

tance of promoting research of this nature in the face of such critique is all the more urgent in light of recent observations that fewer and fewer medievalists are able to access or read Latin-language manuscript texts. Shead's work promises to open new avenues of research. It is to be hoped that it also encourages a greater effort on the part of medievalists to promote the professional skills that are fundamental to the study of the Middle Ages.

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RANDALL B. SMITH, *Reading the Sermons of Thomas Aquinas: A Beginner's Guide*. (Renewal Within Tradition.) Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2017. Pp. xxxiv, 342. \$44.95. ISBN: 978-1-941447-97-0. doi:10.1086/702478

It would seem that a book devoted to his method of preaching cannot bring anything new to the image of Thomas Aquinas, whose academic recognition is based primarily on his systematic works such as the *Summa Theologiae*. For many, preaching will only be an episodic activity of the medieval theologian that remains in the shadow of the scholastic method of the *quaestiones disputatae*. And yet, as Randall Smith's new book shows, Aquinas's art of preaching is the culmination of the entire didactic process, which started with *lectio* and *disputatio* and finished in *praedicatio*. It is this process, moreover, which at the same time sheds considerable light on his spirituality and pastoral approach in theological matters. The availability of the critical edition of Aquinas's *Sermones*, which appeared in 2014 as the latest addition to the renowned Leonine edition of his works, as well as the subsequent translations into modern languages (English, French, Spanish, and Polish), made the study of these didactic methods possible. At the same time, the need arose to guide the readers of Thomas Aquinas through this specific and rather unexplored segment of his works in which biblical exegesis, speculative theology, and rhetorical techniques are interwoven. For his *sermo modernus* style does not just consist in commenting on the Bible, but in transferring its theological content in a way suited to the listeners of the thirteenth century and their needs. In this way, the first two chapters of the book harmoniously reveal the "homiletic revolution" that took place in the thirteenth century within the Dominican and Franciscan orders. Drawing on such works as the *Ars concionandi*, the *De arte praedicatoria*, and others, Smith discusses the meaning of the individual elements of the methodology of the medieval sermon. In doing so, he is able to demonstrate the specific *Sitz im Leben* of thirteenth-century homiletics without aspiring to determine the dependence or influence of one on the other.

Smith's approach is based on a careful analysis of the sermon's text. For instance, in the first chapter he uses the sermon *Ecce rex tuus* to introduce the reader into the general style of Aquinas's sermons. He distinguishes the opening biblical quotation (*thema*), after which the *prothema* appears (a brief introduction concluded with a prayer based on another passage of the scriptures), then *divisio*, and finally *dilatatio*. This allows us to avoid the first misunderstanding for contemporary readers and emphasize that the biblical quotation opening the sermon (and its title) is not referring to the topic of the sermon (which would prove Aquinas's ahistorical approach and thus bending the literal meaning of the biblical text), but to a mnemonic and structural tool. Aquinas's care for the right selection of the opening quote (also from the Old Testament) testifies to the pedagogical desire to delineate the order of later considerations, and also to focus on the Christocentric understanding, as in the case of the analysis of the various advents of Christ in *Ecce rex tuus*. Smith is totally right in locating this practice within the framework of the culture of memory in the Middle Ages.

The subsequent chapters of the book focus on previously indicated parts and methods of the medieval sermon. Particularly developed is chapter 3, in which Smith approximates the

procedure of division that Aquinas uses based on a triple criterion: order of things done, order of constitution, and order of delivery. The art of *divisio* testifies to Aquinas's creativity and expresses his theological assumptions, combining parts with the whole. Smith analyzes the divisions in individual sermons and notes interesting regularities, because Aquinas does not always choose the same criterion for division (e.g., Aristotelian causes). The declaration of parts is based on parallelisms, the use of dual adjectives, prepositional phrases, but also various cases or properties of nouns—in the latter case, the model is adopted by the sermon *Lux orta*, in which it considers the green plant as a description of Mary and opens typological reflections on the tree that brings fruits. Insightful is the comparison of how the same *thema* verse (Luke 14:16) is interpreted in Bonaventure.

Smith's focus is the method of unfolding a sermon, which, as he argues, points to eight ways to implement it. Among them, attention should be paid to the issue of focusing on the noun, as well as argumentation or reasoning (different from the academic disputes, of course), but also to emphasize the role of authorities or the compilation of other biblical quotes. These compilations or chains of quotations are not just proof texts for some theological statements. The sermon does contain, however, a subdivision based on moral and allegorical interpretations. It is worth emphasizing here that Aquinas does not stick to rigid rules and does not always develop all three spiritual senses, but sometimes chooses one or two. At the same time, he is not like many of his contemporaries interested in *exempla* because he opts to move the listener in a different way.

On the basis of this presentation of Aquinas's preaching method, Smith undertakes the assessment of the validity of the allegations against this style (superficial treatment of the Bible, using it to build arbitrary arguments), choosing as his interlocutor Charles Smyth and his *Art of Preaching* (1940). This approach is often lacking in works on medieval biblical exegesis, because these works usually remain purely historical without answering questions that arise for the contemporary reader. Smith's admiration for Aquinas's *ars praedicationis* becomes clear in the final part of the book, when he notes that the contemporary way of preaching is focused almost exclusively on the Gospel, and rarely on the Pauline Epistles or Old Testament. From the *sermo modernus* one can learn the art of integrating Christian doctrine, moral formation, and the eschatological direction of one's life. "Aquinas's defense," as Smith undertakes it, is an encouragement to read his texts with a better understanding of the author's intentions. The appendix contains a detailed outline of the structure and content of each sermon, invaluable for capturing the course of reasoning and the rhythm of sermons.

The strengths of the book are the reading of Aquinas's preaching on many levels (stylistic, rhetorical, historical, biblical, and theological) through the lens of his own interpretative principles expressed in other works (such as in his commentary on Aristotle's *De memoria et reminiscencia* or in his biblical commentaries). Smith sticks strongly to the text of specific sermons and in doing so allows us to understand a method of thinking and writing which has thus far been all too neglected. By exploring these hidden hermeneutical procedures and placing them within their proper historical context, Smith fulfilled his task of providing the reader with a guide to Aquinas's sermons. Such an approach can indeed awaken in the reader the necessary sensitivity not to dismiss too hastily the medieval practices of preaching but to discover its value.

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