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cristianesimo nella storia

RICERCHE STORICHE ESEGETICHE TEOLOGICHE
STUDIES IN HISTORY THEOLOGY AND EXEGESIS

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nella Francia dell'Ottocento come la disciplina del clero, la tutela della morale, il rapporto con altre confessioni, lo spiritismo o il magnetismo animale. Una lista che risulterebbe incompleta senza l'emergenza costituita agli occhi degli inquisitori romani dal socialismo, a cui Philippe Boutry dedica il proprio contributo. Risale al 1834 *Paroles d'un croyant*, il testo che l'ex consultore inquisitoriale Gregorio XVI si affrettò a riconoscere nella *Singulari nos* come il principale volano di una nuova eresia, l'"indifferentismo", che invitava a pensare e a vivere secondo il mondo e senza considerare la dimensione religiosa. Boutry ripercorre la vicenda censoria di un altro testo che si rifece direttamente al testo citato, ossia *Parole de Providence* di Clarisse Vigoureux, finito subito all'Indice nel 1836. Proprio l'analisi del *votum* del censore (riportato in appendice, pp. 373-388) e delle reazioni provocate permette di comprendere il primitivo posizionamento del magistero gregoriano rispetto a un tema destinato a grande importanza. Il mutare di antichi equilibri politici in un periodo che si vuole erroneamente fatto di perfette restaurazioni emerge dalla ricerca di Sylvio Hermann De Franceschi. La metà dell'Ottocento vide susseguirsi vari pronunciamenti dell'Inquisizione che, in conseguenza al loro carattere illiberale, si rivelarono lesivi della tradizione gallicana, come testimoniato dalla messa all'Indice nel 1852 di un'opera assai fortunata come la *Theologia dogmatica et moralis* di Louis Bailly. La condanna moderna di opere o tesi più risalenti costituì un'occasione ghiotta per la chiesa di Pio IX per colpire avversari storici del potere papale, come appunto le prerogative concesse a suo tempo al regno ultramontano. Entro il complesso attivismo a sostegno di Roma e dell'autorità pontificia vennero coinvolti temi come il culto mariano e la definizione del dogma dell'Immacolata concezione, come ha documentato Daniel-Odon Hurel in un saggio dedicato all'impegno profuso dall'abate Prosper Guéranger. Il pensiero del religioso è testimoniato da numerosi suoi articoli scritti nei secondi anni Cinquanta dell'Ottocento, quando l'interesse per Marie d'Agreda e la sua *La Cité mystique* gli offrì l'occasione per prendere parte a quelle violente diatribe. Il volume si chiude con il saggio di Luca Sandoni, in cui viene ricostruita la vicenda censoria di un altro religioso francese, l'abate Léon-Nicolas Godard, i cui *Principes* vennero posti all'Indice nel 1862. L'autore dimostra come poteva generarsi un caso di censura a quell'altezza cronologica, per impeto non tanto delle autorità romane ma di ambienti intellettuali e quotidiani (ad esempio «Le Monde») della reazione francese, il che invita a considerare quanto molteplici e varie furono le direttrici secondo cui poteva articolarsi quella che a posteriori sembrerebbe erroneamente frutto di un'unica volontà di proibizione. Proprio in virtù degli spunti offerti a considerare i molti volti che l'intolleranza inquisitoriale assunse in un periodo storico così lungo e cangiante, il volume rappresenta un'opera di indubbia importanza. Ci si augura che le aperture storiografiche indicate vengano ora recepite da chi analizza da tempo o si accinge per la prima volta a studiare i documenti in cui è sedimentata quest'antica forma di intransigenza, che non smette di influenzare deleteriatamente epoche e istituzioni successive.

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E. Lombardo, *Parole e scritture per costruire un santo. Sant'Antonio dei frati minori nei sermoni medievali (1232-1350)*, (Centro Studi Antoniani, 72), Padova, Centro Studi Antoniani, 2022, XIV + 500 pp.

