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After Francis, towards the Holy Land

Ritsema van Eck legge Evangelisti

The book *Dopo Francesco* offers a highly complex perspective on how members of the Franciscan Order proposed to go about their institutional task of evangelization, from the Order's foundation up to and including the later Middle Ages. Based on a detailed reading of a wide range of primary sources – hagiographies, historiographical works, sermons, normative texts – this monograph offers a highly original analysis of the Franciscan perspectives on armed and unarmed conversion of the religious other.

KEYWORDS: FRANCISCANS; CRUSADE; MISSION; HOLY LAND

Paolo Evangelisti, *Dopo Francesco, oltre il mito. I frati minori fra Terra Santa ed Europa (XIII-XV secolo)*, Viella, Rome 2020, pp. 296.

The legendary meeting between Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kâmil in the Nile Delta close to Damietta (present day Egypt) in 1219, forms the opening and the closing motif of the recent monograph by Paolo Evangelisti: *After Francis, beyond the Myth. The Friars Minor between the Holy Land and Europe (13th-15th Century)*. In the space of this book, the author paints a highly complex picture of Franciscan engagement with the non-Christian other overseas, which goes far above and beyond a reconsideration of the meeting at Damietta. This legendary interview has inspired several, often diametrically opposed, interpretations along the lines of signifying an ideological commitment to peace vs. war, dialogue vs. conflict, and crusade vs. mission¹. Evangelisti is right to emphasize that, despite

¹ Here and elsewhere in this review I refer to literature in English primarily, in order to facilitate a comparison between the historiographies in English and Italian (referenced in Evangelisti's *Dopo Francesco*).

its evocative qualities, the actual content of the exchange between Francis and the Sultan is not recorded by any historical source. He therefore argues that interpreting the aims and intentions of Francis in this episode belongs to the realm of ethical or religious meditation, rather than that of historical inquiry. Instead, the goal of *Dopo Francesco* is to canvas a series of chronologically arranged historical perspectives on how the friars minor proposed to go about their institutional task of evangelization, from the order's beginnings, up to (and including) the establishment of a Franciscan foundation in the Holy Land in 1333².

Both in scholarly and popular literature about the meeting at Damietta we can find interpretations which foreground Franciscan intentions of peace-making and interreligious dialogue. Scholarly examples include: J.M. Powell, *St. Francis of Assisi's Way of Peace*, in «Medieval Encounters», 13, 2007, pp. 271-80; G.K. Johnson, *St. Francis and the Sultan*, in «Mission Studies», 18, 2001, pp. 146-63; F.Z. Munir, *Sultan Al-Malik Muhammad Al-Kamil and Saint Francis: Interreligious Dialogue and the Meeting at Damietta*, in «The Journal of Islamic Law & Culture», 10, 2008, pp. 307-17. An equally positive, popular evaluation can be found in P. Moses, *The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace*, Doubleday Religion, New York 2009; while an opposing (somewhat unbalanced) interpretation aimed at broader audiences is voiced by F.M. Rega, *St. Francis of Assisi and the Conversion of the Muslims*, Tan Books & Pub, Gastonia (NC) 2007. A connection with modern missions is made in A.M. Rosales, *The Encounter That Changed Missions Forever: The Meeting between St. Francis and the Sultan in Damietta in 1219, its Consequences and Implications in the Missionary Orientation of the Church*, Aletheia Printing and Publication House, Cebu City 2017. Examples of recent responses in Italian include G. Buffon, *Francesco l'ospite folle: il povero di Assisi e il sultano, Damietta 1219*, Edizioni Terra Santa, Milano 2019; P. Blasone, F. Cardini, C. Ruta, *Francesco d'Assisi, Al-Malik Al-Kāmil, Federico II di Svevia. Eredità e Dialoghi del XIII Secolo*, Edizioni di storia e studi sociali, Ragusa 2019; *Francesco e il Sultano: l'incontro sull'altra riva, 1219-2019*, a cura di M.P. Alberzoni e A. Avveduto, Società editrice fiorentina, Florence 2019.

