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Late Medieval Franciscan Statutes on Convent Libraries and Education

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When the Observant Franciscans met at the Council of Constance in 1414 to discuss their reform concerns, they also addressed the important problem of replenishing their ranks¹. Their remarks allow us a clear recognition of the order's struggle to recruit new members: 'Although they [the non-reformed Franciscans] are allowed under certain conditions to take in children – that is, when they are donated by their parents – with regard to this activity the brothers nonetheless commit an abuse, because they do not simply leave it to parents or the children (*parvulos*) themselves to volunteer. Instead, when on their journeys they see children who display any sign of dexterity, they flatter them and try as hard as they can to convince them to enter the order. By promising to let them study, to give them the necessary books and to support them in their search for knowledge, those brothers tell them that it will be easy to become bishops or even greater men in the church. They give them fruit and everything they like, until they

1 See for the council in general W. Brandmüller, *Papst und Konzil im Großen Schisma (1378-1431)*. Studien und Quellen, Paderborn 1990. *Idem*, *Das Konzil von Konstanz (1414-1418)*, 2 vols. (Konziliengeschichte. Reihe A. Darstellungen, 8, 11), Paderborn 1991-1997. J. Miethke, Kirchenreform auf den Konzilien des 15. Jahrhunderts. Motive-Methoden-Wirkungen, in: *Studien zum 15. Jahrhundert*. Festschrift für E. Meuthen zum 65. Geburtstag, 2 vols. (eds.) J. Helmroth / H. Müller, Munich 1994, I, 13-47.

have caught them in their snare, and moreover, they make sure that those children stay with them.’²

The critical remarks of the reform-minded Franciscans on their brothers’ practice of taking in new members reveal several themes relevant for our subject³. First, this quotation suggests that even at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the order’s attraction depended on its internal educational offerings⁴. This social acceptance was based on the

-
- 2 *Et licet permissum est conditionaliter iuvenes recipi, videlicet si ap[!] parentibus suis oblatis sint, de hoc tamen fratres abutuntur, quia non dimitunt parvulos de se vel ap [!] parentibus offerri ex sua libera voluntate. Sed quando ambulantes per mundum vident pueros aliquid principium habilitatis habere, ipsos verbis blandis alloquuntur et quantum possunt inducunt ad huius religionis ingressum, promittentes eos ad studia promovere et libros necessarios dare et ad acquirendam scienciam iuvare, dicentes eis, quod de levi semel poterunt esse episcopi et adhuc maiores in ecclesia; dant illis poma et omnia placentia usquequo eos alligaverint vinculis suis, et etiam secum tales pueros manere procurant* (Singularis opus ordinis seraphici Francisci a spiritu sancto approbati [...] quod Speculum minorum seu Firmamentum trium ordinum titulatur. Bonifatius de Ceva, 5 T., Venice 1513, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich, 4 H. Mon. 494, III, fol. 157^{rb}). The Observants regarded this method of recruiting novices as noxious because the will to be devoted to a spiritual life was lacking: *Et quia tales spiritus dei instinctu non inducuntur sed spiritu humano et inflante bonum fructum non faciunt in religione cum adhuc bene inspiratis in principio sit satis arduum donec amor divinus advenerit, quod iugum Christi facit suave et onus suum leve* (ibid.).
- 3 Cf. B. Roest, ‘Franciscans between Observance and Reformation, the Low Countries (ca. 1400–1600)’, *FS* 63 (2005) 409–44; for the non reformed branch cf. P. Weigel, *Ordensreform und Konziliarismus: der Franziskanerprovinzial Matthias Döring (1427–1461)* (Jenaer Beiträge zur Geschichte, 7) Frankfurt am Main 2005. See the review by B. Roest, ‘Ordensreform und Konziliarismus: Der Franziskanerprovinzial Matthias Döring (1427–1461)’, *The Catholic Historical Review* 93 (2007) 161–3.
- 4 See E. Schlotheuber, ‘Bildung und Bücher. Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftsidee der Franziskanerobservanten’, in: *Könige, Landesherren und Bettelorden. Konflikt und Kooperation in West-*