Doctor Eleonora Lombardo's book consists of two separate parts, both of which could very well have been published as independent works. The first part is an analysis of the contents of the saints' day sermons on the feast of St Anthony of Padua. The second part is a *repertorium* of these sermons. These circa 500 pages include a nearly incredible amount of labour, even considering the fact that Lombardo has been able to build on the solid foundation of previous scholarship – not the least her own previous publications and those of Professor Antonio Rigon.

I will deal separately with these two parts of Lombardo's book and start with the first, that is, the analysis of the sermons. This part is self-evidently very appealing for anyone interested in the history of St Anthony, the Franciscan order, or more generally of 13th-century hagiography. What is less obvious is the ground-breaking nature of Lombardo's study as an in-depth analysis of saints' day sermons. Despite the enormous popularity of hagiography and the ever-growing one of the medieval sermon studies, there have been regrettably few analysis concentrating on saints' day sermons as a genre. One could mention Phyllis B. Roberts' work on the cult of St Thomas Becket (P.B. Roberts, *Thomas Becket in the Medieval Latin Preaching Tradition. An Inventory of Sermons About St Thomas Becket c. 1170-c. 1400*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1992), two articles by George Ferzoco (G. Ferzoco, *Sermon Literatures Concerning Late Medieval Saints*, in *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons*. Proceedings of the International Symposium (Kalamazoo, 4-7 May 1995), ed. by B.M. Kienle et al., Louvain-La-Neuve, Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 1996, pp. 103-125; G. Ferzoco, *The Context of Medieval Sermon Collections on Saints*, in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. by C. Muessig, Leiden, Brill, 2002, pp. 279-292), and very few others.

There are numerous contributions including a few edited sermons on the feast day of some important saint, such as St Francis of Assisi, but nothing that could be considered as basic study on the saints' day sermons as a genre. This is not what Lombardo's study proposes to be, but nevertheless the first chapter of this book, *I sermoni su Sant'Antonio. Una panoramica*, is a very useful starting point for any future scholar aiming to work on the field of saints' day sermon. It provides not only a panoramic view of the sermons on St Anthony, but also on the saints' day sermons in general during the 13th and early 14th centuries.

This part of Lombardo's book sets saints' day sermons apart from the rest of the hagiographic sources by defining them as «una sorta di agiografia per le masse» (p. 32). This is very important because, as suggested by Lina Bolzoni in her ground-breaking study *La rete delle immagini. Predicazione in volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena* (Torino, Einaudi, 2009), preaching and in this case, more specifically, saints' day sermons provided lay people with a key to understanding the statues, frescoes, votive pictures, and other visual representations of saints' cult.

The corpus used in Lombardo's study consists of sermons found within model collections and a few individual ones that survived in the form of *reportationes*. It has been assumed that those "published" within model sermon collections were generally

purified from only contemporarily or locally relevant material and kept in such a form that they were ideally useful after decades, or even centuries, and in places geographically far away from those where they were composed: in short, model sermon collections were designed to be useful for as wide a readership as possible.

Reading through Lombardo's analysis on the sermons on the feast day of St Anthony of Padua, it becomes clear that they did not fit into that general pattern of thought. The author shows, without doubt correctly, that the sermons on St Anthony were in many cases very much connected to the important theological and ecclesiastical questions and arguments of their time, and that the saint's function/role within these sermons changed following the big issues of the history of the Franciscan order.

The first generation of Franciscans saw St Francis as an *alter Christus* and Anthony as an imitator and follower of the former. He became a more pragmatic example for the *fratres communes* than Francis, whose imitation of Christ was perhaps too perfect to function as a real-life role model for ordinary friars. As the figure of St Francis started to be modified, so happened also to Anthony, whose humility came to be emphasised as his core virtue. This meant that, when it was necessary, the brothers were to accept different offices within the order and the church. In Lombardo's words: «Essere umili, minimi, minori, non escludere mai l'accettazione di cariche e soprattutto dei compiti connessi alla cura d'anime» (p. 145).

