

faith for theology's inner unity compared to 'the pervasive fragmentation of contemporary Catholic theology' (p. 313). The last section 'Seeking Truth – Wisdom and Contemplation' contains two essays on the actuality for theology of the wisdom of analogy (against the opposite interpretations of Wolfhart Pannenberg and Eberhard Jüngel) and of the role of philosophical contemplation (in dialogue with Alasdair MacIntyre and Benedict Ashley OP).

Ultimately the 'explorations' offered by Hütter can be read as a precise and challenging contribution to the thomistic *ressourcement* in theology, even if the perspective remains too bound to the Neo-Scholastic conception of *duplex ordo*. Should we not seek a reason for this hermeneutical choice in the political desire to construe a so-called 'genuine' liberalism on the basis of Aquinas's magisterium?

MARCO SALVIOLI OP

VERNACULAR THEOLOGY. DOMINICAN SERMONS AND AUDIENCE IN LATE MEDIEVAL ITALY by Eliana Corbari, [Trends in Medieval Philology,22], *De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2013, pp. xiv + 248, €99.95, hbk*

This monograph originated with doctoral research conducted by the author under the direction of the distinguished historian of medieval preaching Carolyn Muessig, and represents the recent turn in sermon studies toward greater sensitivity to the sermon as a place of encounter between preacher and audience. While still primarily a study of texts and textual communities, rather than performance and event, the basic concern of this project is to examine the interaction between clerical sermon writers and preachers and their lay, often female, readers and hearers. Rather than understanding the preacher as 'active' and the audience as 'passive', this optic emphasizes the interpenetration between the two groups.

As Dr Corbari explains in her introduction, the book seeks to demonstrate that medieval sermons, especially those preached or written for reading in Lent, by their use of the vernacular idiom, present an unusually rich opportunity to map out the theologies of the laity, especially women. The emphasis here is on the diversity of approaches and conclusions. She believes, correctly I think, that a perception of preaching as an monochromatic presentation of the conclusions of the scholastic theologians for lay consumption is profoundly mistaken. Nevertheless, the sermon was a bridge between the concerns of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the religious world of the laity. Lenten preaching is the primary focus of the study because *Quadragesimales* are among the most common sermon collections and, as Carlo Delcorno has already noted, probably the most widely diffused. More important than the sermon as an interface and the abundance of Lenten sermonaries as evidence, this project is guided by Bernard McGinn's call for the study of the theology of lay people as a third idiom alongside the theologies of the monastery and the university. This 'vernacular theology' is not limited to writing in the vernacular, rather it is a mode of thinking found also in lay authors, such as Angela of Foligno or Bridget of Sweden, whose works are preserved in Latin.

To accomplish this project, Corbari focuses on three Dominican preachers active in Florence, Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1230–1298), Jordan of Pisa (c. 1255–1311), and Jacopo Passavanti (c. 1302–1357). This allows examination of a Latin sermon collection (Voragine), a collection of vernacular *reportationes* of sermons

preached in Lent (Jordan), and a vernacular treatise on the Lenten theme of penance (Passavanti). Thus Corbari can compare Latin sermons intended principally for the clergy, preaching as recording in *volgare* by lay hearers, and a penitential treatise prepared by a preacher for lay consumption. Through the analysis of extant manuscripts, Corbari tracks the diffusion and reproduction of the three works. She finds that, while the owners of the Voragine manuscripts were mostly male clerics who included them with sermon collections generally, the owners and copyists of the two, more common, vernacular works were mostly women, religious and lay, and that they bound them in volumes containing other vernacular religious works, often authored by women. Thus women were a major force in the circulation of these works and their consumption.

What does this tell us about ‘vernacular theology’? In common with other vernacular religious literature copied and written by women, the two vernacular collections show little concern for metaphysics (in contrast to Scholastic theology), but a strong focus on personal experience and conversion (much like monastic theology). The emphasis on spiritual development and growth also links the literature to contemporary hagiography, another discipline with a wide female readership and that often had as its focus female saints. As a test case for this linkage, Corbari dedicates the long final chapter of her book to Villana de’ Botti (1332–1361), a lay penitent contemporary of Passavanti and congregant of Santa Maria Novella, where that Dominican often preached. Comparing Villana’s *vita*, our major source for her life and spirituality, with the previously analyzed ‘vernacular theology’, Corbari finds a clear convergence. Although written in Latin, the *vita* reflects the same active, literate, visible, and (often) vocal female audience as the two earlier vernacular works. This connection allows Corbari to expand her scope to look at saints popular with that audience, such as Mary Magdalene, whose popular biography was composed by Passavanti’s fellow Dominican Domenico Cavalca. Here too, experience and conversion take centre stage in the life of a penitent woman, who, with her sister Martha, are also active as female preachers.

Villana not only heard vernacular preaching on vernacular themes, she discussed such themes with her female contemporaries. Again the *vita* reflects the monastic concerns of experience and conversion, and it presents a spiritual world inclusive of women. In short, for Corbari, the theological world of the Santa Maria Novella friars and their convent’s lay penitents was a shared religious community, not a rigidly demarcated world where Latin-literate clerics and vernacular-using women lived parallel lives isolated from each other. Women, like Villana, were not passive consumers of vernacular theology, but helped mould it and, outside of sermon times, were its primary transmitters. It is no surprise that Corbari finds that the cult of the vernacular theologian Villana was promoted by lay confraternities that also shared her theology.

While the idea of ‘vernacular theology’, the breakdown of the scholarly constructed wall separating clerical and lay piety, and the recognition of women as mediators between clerical theology and the laity are not original to this monograph, it provides a narrowly circumscribed but carefully examined test case. The result is a convincing demonstration that these three developments in the recent study of medieval preaching were evident in Dominican circles in late-thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Florence. As a narrowly-focused sounding, often concerned with codicological issues, it will be of interest principally to specialists in sermon studies and might well serve as a model for similar soundings outside of Italy.

AUGUSTINE THOMPSON OP