particular curriculum of the order, which guaranteed a good education of preachers and pastors while offering opportunities for social advancement at the same time.⁵ Libraries, too, belonged to the 'profile' of the Franciscans – they facilitated access not only to pastoral works, but also to the expensive scholarly and theological literature as well.⁶ Secondly, we can conclude from the remarks of the Observants at the periphery of the Council of Constance, that in many cases, Franciscans assumed responsibility for the elementary education of their order's future members as well. Since the fourteenth century in particular, they had opened their doors to younger adolescents who would otherwise have had no opportunity of a literate education. Although the higher education of the Franciscans has frequently been the object of research, their role in offering elementary instruction has often been ignored. Of fundamental importance for this task was the friars' access to literature, the different book collections in the late

und Mitteleuropa bis zur frühen Neuzeit, (cd.) D. Berg, (Saxonia Franciscana, 10) Werl 1998, 419 – 34; see in general for the Franciscan education system an excellent overview on the research of the last decades B. Roest, *A History of Franciscan Education: (c. 1210-1517)* (Education and Society in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, 11) Leiden 2000. D. Berg, *Armut und Wissenschaft: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Studienwesens der Bettelorden im 13. Jahrhundert* (Geschichte und Gesellschaft, 15) Düsseldorf 1977. Recently T. Ertl, *Religion und Disziplin: Selbstdeutung und Weltordnung im frühen deutschen Franziskanertum* (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte, 96) Berlin 2006. D. Berg, *Armut und Geschichte. Studien zur Geschichte der Bettelorden im Hohen und Späten Mittelalter*, Kevelaer 2001.

5 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 272–6; *Idem*, 'Ignorantia est mater omnium malorum: the validation of knowledge and the office of preaching in late medieval female Franciscan communities', in: *Saints, Scholars and Politicians. Gender as a Tool in Medieval Studies. Festschrift in Honour of Anneke Mulder-Bakker on the occasion of her Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, (eds.) M. van Dijk / R.I.A. Nip, Turnhout 2005, 65–83.

6 See Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 197–200.

medieval convents and profile and organization of the libraries.

I. Book possession and libraries in the Franciscan Convents

Dieter Berg has suggested that ‘The supervision of the order’s superiors, concerned not only the quality of the education but also its contents, so that Dominicans and Franciscans standardized the knowledge of their clerics and at the same time developed a theology specific to the order that became binding for the brothers and which they were required to teach.’⁷ This centralizing orientation, which superseded the authority of individual convents, affected the structure of studies as well as the basis of their education – in the convent libraries and books in the private use of the brothers.⁸ Normative sources such as the general and provincial chapter statutes give evidence of the care the Franciscans took in dealing with their books. In his *History of Franciscan Education*, published in 2000, Bert Roest emphasizes that most researchers assumed the Franciscan order took a similar development to that observed among the Dominicans – who from the very beginning incorporated libraries into their communities.⁹ Nonetheless, the Franciscans did follow their own path in this regard, one justified via their understanding of apostolic life. An analysis of the order’s statutes reveals a development that

7 D. Berg, ‘Bettelorden und Bildungswesen im kommunalen Raum. Ein Paradigma des Bildungstransfers im 13. Jahrhundert’, in: *Zusammenhänge, Einflüsse, Wirkungen*, Symposium Tübingen 1984, (eds.) J.O. Fichte / B. Schimmelpfennig, Berlin / New York 1986, 414–26, here 424.

8 B. Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction before the Council of Trent*, (Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 117) Leiden 2004. M. Robson, ‘The growth of the libraries of the Greyfriars in England (1224-1539)’, *Il Santo. Rivista francescana di storia, dottrina e arte* 2 (2003) 493–521.

9 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 198.

differs on a basic level from that of the Dominican order. Francis of Assisi rejected acquisitions and possessions of books, and the Franciscan understanding of religious poverty was not set up to accommodate the accumulation of valuable book collections in the order's houses.¹⁰ They knew very well about the dangers embedded in precious books for the life of evangelical perfection. Even when the structure of the order began to be formed they sought to avoid a firm connection between individual brothers and a particular convent. The friars were convinced, that sooner or later, such arrangements would end in the involvement of the religious community in the economic and social interests of the lay people – as could easily be seen in the case of the older orders. As a consequence the order preferred to equip the brothers individually with the necessary books, which were granted to them for lifetime. Although Gregory IX's bull *Quo Elongati* of 1230 permitted the Friars to use books, the order remained conscious of the danger that the possession of valuable books caused for *the life of evangelical perfection*.¹¹ Each book was regarded as belonging to the entire order, and as a result, in principle, each educated member of the order had the same right to the use of any particular book.¹² For this reason, the selection and treatment of books was discussed at provincial and general chapters.¹³ Their decisions were

10 Thomas de Celano, *Vita Secunda S. Francisci* (AF 10), 127–268, c. 23 (*Contra curiositatem librorum*).

11 H. Grundmann, 'Die Bulle Quo elongati Papst Gregors IX.', *AFH* 54 (1961) 3–25.

12 At the general council of Narbonne 1260 the *patres* stated: *Nullus libros aliquos retineat sibi assignatos, nisi sint totaliter in ordinis potestate, quod libere per ministros dari valeant et auferri*, Narbonne, 1260, Assisi, 1279, Paris, 1292; clause 27, 74.

