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## A Retrospective on the Work of David Burr

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# A Retrospective on the Work of David Burr

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- 1 The year 2003 had been a heady one for our friend and colleague, David Burr, professor emeritus at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. Indeed, his most recent monograph, *The Spiritual Franciscans: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis*, published by Penn State University Press in 2001, was awarded the Howard R. Marraro Prize for Italian History, the John Gilmary Shea Prize for Church History and the Otto Gründler Prize for Medieval Studies. This superb volume represents the culmination of a lifetime of research and writing on the phenomenon of those Franciscans, and their lay sympathizers, who were attempting to hold onto and live out the ideals of *paupertas* and *minoritas* which were being ignored or openly assailed by leaders within the Order and the Church at large. One of the real strengths of this study is that it explores in a comprehensive and lucid manner how the dynamics of the movement in Central Italy came to be intertwined with the rather different perspectives at play in Southern France, particularly those associated with Peter John Olivi, a figure on whom David had previously written extensively and brilliantly. The accolades which have been bestowed upon him for this particular book as well as for a lifetime of medieval scholarship have indeed been both timely and well merited.
- 2 Even prior to the public announcement of these three distinguished awards, The Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University had already expressed its desire to honor David for his signal contribution to Franciscan research and publication upon his retirement from active teaching at Virginia Polytechnic. To that end, it announced the organization of a special session to honor him at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual International Medieval Congress at the University of Western Michigan in Kalamazoo on 9 May 2003, a venue in which he has collaborated often with the Franciscan Institute over the last 20 years. This session, “A Retrospective on the Work of David Burr,” had as its aim to explore various facets of medieval Franciscan history which David himself had examined throughout his career. Accordingly, three eminent scholars, Sylvain Piron (École des Hautes Études), Kevin Madigan (Harvard University) and E. Randolph Daniel (University of

Kentucky) were invited to assess David's unique contributions to the field and especially the manner in which his work has opened up new areas of investigation for the next generation of scholars of medieval apocalypticism, Peter Olivi and the Spiritual Franciscans. The honored scholar then responded to the presenters with his characteristic savvy, erudition and wit. The papers which follow here thus represent, in a slightly reworked form, the contributions of the three presenters.

- 3 A festive dinner followed the academic convocation in which testimonials were given on behalf of David by Louisa Burnham (Middlebury College), Darleen Pryds (Franciscan School of Theology, Berkeley) and Bernard McGinn (University of Chicago).

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