



Pilgrim & Preacher: The Audiences and Observant Spirituality of Friar Felix Fabri (1437/8-1502) (Oxford Historical Monographs)

Kathryne Beebe

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Pilgrim and Preacher seeks to understand the numerous pilgrimage writings of the Dominican Felix Fabri (1437/8-1502), not only as rich descriptions of the Holy Land, Egypt, and Palestine, but also as sources for the religious attitudes and social assumptions that went into their creation. Fabri, an Observant reformer and talented preacher, as well as a two-time Holy Land pilgrim, adapted his pilgrimage experiences for four different audiences. He produced the rhymed Swabian-German Pilgerbüchlein for those who sponsored his first voyage; the encyclopaedic Latin Evagatorium for his Dominican brethren; the vernacular Pilgerbuch for the noble patrons of his second voyage and their households; and finally, the vernacular Sionpilger-an 'imagined' or 'virtual' pilgrimage - for the nuns in his care, who were unable to make the real journey themselves. This study asks fundamental questions about the readership for such works, and then builds upon an analysis of Fabri's audiences to reassess the nature of piety, and the place both pilgrimage literature and Observant reform had in it, in late-medieval Germany.

Pilgrim and Preacher is a study of reception, yet one that departs from traditional approaches to pilgrimage literature, which see pilgrimage writing merely as a body of texts to be classified according to genre or mined for colourful details about the Jerusalem journey. This work combines the insights of both literary theory and historical studies with an original, empirical contribution based on an analysis of the manuscripts and printed history of Fabri's writings, setting them in their historical and cultural contexts.

Such an analysis allows us to understand better the working of the religious imagination amongst urban elites and women religious in the late middle ages. By charting the influences of the Observance Movement within the Dominican, Fabri's writings were intended for both his young novices (to make them more effective preachers) and for the religious women who could only go to Jerusalem via the imagination, Pilgrim and Preacher also makes an important contribution to the history of the Dominican Observance movement and the wider currents that flowed between it and the civic and religious feelings of the age.

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