Moving towards the last decades of the 13th century and the first decades of the 14th, the division of the order between conventuals and spirituals becomes more and more visible in the sermons on St Anthony's feast day too, with one side emphasising poverty and the other humility and obedience to one's superiors. Finally, in the aftermath of John XXII's bull *Cum inter nonnullos* (1323), when the spirituals extremists had been expelled from the order, numerous preachers wanted to show Anthony as a champion of unity and peace within the order. The battle over the significance of the concept of poverty lured also members of the secular clergy and other mendicant orders to write a sermon on him. All in all, it can be summarised that the first part of Lombardo's book offers a fresh new look at the history of the Franciscans, only this time seen through their sermons and, to a much lesser extent, through those by secular clergy and other mendicant orders.

Such a strong concentration on the themes relevant to Franciscan history made these sermons less useful for lay audiences, which raises a few questions: firstly, one needs to consider that St Anthony was not – especially outside Italy and the Franciscan circles – a particularly venerated saint. It would be interesting to know whether sermons on his feast day were always included in all the manuscripts in circulation, or whether they were sometimes omitted. Furthermore, the concentration of these sermons on the person of St Anthony on the one hand and, on the other, on all issues Franciscan, is interesting from the point of view of medieval sermon studies in general. Some saints' day sermons – for example those included in the *Sermones rusticani de sanctis* collection written by German Franciscan preacher Berthold of Regensburg – were very similar to other kinds of model sermons (*sermones de tempore* and *sermones quadragesimales*) in a sense that they were all about catechetical instruction of the audience and inviting to penance and life according to the norms set by the church. As we have seen, that was definitely not the case with the sermons on saint Anthony analysed by Lombardo. This would call for a major research project analysing a larger sample

of the *de sanctis* model sermon collections to find out the purpose for which they were actually written. All in all, the author's analysis on the content of the sermons on St Anthony's feast day is a coherent study in itself. It does well and thoroughly what it sets out to do and maps clearly what one can expect to find when reading these sermons. In addition to that, it is a very thought-provoking reading experience for scholars working in the fields of medieval sermon studies or hagiography.

The second part of Lombardo's book, namely the repertory of the surviving sermons on St Anthony's feast day, would have been a colossal achievement as a stand-alone publication. To give some idea of the work involved, we should take a look at its quantitative side: Johannes Baptist Schneyer's *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150-1350* gives information on 138 sermons on the feast day of St Anthony; other scholars had identified another 41 sermons in various publications. This information is not always easily accessible and it is often found in rather obscure journal articles. In addition to these 179 sermons identified by Schneyer and other scholars, Lombardo has managed to identify further 48 new sermons or significant variants to the existing ones, bringing the grand total to 227. Needless to say, the most of these new discoveries are found in manuscripts from all over Europe.

The repertory offers the same basic information on each of the 227 sermons: it gives their *thema*, name of the author, date and place, title if there is any, incipit, explicit, location of the sermon in Schneyer's *Repertorium*, a few manuscripts, possible editions, and a short bibliography on the sermon in question. Large sections of many of the sermons listed in the repertory have been quoted in the first part of the book. In those cases, the text is not a simple transliteration of a single source but, where possible, Lombardo has used at least three solid manuscripts, namely those indicated in the repertory section. Hence, the list of manuscripts does not aim to be perfect or even nearly perfect: it just refers the reader to a few good manuscripts. If one is after complete lists, one is advised to turn to Schneyer, Thomas Kaeppli's *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, or some other similar source.

After the repertory section Lombardo's book closes with two sets of indices, namely one of manuscripts and one of names and places, both very useful for the scholars with only a tangential interest in the topic of the book, as they provide an easy and quick way to mine needed information without reading the whole study.

To summarise, Eleonora Lombardo's book is a very welcome addition to the too short literature on the saints' day sermons genre and is very useful to anyone studying the cult of St Anthony of Padua or early Franciscan history. The repertory section will be very useful for anyone willing to take a firsthand look at these sermons and it is also easy enough to use of those scholars who have limited skills in Italian language. There are some minor mistakes, typos, and other similar issues typical of the small, non-commercial publishers who cannot rely on extensive help from copyeditors. However, such small errors are easily superseded by the numerous merits and virtues of this excellent volume.

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