Franciscan tradition in European Scholasticism. The eight chapters are organized chronologically to span the first four centuries of the history of the Franciscan order. Chapter 1, “Francis of Assisi and the Pursuit of Learning,” begins where it should, with the Franciscan founder. Whether Francis rejected learning as part of the formation of the friar has long been a focus of debate both within the order itself as well as among scholars. Looking anew at the (admittedly) small body of writings left by Francis, Roest convincingly shows that this reformer had a much more complex response to learning than previously understood. Francis was more willing to embrace a place for learning than traditionally accepted, especially as the order grew and in response to papal concerns about heresy.

Chapters 2 through 6 look more closely at the institutionalization of Franciscan learning and its Scholastic character during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Chapter 2, “The Franciscan School System: A Reassessment,” Roest ponders scholarly resistance to evidence of the early establishment of Franciscan schools. Though his earlier monograph found a recognizable school system established in the order by the 1230s, Roest says that most scholarship still takes the Constitutions of Narbonne (1260) as the starting point for its emergence. In this substantive chapter, Roest traces the establishment of lectures and the formation of provincial *studia* in many provinces of the order long before Bonaventure’s tenure as minister general.

Chapter 3, “Religious Life in the Franciscan School Network,” examines the increasing formalization of Franciscan education in the later thirteenth century. Whereas the previous chapter focused on the more institutional manifestations of schooling, this chapter also delves into the molding of future friars. Roest discusses, for example, the establishment of school networks, the routines of student life, and the formation of the novitiate. Communal reading was important to conventual life — taking the various forms of sermons, group lectures, and storytelling, as well as formal teaching. Chapter 4 discusses the contribution of the mendicant orders, mostly the Franciscan and Dominican, to the production of biblical exegesis and commentaries throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In Chapter 5 Roest argues that scholars have underestimated the importance of Augustinian influence in the Scholastic thinking of the Franciscan tradition. Roest carefully traces its influence upon Franciscan theology, for example, in its emphasis upon an intellectual life directed at the suffering of Christ, the role of theology to move people, and the privileged place of individual experience in matters of faith. These two chapters show that Roest is just as at home delving into the intricacies of medieval Scholasticism as he is tracking the convoluted institutional evolution of the order.

For those of us who work on the mendicant traditions after 1500, the final three chapters are especially welcome contributions. Mendicant learning remains poorly studied in the era of the Reformation, a fact that is especially surprising given the active engagement of these orders in religious controversy. Chapter 6 follows the evolution of Franciscan school networks between 1450 and 1650, a time of intense divisiveness in the Franciscan body. The order formally recognized three branches during the sixteenth century: Conventual, Observant, and Capuchin. Chapters 7 and 8 stand apart from previous chapters in their focus on the Low Countries. Chapter 7, “Franciscan Urban Preachers in Defense of Catholicism in the Low Countries, c. 1520–1568,” looks at Franciscan catechisms and other devotional treatises as vehicles of religious controversy. Chapter 8 examines the organization of Franciscan missions in the seventeenth century to reevaluate the effectiveness of the order as vehicles of Catholic reform.

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