² The majority of the existing literature on the late medieval Franciscan establishment in the Holy Land primarily deals with how the friars assisted – and influenced the perceptions of – pilgrims. N. Chareyron, *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages*, Columbia U.P., New York 2005, pp. 82-5; M. Campopiano, *Islam, Jews and Eastern Christianity in Late Medieval Pilgrims' Guidebooks: Some Examples from the Franciscan Convent of Mount Zion*, in «Al-Masaq», 24, 2012, pp. 75-89; B. Saletti, *I francescani in Terrasanta, 1291-1517*, Libreria universitaria, Padova 2016, pp. 69-200; K. Blair Moore, *The Architecture of the Christian Holy Land: Reception from Late Antiquity through the Renaissance*, Cambridge U.P., New York 2017, pp. 117-63, pp. 211-21; M. Campopiano, *Writing*

The book showcases the complexity of this phenomenon, which unfolded across several spheres of interest – legal, social, and economic –, and is inextricably tied up with the murky waters of terminologies like «crusade» and «mission». It complicates modern ethico-religious assessments, which tend to either see the participation of the Franciscans in the crusades as a betrayal of their professed ideals of peace and submission, and/or tend to epitomize Francis' meeting with the Malik al-Kâmil as a prime example of cross-cultural preaching central to the ideals of Franciscan mission. The author signals that the modern connotations of the term «mission» make it unsuitable for discussing Franciscan approaches to evangelization in the late middle ages, especially given the pacifistic overtones associated with Franciscan mission today. Crusade ideologies formed an important component of medieval Franciscan approaches to the Levant, which leads to obvious incongruities with modern conceptions. Therefore, the term «apostolate» is selected as more appropriate for the analysis of the theory and practice of Franciscan engagement with evangelical apostolate and crusading during the first three centuries of the order's existence.

With respect to the existing (non-apologetic) historiography on this topic, Evangelisti particularly foregrounds the work of Benjamin Kedar, John Tolan, and Grado Merlo as relevant points of departure³. While it is in fact well-known that the Franciscan approach to conversion of unbelievers certainly included active promotion of crusade, particularly in the shape of crusade preaching, the topic has – heretofore – not received too much attention, nor have crusading and the connected conversionary apostolate been consid-

the Holy Land: The Franciscans of Mount Zion and the Construction of a Cultural Memory, 1300-1550, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham 2020.

³ B.Z. Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims*, Princeton U.P., Princeton 1984; J.V. Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan: The Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2009; G.G. Merlo, *Nel Nome di San Francesco: Storia dei Frati Minori e Del Francescanesimo sino agli Inizi del 16. Secolo*, Editrici francescane, Padova 2003. This book has received an English translation: Id., *In the Name of Saint Francis: History of the Friars Minor and Franciscanism until the Early Sixteenth Century*, eds. R.J. Karris and J.F. Godet-Calogeras, Franciscan Institute Publications, Saint Bonaventure, NY 2009.

ered as a significant way of being in the world for the friars⁴. With *Dopo Francesco* Evangelisti proposes to fill this gap based on a variety of sources which are rarely considered from this angle (if at all), with the aim of connecting the topic with wider societal spheres, including the legal and economic aspects. His proposal to let go of the Conventual vs. Spiritual Franciscan dichotomy, since it might not be a productive interpretative paradigm for the matter at hand, is stimulating. Clearly, this approach offers ample space to do justice to the complexity of the ideas of Franciscan intellectuals and the debates they engaged in.

Rather than the hagiographical episode on the meeting at Damietta, the Rule of St Francis is foregrounded as a crucial point of reference. Right from the start of chapter 1 – which deals with the period 1219–92 – both the first, unconfirmed, Rule of 1221 and the *Regula bullata*, confirmed by Honorius III in 1223, run through the book as a common thread. Evangelisti particularly foregrounds chapter 16 of the 1221 Rule (which became chapter 12 in the confirmed 1223 Rule) and which deals with the question how a Franciscan friar should comport himself when overseas, outside of Christian society. Chapter 16 of the 1221 Rule proposes two options: to avoid conflicts while quietly confessing to be Christian, or alternatively to openly preach this faith with the aim of converting. In the *Memoriale*, or *Vita Secunda* by Thomas of Celano, an early biography of Francis, Evangelisti recognizes intellectual engagement with the second mode (of active preaching and conversion), since the *Memoriale* raises the question which role the friars minor should assume when confronted with military conversion. The testimony of Illuminato da Acre, who was