13 See for the early legislation of the order C. Cenci (ed.), 'De Fratrum Minorum Constitutionibus Praenarbonensis', *AFH* 83 (1990) 50–95, clause 70, 90; clauses 76–79, 92. M. Bihl (ed.), 'Statuta generalia Ordinis edita in capitulo generali. Anno 1354 Assisii celebrato communiter Farineriana appellata', *AFH* 35 (1942) 35–112.

incorporated into the statutes as binding upon the entire order.

The method of equipping the individual brothers with books was accommodated to the mobility of the order's members and may have been related to the still relatively manageable number of Franciscans with a literate education in the first half of the thirteenth century. There already existed some shared book collections but they were few. The library of the Portiuncola, which probably took shape between 1212 and 1220, is perhaps the oldest of them.¹⁴ Even the statutes that predate the Narbonne general chapter in 1260 suggest that the superiors of the order intended to regiment the access to books.¹⁵ They were specially anxious that books should eventually be returned to the province which had paid for them. Expensive bibles were to be sold and cheaper ones purchased to supply a larger number of brothers.¹⁶ In Narbonne, the order enumerated the rules of the use of books according to systematic principles of access. For the possession of biblical texts, the permission of a superior was required; this could only be given to individuals able to undertake higher academic studies who would be suitable as preachers.¹⁷ The examination of *libri*

14 G. Abate, 'Manoscritti e biblioteche francescane del medio evo', in: *Il libro e le biblioteche*. Atti del primo congresso bibliologico francescano internazionale, 20-27 febbraio 1949, 2 vols. (Bibliotheca Pontifica Athen, 6) Rome 1950, II, 77-126, here 93-7.

15 *Et nullus minister provincialis audeat habere vel retinere aliquos libros absque licentia generalis ministri; nec etiam alii fratres accipiant vel habeant absque licentia suorum provincialium ministrorum*. Cenci, De Fratrum Minorum Constitutionibus (cf. note 13) clause 79, 92.

16 *Omnes libri, qui de cetero pretio scribuntur vel emuntur, remaneant in provinciis, in quibus empti sunt vel scripti [...]*. *Ibid.*, clause 76, 92.

17 Narbonne, 1260, Assisi, 1279, Paris, 1292, clause 28 p. 74. For this cf. already the *Constitutiones Praenarbonensis*, Cenci (ed.), 'De Fratrum Minorum Constitutionibus' (cf. note 13) clause 80, 92f.

curiosi was forbidden.¹⁸ As a consequence new writings were to be examined before being distributed more widely.¹⁹ If somebody published a non examined work he lost it and had to suffer three days of water and bread. No special reference in 1260 in Narbonne is made to convent libraries, they continued to play only a marginal role. The basic attitude of the order toward a self-imposed limitation of possession of books became even more recognizable in 1279 in Assisi: No Franciscan was allowed to own a duplicate copy of a book or two commentaries on the same subject. The minister provincial was to ensure compliance with this provision during the visitation of the convents.²⁰ If a brother did own books – for example, from gifts –, which he did not necessarily need, they were to be redistributed at the next provincial chapter to brothers who needed them more urgently. Despite the increasing clericalization of the order, particularly after the deposition of Elias of Cortona in 1239, studies and scholarship were not meant to take on the most important role among the brothers' activities.

Naturally, the order's houses owned smaller collections of books like the liturgical texts for their offices and masses which were kept in the sacristy or in a room above it. But these collections were connected with practical usage and it is unlikely that they constituted the nucleus of the convent libraries which then simply increased over the course of time. It is much more likely that the development of the order's educational system in the second half of the

18 Narbonne, 1260, Assisi, 1279, Paris, 1292, clause 20, 73.

19 *Item inhibemus, ne de cetero aliquod scriptum novum extra ordinem publicetur, nisi prius examinatum fuerit diligenter per generalem ministrum vel provincialem et definitores in capitulo provinciali. Et quicumque contrafecerit, tribus diebus tantum in pane et aqua ieiunet et caret illo scripto. Ibid.* clause 21, 73.

