

Iacopo da Varazze, Sermones de sanctis. Volumen diffusum. De sancto Georgio, de Inventione sancte Crucis, de sancta Maria Magdalena, de sancta Margarita

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and force them to believe are often encountered in connection with the Eucharist and transubstantiation. This dogma often encountered popular unbelief and resistance. The same was true of the immaculate birth of Jesus and the Holy Virgin remaining a virgin – another part of the Church’s teaching that was difficult to fathom for many members of the congregations.

Jews were also used to make Christian audiences reflect on their own life and behaviour. The idea was to show Jews to be as evil as possible and then claim that bad Christians are even worse. For example, Jews were typically accused of killing Christ, but preachers might then add that they only killed Him in flesh, whereas the sinners that go against His and Church’s teachings are worse since they are trying to kill His soul.


Another typical use of Jews was to make them serve as tormentors when describing the Passion of Christ in all its gory details. Here the main point was that Christians should meditate on the suffering and death of Christ and become better people. The unfortunate side-effect was that the Jews were presented as a pack of bloodthirsty wolves for whom no suffering and torture was enough. Adams observes that while these texts most of the time followed the reasonably tolerable policy of the Church: ‘Faced with so much anti-Jewish propaganda, it is hard to imagine that the audience would have paid particular attention to the finer details of the preacher’s argument about the Jews’ guilt, responsibility, and forgiveness.’ Hence, Adams crystallises the original intent of those who produced anti-Judaic texts and art in his conclusions with one sentence: ‘These Jews were used to help Danes and Swedes understand their place in the world, in time, and in God’s plan for humanity.’ Unfortunately, as a side-effect the Old Danish and Old Swedish sources created an extremely negative image of the Jew.

The second volume of the book consists of an edition and translation of all the major texts used in the study. This is a colossal favour for the reader as some of those texts are not available in print and others have been printed in publications that are not easily available. Furthermore, the translations make these fascinating sources available to those readers whose command of Old Danish or Old Swedish leaves something to be desired.

In the end of the first volume of this splendid book, Jonathan Adams considers what might be called long-term effects of the diffusion of the anti-Judaic preaching, texts, and art. He provides his readers with several examples from the last few years that show that the medieval stereotypical anti-Judaic topoi are still, time and time again, being used in creating the other, sometimes in an openly racist manner, sometimes in a more subtle way. Therefore, knowing the history and development of these topoi is of essential importance in today’s world and Jonathan Adams’ book certainly is a major step forward in this respect concerning Sweden and Denmark. For scholars interested in the preaching and/or Jewish history, it is simply a *sine qua non* read.

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Iacopo da Varazze, Sermones de sanctis. Volumen diffusum. De sancto Georgio, de Inventione sancte Crucis, de sancta Maria Magdalena, de sancta Margarita. Edited by Federica Amore, Maria Ferraiuolo, Ileana Lombardi, and Giovanni Paolo Maggioni. Pp. lxi +257. Florence: SISMEI – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2021. ISBN 978-88-9290-057-8.

The new book edited by Giovanni Paolo Maggioni collects the editions of the nineteen sermons dedicated to St. George, to the Invention of the Holy Cross, to St. Margaret and to St. Mary

Magdalene within the *volumen diffusum* written by James of Varazze. The hard work Maggioni led over a decade on this version of the *sermones de sanctis* by the famous Dominican friar finally gave rise to this important book, letting us grasp the argumentative and structural differences of James' long version of the *sermones de sanctis* by systematically comparing them with those in the more successful short version of the same work. The edition sees the contributions of three young scholars (Federica Amore, Maria Ferraiuolo, Ileana Lombardi) who have assisted Maggioni in his work.

After a brief biographical profile of James of Varazze, and an equally short *excursus* on his works, Maggioni dwells on the 'Dominican communication system' that emerges from James' *sermones de sanctis*. In these pages, the Italian scholar provides new elements to clarify the complex relationship between the *Golden Legend* and the homiletic work by the same author in a system that 'crosses two linguistic areas, passing from the Latin of written texts to the vernacular of the spoken preaching'. Summing up and clarifying some of the points outstanding in his previous studies, Maggioni dwells on the *volumen diffusum*, considering it as the place where James of Varazze implemented all the potential suggested in the previous *volumen breve*.

Confirming his statements of 2005, 2014 and 2016, Maggioni reiterates the presence of two kinds of pretended audiences for the two versions of James' sermons: the short version was addressed to all preachers, not selected for their religious profession, while the long one was intended only for the Friars Preacher, as in these sermons 'the preacher must only translate to his audience what he has read' in a work written to 'comfort, ethically and doctrinally' the confreres (p. xxv, all translations mine) through a 'defined and defining written text' (p. xxvi). There, 'the material used in a short sermon is diverted and redistributed in different order in other sermons, giving rise to new texts and original developments' as shown both in the table on pp. xxvi–xlii and, in more detail, in the sections relating to individual saints.

