

tion de Thomas, n'est accompagnée d'aucune citation. Si ce chapitre est tellement rare, il eût été utile de le reproduire. Les textes hagiographiques ne sont pas identifiés par leur numéro *BHL*. Ça et là, une expression latine, ou une traduction, fait froncer les sourcils: ainsi p. 33, l'A. mentionne l'*Ystoria de sancti Thome* et traduit *abbatiam ... quae ordinis erat Cisterciensis* par «monastery ... in which was housed a Cistercian congregation». Malgré ces quelques faiblesses, on saura gré à l'A. d'avoir exploré ces premières années du culte de S. Thomas, qui n'avaient guère été considérées jusqu'à présent.

R. GODDING

Gerardo DE SIMONE. **Il Beato Angelico a Roma 1445-1455**. Rinascita delle arti e Umanesimo cristiano nell'Urbe di Niccolò V e Leon Battista Alberti (= *Fondazione Carlo Marchi. Studi*, 34). Firenze, Leo S. Olschki, 2017, XVI-358 p., 323 ill. [ISBN 978-88-222-6512-8]

Giorgio Vasari starts his description of the life of Fra Giovanni da Fiesole with the observation that he “was no less excellent as a painter and illuminator than as a monk” and that because of the colouring of his celestial figures he was called Angelico. He ends his description with the epitaph of Fra Angelico in Santa Maria sopra Minerva: “Give me not praise for being another Apelles, but that I gave all I had to thy poor, o Christ...”. The nickname Angelico was confirmed by the Church when Pope John Paul II beatified him in 1982.

As far as the work of Fra Angelico is concerned, Vasari wrote, among other things, that “Pope Nicholas V sent him to Rome, and employed him to decorate the chapel of the palace where the Pope hears Mass. Here he painted a Deposition from the Cross and some stories of St. Laurence of great beauty. Furthermore, for the same Pope he did the chapel of the Sacrament in the palace. This was afterwards destroyed by Pope Paul III in order to put his stairs there. In this work, which was excellent in his distinctive style, he did some incidents from the life of Jesus Christ in fresco...”. The presentation drawings of Fra Angelico for the Sacrament Chapel, on purple colored parchment and kept in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen at Rotterdam and in the Fogg Art Museum at Cambridge, MA, give an idea of the decoration of this chapel. The other chapel, with scenes from the life of Saints Stephen and Lawrence, has been preserved. This chapel, also called the Cappella Niccolina, was restored in 1995-1996 and can be visited as part of the Vatican Museums.

The decoration of both chapels, together with the other paintings of Fra Angelico created in 1445-1455, is extensively treated for the first time by Gerardo de Simone in his book *Il Beato Angelico a Roma 1445-1455*. The A. deals with the last ten years of Fra Angelico's life, which he spent mainly in Rome. Pope Eugene IV (1431-1447), who had got to know Fra Angelico's work in the San Marco convent at Florence, called him to Rome in 1445/1446, where he came to work for two popes – Eugene and Nicholas V (1447-1455). He made paintings in the choir of St Peter's, in other spaces of the papal palace: in the Sacrament Chapel, in the papal private chapel or Cappella Niccolina, and the study of Pope Nicholas. Fra Angelico's stay in Rome was temporarily interrupted (1449-1452) because he had to

take on the job of prior at Fiesole. During his time in Rome he lived in the convent of the Dominicans at Santa Maria sopra Minerva, in which church he was buried.

De Simone shows how both popes wanted to restore Rome in its former glory, because the city had been neglected during the papal exile in Avignon (1309-1377) and during the Western Schism (1378-1417). Ancient Rome and contemporary Florence served as examples, especially according to Pope Nicholas. Because of his interest in humanistic studies Nicholas is called “the first Renaissance pope”. He chose St Peter’s as the main church of Rome and the Vatican palace as the pope’s residence. The Chapel of Saints Stephen and Lawrence in the Vatican replaced the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the papal chapel in the Lateran palace, the former papal residence. The *Sancta Sanctorum* in its current form dates from 1278. Both chapels, the *Sancta Sanctorum* and the Cappella Niccolina, have a square floor plan. The martyrdoms of Stephen and Lawrence are depicted in both chapels. And in both chapels the four-part vault is dedicated to the four evangelists (in the Niccolina the four evangelists and their symbols, in the *Sancta Sanctorum* only the symbols of the evangelists). During the reign of Nicholas V, the city of Rome was artistically dominated by Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), the designer of what Pope Nicholas wanted to build, by Bernardo Rossellino (1409-1464), the executor of what Alberti conceived, and finally by Fra Angelico.