⁴ Compare C.T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge U.P., New York 1994. On later periods see, for example, V. Covaci, *Praying for the Liberation of the Holy Sepulchre: Franciscan Liturgy in Fifteenth Century Jerusalem*, in «Institutum Romanum Norvegiae Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia», 31 2019, pp. 177-95; M.P. Ritsema van Eck, *The Holy Land in Observant Franciscan Texts (c. 1480-1650): Theology, Travel, and Territoriality*, Brill, Leiden 2019, pp. 140-60, pp. 182-200; Norman Housley has on various occasions drawn attention to Franciscan crusade preaching from the late fifteenth century onward, for example N. Housley, *Giovanni da Capistrano and the Crusade of 1456*, in *Crusading in the Fifteenth Century: Message and Impact*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, pp. 94-115.

present with Francis in Damietta in 1219 and the main source for this part in the *Memoriale*, suggests that Francis and his companions strove to formulate their own position with respect to the complex issue of military intervention as a means to convert and/or engage with unbelievers. Evangelisti argues that reflection on the possible modes of engaging with unbelievers, and the utility of Western Christian presence in the Holy Land, was a topic that formed part of the order's intellectual baggage from the beginning, especially since 13th century crusading likely compelled the friars to reflect on this.

Following these opening considerations, chapter 1 turns to analyse the *Liber recuperationis Terrae Sanctae* by friar Fidentius of Padova, which he presented to the (also Franciscan) pope Nicolas IV shortly before the fall of Acre in 1291. Fidentius had been *vicarius* of the Franciscan province of the Holy Land in 1272-74, and was thus well placed to write this treatise, which first deals with the recovery of the Holy Land and then offers a proposal for how a Christian society could be built up there after recovery⁵. Evangelisti's analysis primarily focuses on this second half: the foundations of the new Christian *societas* to be built in the Holy Land. He notes Fidentius' sensitivity to the «diversity of (Christian) nations» there and to the variety of customs, underscoring the uniqueness of Fidentius *Liber*: not only one of the first recovery treatises, but also only one written by someone with first-hand experience in the Eastern Mediterranean. Evangelisti's analysis aims to demonstrate that this is a political project, aimed at creating a territorial state⁶. Fidentius interprets the loss of Antioch in 1268 and the loss of Tripoli in 1289 as the

⁵ Compare S. Schein, *Fideles Crucis: The Papacy, the West, and the Recovery of the Holy Land, 1274-1314*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1991; P. Gautier Dalché, *Cartes, Réflexion Stratégique et Projets de Croisade à la Fin du XIII^e et au Début du XIV^e Siècle: Une Initiative Franciscaine?*, in «Francia», 37, 2007, pp. 80-3, plate I, pp. 87-92; L. Demontis, *Quomodo Terra Sancta recuperari potest: Fidenzio da Padova, Raimondo Lullo e il «superamento» della crociata*, in «Antonianum», 90, 2015, pp. 545-61.

⁶ This work is obviously well founded in the author's already extensive research on this topic. P. Evangelisti, *Il «Liber recuperationis Terre Sancte» di Fidenzio da Padova: un progetto egemonico francescano per il recupero ed il governo della Terrasanta, in Acri 1291. La fine della presenza degli ordini militari in Terra Santa e i nuovi orientamenti nel XIV secolo*, a cura di F.M. Tommasi, Quattroemme, Perugia 1996, pp. 143-70; Id., *Fidenzio*

result of the political and diplomatic shortcomings of the Crusader States. Recovery would thus not only depend on armed force and military tactics, but also on various political factors, as well as uncomfortable alliances, necessary to confront common enemies. Especially Fidentius's suggestion of using economic pressure, in the shape of naval blockades and trade embargo's is interpreted as innovative at the time by Evangelisti.

