



BOOK REVIEW

Michael W. Dunne and Simon Nolan, eds. *A Companion to Richard FitzRalph: Fourteenth-Century Scholar, Bishop, and Polemicist*

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True of all Brill's publications, *A Companion to Richard FitzRalph* is a handsome volume. It is also large: as well as an introduction by the editors, it contains thirteen essays and runs to just shy of 500 pages. For a couple of decades now, Michael Dunne at Maynooth has been leading the charge to make FitzRalph better appreciated. Hosting conferences, guiding critical editions to print, and working to get scholars writing about the Archbishop from Dundalk, Michael Dunne has been assiduous. As well as contributing one of the essays, Dunne translated Jean-François Genest's essay on FitzRalph and future contingents, one of the standout contributions to the volume.

FitzRalph was born circa 1300 to an Anglo-Norman family. He was not of Gaelic origin and so part of the overlord class. Fissures among the communities of the British Isles dogged his academic career and ministry. When Chancellor of Oxford (1332–34), his stewardship was marred by a dispute between the Northern and Southern students: the former felt discriminated against in the allocation of fellowships that, they contended, went principally to Southerners. This pattern persists in the United Kingdom to this day. Interestingly, it was also a significant backdrop to the anglicizing aspects of the Scottish Enlightenment: Scots after the Act of Union struggled to find prominence in London's circles of power. In his lectures on rhetoric, Adam Smith urged his students in Edinburgh and Glasgow to adopt the speech of the English court. The problem in FitzRalph's Oxford was so severe it required him to go to the papal court in Avignon to explain himself.

A more intense version of the problem haunted him when Archbishop of Armagh. From 1346 to 1360, when he died, FitzRalph held the highest ecclesial office in Ireland. A dedicated bishop, and something of a controversialist by nature, FitzRalph took exception to the Franciscan teaching on poverty. Like any good administrator, he was acutely aware of the problem of revenue that went someway—though not all—to explaining his hostility to the Franciscans. Their ministry garnered fees that otherwise would have gone into the coffers of the archdiocese. Of his fourteen years in office, he was only half the time in Ireland. His absence was welcomed as he was wont to lament in sermons both the fighting between the English and Irish, as well as the corruption in the country. He accused the Franciscans of stirring the ethnic pot—his flock divided between a Gaelic population loyal to the land's traditional law and the Norman settlers who embraced the common law tradition stretching back to the Anglo-Saxons. FitzRalph was thus embroiled in an early variant of the Irish Question.

Contributors come from across Europe, and the essays are of high quality. There are essays on the patronage system of the time, but most detail FitzRalph's philosophy of mind, moral, and political thinking, his metaphysics, as well as his contributions to theology. Educated at Oxford (1315–28) he was close to the Merton Calculators, Michael Dunne observing a “mathematization” to his theology. This point is very ably demonstrated in the essay by Elżbieta Jung on infinity, which includes helpful diagrams. FitzRalph's most famous thesis is that lordship, ownership, and jurisdiction is exclusively derived from God's grace. The essay by Michael Haren unpacks the circumstances, ideas, and stakes of that thesis nicely. Stephen Lahey's essay discusses the prominence of the thesis in anabaptist circles in Central Europe in the years of the Radical Reformation.

The introduction by Michael Dunne, and his co-editor, the Carmelite Simon Nolan, also of Maynooth, includes an excellent summary of FitzRalph's works, as well as where they stand in terms of being edited. Since *Sentence* commentaries are the starting place for many scholarly inquiries into medieval thought, helpfully there is a list of the questions in FitzRalph's *Lectura on the Sentences* at rear of the volume. A curiosity of the volume is that three authors are responsible for half of all the essays in the book.

British Studies will welcome the collection as it scrambles a common misconception about medieval rootedness. Some may seldom have left their villages, perhaps, but FitzRalph journeyed between the British Isles and Avignon at least four times to play a role in debates of European scope, and even ecumenical significance with Orthodoxy in the East. Nolan's essay reveals that FitzRalph's works were printed at Louvain and Paris, and his ideas were cited by churchmen on the Continent in their debates with Luther. In addition, FitzRalph's theory of dominion vitally framed natural law in Spanish Scholasticism's confrontation with extractive imperialism.

As many of the essays conclusively show, FitzRalph eagerly took part in British intellectual debates, and his ideas would later be used to assert the Catholic verity of the English church during James I's struggles against the papacy. A sophisticated intellectual, FitzRalph represented medieval British thinking—evident from essays by Monika Michałowska and Christopher Schabel—to the popes in Avignon.