ATHANASIUS SULAVIK

THE PREACHING OF WILLIAM OF LUXI, OP,
AT THE PARIS SCHOOLS BETWEEN 1267 AND 12751

Little is known about the Dominican exegete and preacher, William of Luxi, who taught at Paris and preached in its environs between 1267 and 1275. Though his twenty-eight unedited sermons tell us little about his life, they do contribute materially to our growing understanding of the social and academic conditions in Paris. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to offer a brief introduction to William's life and writings, together with an examination, based on eleven sermons2, of the ways in which William directly linked preaching to confession.

I. LIFE

Like the origins and early life of most thirteenth century Dominican friars, William of Luxi's life remains obscure. Not only are literary references concerning William's life extremely rare, but almost everything known

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1 The dates 1267 and 1275 represent William's earliest (cf. n. 27) and latest datable sermons. The latest datable sermon, Dominica quarta in quadragesima, was preached on March 24, 1275. Internal evidence from its prothema provided the clue to its date. There we find: «Verba ultima proposita concordant festitutati, que est de conceptione Filii Dei in utero Virgini Maria...» (ms. Paris, BnF, lat. 14952, f. 75ra), a clear reference to the feast of the Annunciation. The sermon was preached either on the feastday itself, or on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation. If it had been preached on the feastday, then we are left with March 25, 1240; if on the day after, then March 26, 1256. But if it was preached on the eve of the Annunciation, then the date would be March 24, 1275, which is the most likely date of the three.

2 The eleven sermons as listed in Th. Kiepfer, Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi (= SOPMA), II, Rome 1975, pp. 110-114, are 1561, 1538, 1562, 1549, 1537, 1550-3, 1540, and 1545.
about him must be retrieved from the biblical commentaries and sermons ascribed to him, all of which remain in manuscript form. Since his works contain no autobiographical references, we are left with very limited information about him. All that is certain is that he was a Regent Master of Theology at the University of Paris, he preached in the environs of Paris between the years 1267 and 1275, and he died sometime after 1275.

It is likely that he was born in Burgundy some 35 kilometers south of the city of Auxerre. According to the rubricated titles of his works, William was known as frater Guilelmus, de Bucsi, Busci, Lexi, Lisi, Lisci, Lissy, Luci, Luscii, Luscus, and Luxii. The bewildering array of variant spellings for "Luxii" complicates locating his place of origin. However, one medieval source, Stephen Salagmac's De Quatuor in Quibus Deus Praedicatorum Ordinem Insiginit, lists William among the Parisian Masters: "Fr. Guilelmus de Lexovio, Burgundiae," Lexovio, which is Lieusix in Normandy, may be a misreading for Luxovio, which is Luxeul in Lorena, a region which is closer to Burgundy, but is not in Burgundy. If we consider further the places of origin found in the rubricated titles of William's works, we find that such place names as Luscii, Luscus, Lissy, Lissi, Lisi match up well with their modern French equivalents, Leccey, Lixy, Lucey. The names are common enough for towns across France, but are concentrated in Burgundy. There is Leccey in Côte d'Or (Lissiacum in the 17th century), Lixy sur Yonne (Lissiacum in the 18th century), and Lucey in Côte d'Or (Lussiacum). Today, three villages, Lucey le Bois, Lucey sur Cure and Lucey sur Yonne, all of which are located south of the city of Auxerre in Burgundy, appear to be the best candidates for William's place of birth.

Nothing is known about William's entrance into the Order of Preachers, nor his arrival at Paris. Though his title as a Master of the Sacred Page is a matter of public record, the period of his regency remains unclear. As has already been mentioned, William's name is found among Salagmac's list of Parisian Masters. The list places William's regency between that of the Flemish Dominican, Gilbert of Ovis (before 1269), but before the French Dominican, John of Versailles (Varzy), who was teaching in 1270 or a little earlier. Since the dates of Gilbert's and John's regencies are unsure and the list is not arranged in chronological order, this information is of little value for assigning dates to William's regency. However, appended to the end of the Vitae Fratrum, in a marginal note at the foot of ms. Vat. Reg., lat. 584, Simon Tugwell has discovered an extended list of Parisian masters added after the General Chapter of 1260. William's appearance in that marginal note places his regency sometime after 1260. The manuscript evidence from its datable sermons, placing William at Paris between 1267 and 1275, casts doubt on Glorieux's conjectural dates of 1276-1277. The fact of the matter is, the time-frame of William's period of regency, defined as a minimum of two years, cannot be determined with any precision. It is therefore safest to place his regency sometime between 1267 and 1275.