Another, little-studied aspect which receives much attention in *Dopo Francesco* is Fidentius' requalification of the crusader, the *crucis signatus*, who is no longer only a *miles Christi*, a knight of Christ, but a fighter of Christ, *pugil Christi*. This terminological innovation signals a new ideal type of the crusader, whose qualities and virtues (associated with Franciscan values like *caritas*, chastity, humility, piety, and frequent prayer) should provide the foundations for the projected Christian society in the Levant. The *dux* (not a *rex*) or leader of this community of *pugiles* should not only be a military figure, but also be an institutional leader, capable of good government, to ensure a viable socio-economic basis for this new society in the East. Fidentius thus proposes a non-feudal, non-personal rule: not a king, but a head of government who responds to the needs of the *habitatores terrae Sanctae* instead of the wishes of barons and military orders (thus preventing a weakness of the erstwhile Crusader States, which he perceived). Evangelisti foregrounds that Fidentius' centralistic approach to government – including taxation, a non-mercenary military, and the administering of justice – is radically different from coeval feudal models and that the resulting conceptual framework is almost modern⁷. Finally, the author notes that the Christian society in the East projected by Fidentius hardly exhibits dependence on the Roman Catholic Church; indeed, there is a marked disinterest in what the Roman curia might wish for, which is remarkable given that Pope Gregory X and Nicholas IV were important interlocutors for this project. Above all, Evangelisti's analysis sets out to demonstrate that the *Liber* is a Franciscan document at a much more deeply seated level than is general-

da Padova e la letteratura crociato-missionaria minoritica: strategie e modelli francescani per il dominio, XIII-XIV sec., il Mulino, Bologna 1998.

⁷ Evangelisti, *Dopo Francesco* cit., p. 69.

ly appreciated, also suggesting that it anticipates (renewed) Franciscan presence in the Holy Land⁸.

In Chapter 2 of *Dopo Francesco* – which deals with how Franciscan friars promoted crusade through word and deed – Evangelisti further investigates the ideological foundations on which these friars might base their complex engagement with crusading. While the friars minor were of course involved in crusade preaching on a larger scale, the author proposes an in-depth analysis of a number of key passages by the friars Gilbert of Tournai (c. 1200-1284) and Bertrand de la Tour (c. 1265-c. 1333) in order to bring into focus specifically Franciscan approaches to crusade preaching⁹. First up are three model sermons for preaching the cross by Gilbert of Tournai, which address two potential audiences: those who might take the cross, and those who aim to give substance to crusading vows already made. In this context a well-known verse from the Apocalypse of St John: *Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God* (Rev. 7:2, New international version), emerges as important. At the time, the angel with the seal of the living God was often identified as St Francis, and often interpreted by members of the Franciscan order as referring to Francis' role as a driving force behind apocalyptic renewal. Gilbert uses the image of this angel to articulate his conception of a model crusader *miles Christi*. Moreover, Gilbert uses the image of the seal to draw attention to the meaning and symbolism of the «sign of the cross» central to crusading rhetoric in general. Other typically Franciscan themes which emerge as important are the ideals of *sequela Christi* and of poverty, as well as the letter *Tau*, which Gilbert also employs when painting his picture of the ideal *miles Christi*¹⁰. With respect to the crusading schemes of Bertrand de la Tour, Evangelisti particularly highlights that these are not so much preoccu-

⁸ Ivi, p. 37.

⁹ For an edition and translations of Gilberts *Ad cruce signatos et cruce signandos* sermons, see C.T. Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2000, pp. 176-209.

¹⁰ Compare M.F. Cusato, *From Damietta to La Verna: The impact on Francis of his experience in Egypt*, in *Daring to Embrace the Other: Franciscans and Muslims in Dialogue*, ed. D. Mitchell, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure NY 2008, pp. 81-112.

pieced with constructing an image of the evil infidel other in the East, but rather seem to focus on biblical places which offer building blocks for the construction of a Christian society in the East. Bertrand's sermons may in this sense be seen as comparable to Fidentius of Padova's project, discussed in the previous chapter.