The edition is carried out mainly on the basis of two volumes of the manuscript Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 32 sin. 4 and 5, one of the oldest and more complete testimonies of the collection, and their description is made by Maria Ferraiuolo (pp. li–lvii). It is a manuscript of Franciscan origin, written in Santa Croce, Florence. The library and the *scriptorium* of the Florentine Franciscan friary are currently the subject of in-depth analysis on the evolution of vernacularisation in Central Italy, and on the sources for Franciscan pastoral care in an area continually shaken by internal struggles and divisions.

The survey led on each of the four groups of sermons edited in this book is structured according to a similar scheme, which allows comparison and better understanding of James' entire collection: a benchmark between sermons of the *volumen breve* and those of the *volumen diffusum* (number, structure, articulation of the group), presentation of the sermons published here (not present in the case of Saint George), schemes of the sermons in each section.

Giovanni Paolo Maggioni opens the edition dealing with five sermons on Saint George, two more than the short version. Among them, sermon 168 (pp. 28–34) is particularly interesting for the presence of an appendix (sermon 169) dedicated to preachers and prelates. As highlighted by Maggioni here 'the Dominican author seems to insist on some points and in particular treats those who, having intellectual skills, avoid preaching, limiting themselves to performing liturgical duties or even getting involved in the affairs of men because of their attitude to hell' (p. 7). These themes run all over the collection, passing from one sermon to another almost without any changes, and they demonstrate the concern for morality in James. The author not only admonishes preachers from meddling in earthly things (p. 39), but also, and above all, criticises 'those who, feeling a quiet conscience, limit themselves to liturgical duties' because 'their intelligence will have no taste and will be useless' (p. 7, p. 38).

More intricate is the narrative in the five sermons for the Invention of the Holy Cross. The edition was conducted by Federica Amore on the basis of two previous studies published by Maggioni himself in 2013 and 2017. Due to the importance of the Cross in Christian life, James of Varazze enlarges these sermons with novelties in the use of sources not found in the *volumen breve*. In the long version, the Dominican author makes large use of secular sources and deepens his


explanations in sermons 187 and 188. The latter in particular dwells on the origin of the wood of the Cross, a theme not included in the short version of the *de sanctis* collection, introducing arguments drawn from the Fathers, from classical authors, as well as notions of botany extrapolated from texts originated in the medical school of Salerno and from Albert the Great's *De vegetalibus*. In doing this, James demonstrates his deep cultural knowledge and his willingness to provide all possible readings of the scriptural passage (here *Quasi cedrus exaltata sum*, Sirach 24. 17), without omitting any path of interpretation, as demonstrated by the following sermon, dedicated to the praise of the wood of the Cross and to its revelation. In accordance with the intention of creating a closed structured reading, that is, a text the reader can also meditate on, the last sermon of the group is a moral one, focused on the imitation of the crucified Christ. The Cross is here called 'medicinam crucis' and with its wood 'ille medicus qui de celo descendit uulnera humani generis crucis sue medicina sanauit' (p. 90).

There follow three sermons dedicated to Saint Margaret, edited by Ileana Lombardi. In the first one, perhaps the most interesting [sermon 248: *Ipsa conteret caput tuum* (Genesis 3. 15), pp. 97–98, edition pp. 106–12] the saint is a perfect example of imitation of the suffering crucified Christ, and James insists on this subject by comparing in detail the punishments suffered by Christ and those inflicted on the saint. Lombardi analyses in detail the three sermons that make up the section, emphasising the differences between the arguments of the sermons of the *volumen diffusum* and the corresponding texts of the *volumen breve*, even indulging in some repetition. It is worth noting that for James it is not important to remember that Margaret was the patron saint of women in childbirth, that image not being useful for the construction of the sanctoral model for the Friars Preachers, as can be seen in the image from the sermon 48. It is a choice that marks the whole production of the author of the *Golden Legend*, who does not recall this feature even in his hagiographic work.

