

Franciscan vision is broadened and propelled into the uncharted territory of the modern world.

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*Poverty, Heresy and the Apocalypse: The Order of Apostles and Social Change in Medieval Italy, 1260–1307*, by Jerry B. Pierce (London: Continuum, 2012; pp. xiv + 197. £65).

Having tried and failed to join the Franciscan Order in Parma, some time around 1260, Gerardo Segarelli decided to pursue apostolic ideals on his own. The following he soon attracted came to be known as the Order of Apostles, and it enjoyed forty years of modest success. But both in northern Italy and abroad, the church's patience with groups on the periphery of orthodoxy was ebbing. The Second Council of Lyon (1274) decreed that those wishing to emulate apostolic poverty must do so within one of four approved mendicant orders: Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, and Augustinian Hermits. Papal pressure on the Apostles soon increased, first by admonition, then by repression. In 1294, following the persecution of some adherents, Segarelli himself was incarcerated, and in 1300 he was convicted of heresy and executed. An emerging faction, led by Fra Dolcino, developed a radical apocalyptic identity and went into hiding. They found a politically congenial haven among the rural inhabitants of the Valsesia in northern Lombardy, whence Dolcino may have hailed. Yet their resources were limited and their respite brief. In March 1307 forces co-ordinated by the local bishop ended the group's meandering and led its leaders to trial and death.

Jerry B. Pierce's book is the first English-language monograph dedicated to the history of this order, which has received a modicum of attention outside Italy, mainly from students of heresy, popular resistance, the mendicant orders, and the Inquisition. The main achievement of this study, which owes much to the work of several Italian specialists, lies in illuminating the weak evidential basis for the order's reputation, among scholars and in the popular imagination alike, as heinously violent. The three main texts describing the Apostles' rise and fall were composed by strongly antagonistic contemporaries: Salimbene, a Franciscan chronicler and native of Parma, Bernard Gui, a Dominican scholar and inquisitor, and the anonymous author of the *Historia Fratris Dulcini Heresiarche*. Subsequent interpretations have swallowed much of what these authors said about the Apostles, hook, line, and sinker. Most troubling, specialists from Henry Charles Lea to Gordon Leff to Malcolm Lambert have accepted reports of the brethren's unorthodox rituals and extraordinary brutality as not only factual but also typical of their practices from the order's inception onwards. Pierce ably exposes these texts' tendentiousness and suggests a new reading.

It is in moving beyond deconstruction that this study disappoints. For, having developed a strongly-worded critique of several medieval and modern authors as engaged in, or unwittingly extending, a 'smear campaign', Pierce then produces a contrarian and highly streamlined narrative, driven by one main engine: not only were the Apostles essentially peaceful, but also (to the extent

that they ultimately developed an apocalyptic outlook) their radicalisation, which may have led to some violence, was 'caused' by the church's heavy hand. The scarcity and nature of the evidence fails to foster a more open-ended approach in this book. The reinterpretation, moreover, relies on the broader theses of Norman Cohn and R.I. Moore, while not engaging with critiques of their work (and these abound). Thus the promise (p. 2) to avoid a 'simple inversion of the traditional tale' in which the Apostles 'become the hapless victims' goes unfulfilled. This is emphatically not to argue that Pierce's reading of the sources is untenable, but rather to suggest that framing the argument in terms of a zero-sum game is unnecessary and ultimately unproductive.

From this perspective, the book's lesser fault is its disproportionate amount of synthesis. After a brief encounter with Segarelli in Chapter One, nearly four chapters (from a total of nine) go by before we meet him again. In the interval the author, on the basis of secondary and dated literature, summarises the political, religious, economic, and urban history of western Europe between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries—not the most effective way of linking micro and macro levels of analysis. Lastly, while there is potential value in employing modern analogues, the one offered here, and which hangs over the book from prologue to conclusion, is curious—namely the demise of the Branch Davidians near Waco, Texas, in 1993. It is important, indeed laudable, to question narratives constructed by officialdom (be it the papal Inquisition or the ATF) as a justification for perpetrating gratuitous violence. But it is odd to suggest that David Koresh and his followers at Mount Carmel Center adopted an apocalyptic outlook and were radicalised into violent action solely because of a government playbook.

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*Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to J. Beverley Smith*, ed. R.A. Griffiths and P.R. Schofield. (Cardiff: U. of Wales P., 2011; pp. xviii + 252. £69).

J. Beverley Smith's contribution to the history of Wales is an extensive one, delivered over more than fifty years of publication at the highest level and ranging across centuries from the high middle ages to the early modern period. This contribution is celebrated by an appropriately strong group of scholars in this substantial and satisfying *Festschrift*. The contributions represent a good range of thematic approaches—from manuscript studies to church building to modern historiographical approaches to Wales—without the book losing intellectual coherence, and the elements are well balanced.

Huw Pryce's account of Anglo-Welsh agreements in the thirteenth century to 1277 suggests that the form of the treaty documents themselves, their text and their physical history, are as significant as the terms of those agreements. David Carpenter argues that Welsh political culture in the age of Gwynedd's imperialism could be characterised by confederation and not by domination as practised by Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, and suggests that the former would have been a 'better way forward for Wales'. David Stephenson maintains in his piece that a key part of the B-text of the *Annales Cambriae*, for the years 1257–63,