Chapter 2 also offers an extensive analysis of the *Miles Armatus* by the well-known Franciscan theologian Peter John Olivi (c. 1248-1298). This relatively brief text, which was completed after c. 1292 and which also circulated in the vernacular, is interpreted as having primarily didactic purposes¹¹. Evangelisti foregrounds the «multimedia» orientation of the text, which opens with a description of a fully armed knight¹². This militaristic image is then deciphered in the rest of the *Miles* in order to encourage and instruct members of lay society on how to sustain the conversion of unbelievers, again with much emphasis on values like poverty and *sequela Christi*. Following Evangelisti's detailed discussion of these various Franciscan texts aimed at recruiting crusaders and promoting the construction of an ideal Christian society based on Franciscan values in order to support crusading/conversion efforts, the chapter then concludes on a more practical note. The final section discusses examples which illustrate additional legal prerogatives which Franciscan friars could have, apart from the right to preach crusade, such as accepting inheritances for the benefit of crusading efforts and the competency to put a monetary price on the redemption of a crusading vow.

¹¹ For editions see *Miles Armatus*, a cura di R. Manselli, in *Spirituali e Beghini in Provenza*, Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, Rome 1959, pp. 287-91; and *Miles Armatus*, a cura di A. Montefusco, in «Studia Francescani», 108, 2011, pp. 51-170 (here pp. 84-94). For Provençal versions see I. Arthur, *Lo Cavalier Armat, version provençale du Miles armatus attribué à Pierre Jean Olivi*, in «Studia Neophilologica», 31, 1959, pp. 43-64; and R. Manselli, *Lo Cavalier Armat (texte provençal édité d'après le ms. 9 de la Bibl. conv. Chiesa Nuova d'Assise)*, in *La Religion populaire en Languedoc du XIII^e siècle à la moitié du XIV^e siècle*, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 11, Privat, Toulouse 1976, pp. 203-16. Compare R. Manselli, *Les opuscules spirituels de Pierre Jean-Olivi et la piété des béguins de langue d'Oc*, in *La Religion populaire en Languedoc*, pp. 187-201.

¹² Compare A. Montefusco, *Un testo francescano «multimediale»: lettura del Miles armatus/Cavalier Armat di Pierre de Jean Olieu*, in «La Parola del Testo», 11, 2005, pp. 285-306.

Following these various angles on promoting crusade as well as projecting crusader society-building in the Holy Land, Chapter 3 identifies a crucial turning point in Franciscan engagement with crusade, conversion, and presence overseas. Following the fall of Acre in 1291, which marked the end of the Levantine Crusader states, there was no permanent Western Christian presence in the Holy Land until the foundation of the Franciscan custody of Mount Sion, with headquarters just outside the walls of Jerusalem, in 1333. Previous discussions of this Franciscan establishment in the Holy Land have overwhelmingly focused on these friars' influence on both the practical and cultural experiences of Western pilgrims as the only Catholic institution present there. Evangelisti takes a different approach to the foundation: as a novel opportunity for observing the mandate of the 12th chapter of the Rule of 1223 (friars who by divine inspiration wish to go amongst Saracens and other unbelievers can do so as long as they have permission from their superiors)¹³. He then convincingly identifies diplomacy, sensitivity to political contexts, and the autonomous character as defining features of this new Franciscan venture in the Holy Land¹⁴. The author points out that the first papal bulls recognizing this foundation date to 1342, nine years after the fact, and even then neither claim any of the credit for the initiative back to the Roman Curia, suggesting an independent Franciscan enterprise. This is then corroborated by the discussion of events in the *Chronicle of the 24 ministers general* which mentions the foundation in 1333, but fails to include its 1342 papal recognition, thus presenting the foundation on Mount Sion as a result of a Franciscan will to be present in the Holy Land.

The author particularly accentuates the outstanding diplomatic acumen and sensitivity to evolving political contexts which allowed Franciscan friars to turn their ambitious aim of establishing in the Holy Land into reality, at a time when other orders like the Dominicans likewise tried but failed. It demonstrates that the Franciscan attempt could not have succeeded without the support of various royal allies, including

¹³ Evangelisti, *Dopo Francesco*, p. 138 and p. 173.