2. Writings

Though William's postills on Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, and the Twelve Minor Prophets have survived, his postills on the Catholic Epistles and the Apocalypse have not. No firm date of composition has yet been established for the existing texts; we can only postulate that they were produced during his teaching period at Paris, where they were undoubtedly composed. William, no doubt, intended them for use beyond the classroom, probably as a preaching aid for those Dominican friars involved pastorally in preaching and hearing confessions, the fratres communes. The postills.

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(3) Monumenta Ordinis Praedicatorum Historica (=MOPH), t. XXII, ed. Th. Keppeli, Rome 1987, p. 127, n. 21; cf. p. 1, n. 2. The work is attributed to Stephen of Salagmac (c. 1230-1291) who stopped writing in 1277; Bernard Gis (1261-1331) finished his basic revisions in 1307, but continued adding to them until 1314. For a discussion of Gis's writing and revision of the cronica, specifically concerning the list of Parisian masters, see S. TUGWELL, Bernardi Guidonis scripta de sancto Dominico, MOPH XXVII, Rome 1998, pp. 50-52; for its historical setting, see W. HINNEBUSCH, The History of the Dominican Order, II, New York 1965, pp. 406-9 and 411-16. The German Dominican, Johannes Meyer, also compiled a list in 1475, de priscis sancti patris Parisiorum dominicorum de ordine fratrum Praedicatorum, an annex to his Chronica brevis ordinis Praedicatorum. There we find n. 21: Item Guilemmus de Lexovio, Burgundiae. Scheben's in his introduction asserts that the list derived from genealogia miliarium, which in turn most likely depended upon Bernardus Gis's Catalogus. See J. MEYER OP, Chronica brevis Ordinis Praedicatorum, ed. H. Scheben, Leipzig 1933, introduction pp. 18-19, and text p. 110.
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(6) SOPMA, t. II, p. 42.
(8) I am grateful to Father Simon Tugwell OP for sharing with me this discovery from his own research.
(10) H. DENİFELE - A. CHÂTELAIN (eds.), Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis, Paris 1889-1897, I, p. 587 (ca. 1280): "Item juratus quod legitis per duos annos continue nisi rationabilis causa intervenit." How the obligatory regency worked out in fact has remained unclear. For a good treatment on the subject of teaching careers at the University of Paris during the thirteenth century, see W. COURTNAX, Teaching Careers at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, Cambridge 1988.
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Scripture. Like his fellow Dominicans, who were both preachers and confessors, William linked the pulpit with the confessional. By doing this, William was following the Dominican tradition as illustrated in the postils of Hugh of St. Cher and William of Alton. These, in turn, were deeply influenced by the works of Peter the Chanter and Stephen Langton. William’s sermons provide strong evidence for a tradition of reform-directed preaching with its roots in the late twelfth century, and still flourishing in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

5. APPENDIX

Since none of William’s twenty-eight sermons have been edited, it may be useful to conclude with a sermon delivered by William at Paris on the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The edited text of the sermo with its collatio was based on a reportatio contained in the sole surviving thirteenth-century manuscript, Soissons 125, f. 79va-84rb. The transcription is based on a photographic image.

I have preserved the sermon’s original orthography and have structured it as closely as possible to its original paragraph-marks. All paragraph numbering is editorial. Scriptural quotations have been italicized; punctuation and capitalization are according to modern usage.

There are three sets of apparatus. The critical apparatus records all scribal errors and editorial corrections. It is evident from this apparatus that the textual quality of this manuscript leaves a lot to be desired. The second apparatus focuses on the biblical text by identifying scriptural variants contained in three medieval exemplars of the ‘Parisian Bible’: Ω, Ω, Ω. Whenever the biblical passage is highly abbreviated in the text, the second apparatus records the passage in full. The third apparatus registers scriptural, liturgical, patristic, and medieval sources.

(61) For the catalogue listing of William’s sermon, inc.: Herodes mittens occidit omnes pueros qui erant in Bethlehem et in finibus eius, a hymnus et infra. 5


3. Sed Herodes, nesciens cognoscere Christum ab aliis, queren unum interficerit, omnes interficit a hymnus et infra, ut occidendo omnes unum interficeret. Et notantur in uerbis istis duo: primo Herodes malitia, cum


14-16 Conserua ... tecum] conserva fili mi praecepta patris tuo et ne dimittas legem matris tuae licea ea in corde tuo inquit et circumdata gesturi tuo cum ambulatibus graduantur tecum. Vade [Biblia sacra, l. XI, p. 40].

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