

surveys—either of Ireland or a wider international arena. For anyone approaching the topic for its own sake hereafter, Simms has set a high bar indeed.

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RANDALL B. SMITH, *Aquinas, Bonaventure, and the Scholastic Culture of Medieval Paris: Preaching, Prologues, and Biblical Commentary*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. 460. \$103. ISBN: 978-1-1088-4115-3.  
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Toward the middle of the thirteenth century, at the burgeoning University of Paris, two diverse cultures collided, one of them belonging to secular masters, the other to the friars of the recently founded mendicant orders, Franciscans and Dominicans. It is to the latter that Randall Smith turns his attention in his study of an academic “culture of preaching, prologues, and biblical commentary” (18). Setting out to illustrate the dependence of the biblical commentaries of a nascent university genre on a similarly nascent genre of sermons, known at the time as the “modern sermon” [*sermo modernus*], Smith shows that their purpose was to train prospective preachers with material especially useful for what he describes as “*sermo modernus*-style preaching.” According to his view, in both their style and purpose biblical commentaries and their prologues were composed after the fashion of the *sermo modernus*. Especially at the University of Paris, the *prologus* that had been employed to introduce commentaries on works of many kinds emerged as a distinct, highly codified genre, intended to introduce to readers of generally modest background a given work and its author according to the categories of Aristotle’s four causes. This, too, was after the fashion of the *sermo modernus*. It was a form that endured for over two centuries, until Renaissance humanists introduced newer approaches to preaching, prologues, and biblical commentary.

Clearly written and well documented, Smith’s study examines numerous well-chosen selections from a broad variety of works by the period’s two most famous writers—Bonaventure and Aquinas.

The volume includes nineteen chapters grouped into three parts. The first, entitled “Preliminaries,” surveys the historical and cultural background indispensable for understanding Smith’s “*sermo modernus*-style preaching.” For understanding this context, Smith draws mainly from the prologues, sermons, and *principia* (addresses delivered to university audiences by those incepting as masters). Central to this context was the period’s “homiletic revolution,” as Smith calls it, the initial stimulus for which had been provided by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, in its mandate to the effect that “bishops should henceforth provide men ‘suitable for carrying out the office of sacred preaching’” (27). Previously this office had been reserved to bishops, whose efforts to fulfill it had met with mixed success. But Smith discusses a few other revolutionary impulses, one of which was the foundation in the council’s immediate aftermath of the highly mobile mendicant orders, Franciscan and Dominican, willing and able to meet the council’s demand for preachers suited to the task. Another stimulus was the burgeoning University of Paris, which was emerging as a center for the formation of educated preachers, as well as an important source of production of sermons and manuals for preaching.

The volume’s second part is given to Thomas Aquinas, but rather than another contribution to the now crowded field of intellectual autobiographies of Aquinas, Smith offers a detailed examination of his various prologues. Beginning with a consideration of *Rigans montes*, the first part, or *principium*, of his inception as a university master, followed by *Hic est liber*, its second part, or *resumptio*, Smith goes on to discuss Thomas’s other prologues, mainly those introducing his biblical commentaries. But he also rightly discusses Thomas’s prologues to a

few speculative works (*Scriptum super Sententiis Petri Lombardi*; *Super Boethium de Trinitate*) and a polemical one (*Contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem*).

Smith understandably turns his attention to a collection of three relatively simple early prologues belonging to commentaries on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. That the first two antedate Thomas's inception as a master has long been recognized. This is mainly because they are cursory expositions of the literal sense, devoid of either allegorical interpretations or presentations of questions, both of which at the time were reserved for masters. Though exegetically less interesting than Thomas's later biblical commentaries, both are of considerable historical importance, as they provide a basis for observing his development as an interpreter of scripture. Moreover, Thomas's authorship of these two works appears secure, as each survives in several manuscripts, and the medieval catalogues of his writings, as well as his medieval and modern biographies, are virtually unanimous on their authenticity. And yet, the present reader regrets that the author has not alerted his audience to the considerably less certain attribution of the aforementioned commentary on Lamentations. This has never been a matter of scholarly consensus, from its *editio princeps* in the Piana edition of Rome (1570–71) to the present, and there survives only one late manuscript witness, wherein it is attributed, twice, in the hand of one of its scribes, not to Thomas but to an Augustinian hermit by the name of Augustinus de Ancona (d. 1328).

The book's third part looks at Bonaventure, offering a close study of the full range of his prologues, beginning with the *principium* and *resumptio* of his inception as a master, and continuing with others belonging to his exegetical works (collations on the Six Days of Creation, commentaries on the Gospels of Luke and John), and two of his speculative ones, namely his *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi* and *Breviloquium*. Particularly interesting is the prologue to the latter, where Bonaventure offers his students a remarkably rich account of scripture's various modes of discourse and provides tenets for their exposition.

For all of its interest, the literature of these two thinkers is often technical and sometimes opaque to the unsuspecting reader. Smith succeeds admirably in facilitating access to it, mainly by illustrating the parallels between the modern sermon, the prologue, and university biblical commentary, the latter known at the time as the postil [*postilla*].

The modern sermon, prologue, and postil have by now each received considerable scholarly attention, but they have not yet been clearly shown to belong to a single development. Among this volume's merits is its demonstration that preaching remained this movement's wellspring. For this Smith offers a metaphor employed by Peter the Chanter (d. 1197) a few generations earlier to show biblical study, disputation, and preaching as three distinct yet interdependent components of a single house. As Peter put it, study of scripture provides the foundation of a preacher's formation, disputation furnishes its walls, and preaching remains its end, as it shelters the faithful from the heat and turbulence of the vices (*Verbum abbreviatum*, chapter 1). Worth noting is that disputation appears as no end in itself, but brings the would-be preacher to understanding, since nothing in scripture is well understood or faithfully preached before having been chewed and crushed by the tooth of disputation. In Smith's account of the metaphor, a would-be preacher's training in biblical commentary and disputation would equip him with content for sermons, as well as the "habits of mind" necessary for presenting it in the contemporary style of a modern sermon (39, 424). Nearly eight centuries after the emergence of the *sermo modernus* historians of medieval or modern dialectic, biblical commentary, or preaching will find in this volume invaluable insight into this vast but fascinating literature.

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