¹⁴ Compare Id., *Il 1333 e la Custodia di Terra Santa: Condizioni Politiche e Culturali alle Origini di un'Istituzione Franciscana di Lunga Durata*, in «Frate Francesco. Rivista di Cultura Franciscana», 82, 2016, pp. 49-195 (here pp. 49-63).

– but not limited to – Robert of Anjou (1277–1334), king of Naples, and his wife Queen Consort Sancha of Majorca (c. 1285–1345). In addition, legal and economic aspects of the 1333 foundation are considered, such early acquisitions of real estate in the period 1335–1337. Properties on Mamluk state-owned areas were purchased directly by individual friars and then ceded to the *custodia*. Evangelisti argues that this strategy, which combined financial backing with a powerful European support network, helped to create a stable legal and economic basis for the foundation in Jerusalem. Apart from this very cogent analysis of the circumstances and characteristics of the fourteenth-century Franciscan establishment in the Holy Land, chapter 3 of *Dopo Francesco* also aims to situate this endeavour in the wider cultural context of a wide array of Franciscan thought on presence in the Holy Land and various possible ways of engaging with unbelievers. Particular attention is paid to the work of Roger Bacon, which emphasizes the importance of converting by means of persuasion rather than armed crusade, and proposes a Holy Land project to be taken up by linguistically capable *sapientes*. Franciscan «wise men» may well have been intended by Bacon according to Evangelisti. Overall, chapter 3 offers an original and timely analysis of the foundational phase of the custody of Mount Sion, and also shows that the initiative can be squared with pre-existing Franciscan ideology on this subject.

Chapter 4 proposes to relate the Franciscan «conversion-project» during the thirteenth and fourteenth century, outlined thus far, to normative or institutional sources of the order. To this end chapter 16 of the 1221 Rule is cited in full, which is indeed rather helpful because this quotation (filling an entire print page) really does demonstrate the centrality and various possible modes of «going among Saracens and other unbelievers» which was envisaged for friars this early on¹⁵. The conspicuously shorter chapter 12 of the 1223 Rule,

¹⁵ On this topic compare L. Gallant, *Francis of Assisi: Forerunner of Interreligious Dialogue. Chapter 16 of the Earlier Rule Revisited*, in «Franciscan Studies», 74, 2006, pp. 53–82; M. Weaver, *The Rule of Saint Francis: What was Really Lost?*, in «Franciscan Studies», 69, 2011, pp. 31–52. Also see M.W. Blastic, *A Study of the Rule of 1223: History, Exegesis and Reflection*, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure NY 2008; D. Flood, *Francis of Assisi's Metadiscourse to the Rule and its Rejection*, in «Frate

which boils down to a curt: if a friar wants to do this, he will need a licence, is also quoted¹⁶. These quotations are then followed by an extensive consideration of order constitutions, provincial statutes, and papal bulls which interpret the Rule of 1223, most of which exhibit an astounding silence on its 12th chapter, especially given the general interest in crusading during the 1230s and the number of friars engaged in supporting such efforts.

Evangelisti's investigation also demonstrates that the situation is different where commentaries on the Rule are concerned. In the fascinating final section of chapter 4 it becomes clear that the responses to chapter 12 of the 1223 Rule are varied both in contents and length. None of these commentaries deal with crusade explicitly, but rather with the conversion of unbelievers in general, who may include – but certainly are not limited to – Saracens. The commentary of David of Augsburg also mentions heretics and John of Peckham further includes heathens and schematics. Of particular interest is Evangelisti's discussion of the commentary by Olivi, which in turn also profoundly influenced the *Expositio* by Angelo Clareno (c. 1255-1337). In his commentary on the Rule, Olivi connects the image of the angel of the sixth seal from Revelations (also cited by Gilbert of Tournai) to the chapter 12 of the 1223 Rule, interpreting it as a prefiguration of the order's task of converting Saracens. This task again forms a crucial aspect of an all-encompassing conversion effort entrusted to the order, closely connected to the end times. Also of interest is the *Elucidatio* (c. 1253-54) of the Rule by Hugh of Digne, who refers to chapter 16 of the Rule of 1221, testifying to its continued relevance¹⁷. Finally, the commentary (c. 1283-84) by Friar John of Wales emerges as a more reserved voice, which values a righteous life over having been in Jerusalem, and which suggests that evangelizing Saracens should be left to only those friars who are perfectly up to the task¹⁸. Evangelisti emphasises that, despite