The A. pays special attention to the Chapel of Saints Stephen and Lawrence, painted from top to bottom. The side walls are divided into three zones. A top zone with painted draperies is followed by a zone with the life of Lawrence: his ordination as deacon by Pope Sixtus II (entrance wall); Sixtus handing him the treasures of the Church; Lawrence dividing these treasures under the poor (entrance wall); Lawrence in front of the prefect Decius; martyrdom of Lawrence (left wall). In the third zone we see St Peter ordaining Stephen as a deacon; Stephen who distributes alms (right wall); the preaching of Stephen; Stephen brought before the Sanhedrin (entrance wall); the expulsion of Stephen from the city; Stephen’s stoning (left wall). In addition, we find a number of saints along the walls, painted under a canopy. All scenes and figures are arranged hierarchically: the higher on the wall and the closer to the altar, the more important. From the bottom up we see the draperies, the life of Lawrence, the life of Stephen – the first martyr – on the walls, and the evangelists in the vaulted planes. The death of the two martyrs is displayed one above the other, close to the lost fresco or panel with the Entombment of Christ above the altar. The depicted saints are two monks: Jerome in monk’s dress and a cardinal’s hat at his feet, and Thomas Aquinas; two bishops: Ambrose and Augustine; two patriarchs: Athanasius and John Chrysostom; and two popes: Leo the Great and Gregory the Great. In the painted architecture, in which Alberti may have advised, we find elements from ancient Rome (the Aurelian Walls in The expulsion of Stephen from the city), Early Christian St Peter (in The ordination of Lawrence, and Lawrence distributing alms), and contemporary Florence (the Palazzo Rucellai of Alberti in The Preaching of Stephen).

For Santa Maria sopra Minerva, Fra Angelico painted in 1449 a Madonna with Child in a somewhat byzantinising style – the panel is still in the church – to create a kind of copy of the “Lucas Madonnas” elsewhere in the city (in Santa Maria Maggiore, Santa Maria del Popolo, Santa Maria in Aracoeli, and Santa Maria in

Cosmedin). In addition to two popes, Fra Angelico found in Rome a cardinal as commissioner: the Spanish Dominican Juan de Torquemada (1388-1468). Torquemada was the author of a very successful book of meditations on the life of Christ, *Meditationes*. This is evident from the fact that it has been preserved in 29 manuscripts. Moreover, it was already published in 1467, illustrated with woodcuts, printed in Rome by the German Ulrich Han. The manuscript with the most beautiful miniatures – painted by a Tuscan, perhaps Florentine artist – is to be found in the Vatican Library (*Vat. Lat.* 973). The printed copy with the most beautiful illustrations, made by a northern artist – 34 colored woodcuts – is kept in the Stadtbibliothek in Nuremberg (Inc. 4.2<sup>o</sup>). It is plausible that the aforementioned miniatures and wood engravings go back to paintings in the cloister of the Dominican monastery next to Santa Maria in Aracoeli. Torquemada and Fra Angelico stayed here. It is known that Torquemada started building projects in church and cloister. He must have ordered a series of frescoes in the cloister that illustrated his *Meditationes*. It is obvious that Fra Angelico was commissioned to make the frescoes. They are not preserved, but the similarities between Fra Angelico's late work (including the frescoes in the Niccolina) and the aforementioned miniatures and woodcuts point in the direction of Fra Angelico's authorship of the frescoes in the cloister.

Gerardo de Simone has clearly demonstrated the role Fra Angelico played in the context of Christian humanism in Rome in the middle of the fifteenth century. In a preview of this book, Fra Angelico is even called “più umanista meno beato”. Let us keep in mind, however, that this painter is rightly called both a Renaissance man and a saint. De Simone is the perfect scholar to accomplish this study. It is a continuation of his doctoral thesis, defended in 2006 at the University of Pisa, and of his numerous subsequent publications on the subject. There is nothing to add to his book here discussed. The text, with very extensive notes, covers 265 pages. There are 145 illustrations in color and 188 in black-and-white. The bibliography covers 60 pages.

P. VAN DAEL

**Études d'iconographie dominicaine.** Europe occidentale (XV<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle). Sous la dir. de A. LAFFAY – G. DE LASSUS SAINT-GENIÈS (= *Dissertationes Historicae*, 35). Roma, Angelicum University Press, 2017, 274 p., ill. [ISBN 978-88-99616-12-0]

Cet ouvrage appartient à l'ensemble des publications publiées à l'occasion du 8<sup>e</sup> centenaire de la fondation de l'Ordre des Frères Prêcheurs. À lui seul, le titre suffit à indiquer la thématique principale qui est l'objet des dix études le composant.

Élément à signaler avant tout, comme le rappelle A. Laffay dans l'avant-propos: l'absence d'une *vera effigies* de Dominique; et si on connaît quelques-uns de ses traits physiques grâce aux écrits relatant la naissance de l'Ordre, il n'existe qu'une seule description un peu détaillée de la personne du prêcheur, due à sœur Cécile, moniale de Saint-Sixte à Rome, fort admirative du saint. Elle s'exprimait en ces termes: «Voici quel était l'aspect extérieur du bienheureux Dominique. Taille moyenne, mince de corps, beau visage un peu rougeaud, les cheveux et la barbe un