The last section, edited by Maria Ferraiuolo, is devoted to Mary Magdalene and includes six long sermons, one more than the *volumen breve*. As always, the structure of almost all sermons reflects that of the short version, despite some expansions, conforming to the nature of the longer collection. Unlike Lombardi, Ferraiuolo does not dwell on the content of the sermons, and she mainly highlights the differences between the two collections through comparison of long excerpts. However, she recalls the importance of body as a metaphor of virtues and vices in the sermons on Mary Magdalene. In this regard, sermon 255, *Remittuntur tibi peccata tua* (Luke 7. 48) is particularly attractive. It is divided into three divisions: the doctor, the sick and the disease, respectively meaning Christ, the sinner and sin. In the third *divisio* (the sin) James proposes a code of conduct for women. He is indeed careful to distinguish the vices characterising women from those shared by all Christians and he condemns the beauty of the body as a cause of vanity, wealth as a cause of pride, the idleness of the mind, and the 'securitas libertatis' that erases any fear from the female soul, leading the woman to a dishonest life. These vices are even more dangerous as they pertain to women, represented by Mary Magdalene: they are public so they offend God, corrupt others and lead to scandal in the Church. The female example is then adapted to a male context through a quick list of vices that traditionally characterise men: envy, sadness (*tristitia*), avarice and vain-glory, gluttony, and lust, the latter being considered more serious because it stains the body and being caused, not surprisingly, by proximity to women. James outlines in these few pages (pp. 187–89) a lively picture of moral teaching that, in some points, goes beyond tradition, and shows the author's intention to prepare his confreres for the spiritual guidance of women, probably to recall them to female convents of the Order or to the spiritual guidance of lay women who relied on the friars.

In conclusion, the book edited by Amore, Ferraiuolo, Lombardi and Maggioni provides the reader with an important instrument of study for medieval homiletics and hagiography, also allowing a deeper knowledge of James of Varazze as an author of sermons. Editing all the sermons related to each saint and providing the edition with short summary tables is a fruitful idea and will help future scholars willing to explore this material. We hope that this will be the first of a series of

volumes which would help to reconstruct most of the difficult tradition of *Volumen diffusum* as well as Dominican education and pastoral care in the thirteenth century.

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Beyond the Sermo Modernus: Sermon Form in Early Fifteenth-Century England. By Siegfried Wenzel. *Studies and Texts*, 222. Pp. vi + 282. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2021. ISBN: 978-0-88844-222-2.

Siegfried Wenzel has spent his career exploring Latin sermon collections and preaching aids from late medieval England. From *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (1967) to his early work on the *Fasciculus morum* in *Verses in Sermons* (1978) and his edition and translation of the same, to *Macaronic Sermons* (1994) and *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England* (2005), Wenzel has brought precision to the world of medieval preaching opened up by Gerald Owst decades ago. In particular, he has provided texts, both by editing important sermons and preaching aids and by preparing translations, sometimes in facing-page format and sometimes as stand-alone works, as in *Preaching in the Age of Chaucer: Selected Sermons in Translation* (2008). He is also an authority on the *sermo modernus*, the sermon format that originated in twelfth-century Europe and which was promoted by both university preachers and the mendicant orders. In this area, too, Wenzel has provided a study of the medieval *artes praedicandi*, the rhetorical manuals that taught medieval preachers the elements of the *sermo modernus* (*Medieval Artes Praedicandi: A Synthesis of Scholastic Sermon Structure* (2015)).

It is thus appropriate that Wenzel seeks to go ‘beyond the *sermo modernus*’ in this study by placing preaching literature into context with other developments in theology from late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England. Scholars of the period like William Courtenay and Jeremy Catto have noted a movement away from scholastic argumentation and toward biblical explication and devotional practice in theology. Wenzel asks whether there was a similar movement in preaching and posits that such a movement would be most likely to turn up in the *sermo modernus*.

Wenzel does indeed discover a number of authors in this period who ‘moved beyond’ the *sermo modernus* form of sermon construction. For those unfamiliar with the genre, such sermons generally began with a short text selected from the *lectio* or pericope of the day’s Mass, called a *thema*, that related to a specific occasion. The *thema* was generally followed by the protheme (a device to capture the audience’s attention) and an invitation to prayer; the *introductio thematis*, an explanation of the choice of *thema*; the division of the *thema* into parts; the confirmation of the parts with authoritative proof texts; the development of the parts; and a closing formula (p. 2). Authors who veered away from the *sermo modernus* format tended to cite the entire Gospel pericope instead of choosing only a brief phrase, and many of them explicated the Gospel text phrase by phrase, a method known as postillation. Some of them also introduced academic components, such as raising *dubia* (problems) from the biblical reading and drawing conclusions about them. Wenzel’s book seeks to answer whether these approaches constitute an innovation of the fifteenth century.

Though Wenzel raises this research question, contributing to a scholarly debate seems less important to him than bringing the sermons of several authors and collections to broader attention. He begins by exploring the criticism of the *sermo modernus* that existed from its appearance in the