Francesco», 79, 2013, pp. 209-23; Id., *Francis of Assisi's Rule and Life*, Tau Publishing, Phoenix AZ 2015.

¹⁶ Evangelisti, *Dopo Francesco*, pp. 172-3.

¹⁷ Also see B. Vollot, *Hugh of Digne and the Rule of 1216*, in «Greyfriars Review», 15, 2001, pp. 35-85.

¹⁸ For an introduction and critical edition, see D. Flood, *John of Wales' Commentary on the Franciscan rule*, in «Franciscan Studies», 60, 2002, pp.

differences of interpretation, all normative texts agree on the importance of obedience to the Roman Catholic church and fidelity to its faith. These two pillars provide the parameters which determine the legitimacy of any Franciscan participation in crusade and/or conversion initiatives, notwithstanding the silence of many normative sources on the 12th chapter of the Rule of 1223.

The 5th and final chapter of *Dopo Francesco* considers Franciscan positions on martyrdom, which were naturally more concerned with both internal threats like heretics, and unbelievers occupying the Holy Land, than with the martyrdoms associated with the early Christianity. The Rule of 1221 considers various possible modalities in which friars might seek martyrdom among unbelievers, emphasizing the importance of divine inspiration and suitability of the individual candidate in such cases. The Rule of 1223 no longer mentions martyrdom, but retains the prerequisites of divine inspiration and suitability, as applicable to friars wishing to go amongst Saracens and other unbelievers. Commentaries on this Rule do take martyrdom into consideration, generally expressing some reserve and caution with respect to actively seeking martyrdom. The example of St Francis – who travelled to the Levant out of a desire for martyrdom which of course was not realized there, but later (in the eyes of many commentators) in the guise of his Stigmatisation at La Verna in Italy – runs through this chapter like a common thread. Based on analysis of a particularly wide range of Franciscan sources, which it is impossible to do justice to here, Evangelisti demonstrates that the example of Francis as a model-martyr became enduringly influential within the order. This type of martyrdom within life was perceived as having been realized not only through the Stigmatisation, but also through a proselytizing apostolate in the Levant while accepting the danger of (and cultivating a longing for) martyrdom; the episode with the Sultan at Damietta comes up more than once in this context too.

93-138. For a translation into English, see *Early Commentaries on the Rule of the Friars Minor (13th-14th Centuries)*, Vol. 1, Hugh of Digne, David of Augsburg, John of Wales, ed. D. Flood, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure NY 2014; M. Blastic, *The Rule Commentary of John of Wales*, in *The English province of the Franciscans (1224-c.1350)*, ed. M. Robson, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2017, pp. 109-29.

The quest for this type of martyrdom was also connected to armed conversion and crusade by various friars, for example as a possible way of informing the image of the ideal crusader. *Evangelisti* demonstrates how various Franciscan authors forged fascinating connections between Francis as model-martyr – also identified as the angel of the sixth seal – his stigmata, and the identity of crusaders as *cruce signati*. The inclusion of several fifteenth and sixteenth-century texts in this chapter helpfully illustrates the continued relevance of the issues at stake.

Dopo Francesco concludes with a brief epilogue which recalls the overall aim of the book (offering series of historical tableaux showing how the Franciscan order has engaged with chapter 12 of its Rule in word and deed, also defined as its evangelical apostolate), as well as the dominant hermeneutical model which traditionally has often been applied to this topic, exemplified by (ahistorical) interpretations of the meeting of Francis with the Sultan at Damietta. Following the analysis of the vast array of Franciscan and non-Franciscan sources offered by this book, the author's conclusion that this traditional paradigm is indeed insufficient, comes across as entirely convincing.



There is no overstatement in saying that this is an important book which takes a highly original approach to the theory and practice of Franciscan engagement with evangelical apostolate and crusading during the middle ages. *Dopo Francesco* offers a detailed reading of a wide range of primary sources – from hagiographical, historiographical, sermonical, to normative, etc. – which have rarely been considered from this angle, let alone in conjunction to each other. The resulting, composite picture may here and there arguably come across as slightly episodic, both in case of the five thematically rather focused chapters, as well as on the level of the architecture of individual chapters. For example, chapter 1 mainly considers the Franciscan Rule(s), Celano's *Memoriale*, and Fidentius of Padova's recovery treatise. Nevertheless, the detailed analysis of the individual sources does help to accentuate the shared ideological framework for approaching

apostolate and crusade, which inspired Franciscan thinkers from the early thirteenth century up to and including the sixteenth century. The main contribution of this book lies in having demonstrated the eye-catching level of conceptual continuity which clearly runs through generations of Franciscan texts. Indeed it makes the reader curious for more: which other medieval sources might in fact be connected to the same paradigm?

With this book Paolo Evangelisti successfully deals with the challenging question what was actually Franciscan about medieval Franciscan approaches to the Levant and the unbelieving others, who may inhabit that space. Instead of opting for understandably attractive, but for this period ahistorical, notions of pacifism and ecumenicism suggested by some of the pre-existing literature (also in association with the encounter between Francis and the Sultan), he has produced a pioneering study which offers several significant insights. For example, he has shown the high degree to which values and virtues central to the medieval Franciscan tradition informed friars' perspectives on the ideal crusader, as well as ideas about how to build a durable crusader society in the East. Moreover, the book highlights the importance of studying commentaries on the Franciscan Rule(s) produced at different points in time, as a crucial way of producing historical perspectives on the reception of foundational norms and values within the order through time. The individual reader can undoubtedly gain many more and other exciting new insights from this book, depending on his/her background and interests. Based on my own experience with late medieval and early modern Observant Franciscan texts on the Holy Land by friars connected to that Franciscan province, I was particularly struck by the period-transcending centrality of Francis as a foundational figure, identified with the angel of the sixth seal. This image, and the range of (eschatological) responses it elicited, seems to have been enduringly integral to how members of this order envisaged its role in the larger scheme of salvation history during the pre-modern period, particularly with respect to armed and unarmed conversion of unbelievers. As a result, based on my reading of *Dopo Francesco*, I have become even more convinced of the vital importance of studying pre-modern Franciscan history across the tradi-

tional medieval/early modern divide (c. 1520); this book offers insights which can, for example, be of particular relevance to scholars studying the global Franciscan missions of the early modern period. All considered, *Dopo Francesco* is essential reading for all students of history of the Franciscan order, medievalists and early modernists alike.

Given the importance of the historiographical intervention presented by this book, one would ideally hope to see its analyses and overarching message disseminated as widely as possible. Apart from specialists of Franciscan order history, who may find a refreshing reorientation of fundamental tenets in this book, its main gist may also be highly relevant for a much broader range of medievalists, including not only those working on crusade and mission, but indeed also scholars working on various related aspects of religious (art) history. For example, one might imagine that interpretations of visual representations of the Francis's Stigmatisation might in certain cases benefit from the knowledge presented by *Dopo Francesco*. In its current form the book primarily addresses the first group, namely medievalist specialists of Franciscan order history for whom the various Franciscan authors discussed, important sources and events, as well as ideological currents and controversies in the order's history, hardly need any introduction or contextualisation. This is entirely understandable given the scope and aims of the work. However, as a result the book might not offer an accessible read to all audiences it can indeed be relevant for, including non-Italo-phone ones, given the advanced level of its academic prose. Therefore, it is to be hoped that the overarching message of this important monograph may also receive the international reception that it deserves (perhaps in translated and/or condensed form), apart from surely becoming a touchstone in Italian Franciscanist scholarship.

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