20 Narbonne, 1260, Assisi, 1279, Paris, 1292, (Assisi 1279) clause 24a, 81.

thirteenth century was the turning point.²¹ Custodial and provincial schools were founded everywhere. Here brothers suitable for university studies or preaching activity were prepared for work in a *studium generale* or university. Over the course of the thirteenth century the order grew enormously, so that an educational substructure had to be created for the training of priests, preachers, confessors and convent teachers.²² The Aristotelian-influenced scholarly and methodological foundation of theology training had increasingly prevailed. The order embraced this form of theological education. Thus its curriculum was systematized and standardized, its education system following the scholastic subject divisions of the arts, philosophy and theology, for the pursuit of which a broad spectrum of special literature was necessary.

The *Ordinationes*, confirmed by Pope Benedict XII in 1336 responded to this new situation.²³ These ordinations now demanded the organization of libraries in all Franciscan settlements for the first time.²⁴ Texts on grammar, logic, philosophy and theology were to be available to all members of the Franciscan communities. Libraries were to include duplicates or even triplicates of important works depending on the *conditio* and *status* of the house. Even so, normative regulations reveal an equally important economic consideration: the equipment of the

21 E. Schlotheuber, 'Büchersammlung und Wissensvermittlung. Die Bibliothek des Göttinger Franziskanerklosters', in: *Schule und Schüler im Mittelalter. Beiträge zur europäischen Bildungsgeschichte des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts*, (eds.) M. Kintzinger / S. Lorenz / M. Walter, Cologne / Weimar/ Vienna 1996, 217–44, here 222.

22 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 65f.

23 M. Bihl (ed.), 'Ordinationes a Benedicto XII pro fratribus minoribus promulgatae per bullam 28 novembris 1336', *AFH* 30 (1937) 309–90.

24 *Ibid.* XI, 4–6, 356.

libraries was connected to the status of a convent, and unnecessary or superfluous items were to be avoided. This basic systematizing feature can also be clearly seen in practice: from the size and composition of a library we can determine whether a house had a convent school, a custodial or provincial school or even *studia solemnia*.²⁵ More important houses often possessed two separate collections, a public library and a secret collection. The custody or rather the province retained control over the administration, for 'extra' books according to these ordinances were to be redistributed to other houses in the same province.²⁶ Two different libraries appear to have existed in the Cambridge convent.²⁷ One was the school library of the convent and the other was the library for the custody, from which the order equipped brothers who went on to university studies and supplied convents or new settlements with less generous collections.²⁸

The transition of the libraries to the status of mandatory constituent parts of the convent around the turn of the fourteenth century seems at first an accommodation of the Franciscans to the practices of the older orders or the Dominicans. At second glance, however, clear differences can be found in the circumstances that prevailed for example in the largely autonomous Benedictine or

25 E. Schlotheuber, 'Die Franziskaner in Göttingen. Die Geschichte des Klosters und seiner Bibliothek' (Saxonia Franciscana, 8) Werl 1996, 116–32.

26 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 202.

27 *Ibid.* n. 22: See more detailed A.G. Little, 'The friars and the foundation of the Faculty of Theology in the University of Cambridge', in: *Idem, Franciscan Papers, Lists and Documents*, Manchester 1943, 122–43, here 142f.

28 The libraries of the custody were also mentioned by the *Ordinationes* of Benedict XII: *Libri vero ad communitatem custodiae pertinentes distribuantur in provinciali capitulo fratribus eiusdem custodiae tantum* (...). Bihl, *Ordinationes* (cf note 23) XI, c. 8, 356f.

Cistercian abbeys. As in the past, the order continued to supersede convent control of the selection of the literature and the collection. In this way, the brothers could generally be assured that wherever they landed, the necessary literature would await them. This centralizing concern for training and teaching as seen in the *Ordinationes* also left its mark in an organized system of scrutinizing the texts read, taught and reproduced in the order. Every new work, each theological, legal or philosophical treatise, no matter which author wrote it, was subject to examination. Only when the text received the approval of four of the order's masters of theology, permission was given for its further distribution within the community.²⁹ Acceptance or rejection was noted in writing to the custodian or guardian in a so-called *epistola approbatoria*. Thus notes of approbation are found in some codices, as late as the *Kannemannkodex*, which found its way into the convent library at Lüneburg in 1461 from the estate of the Franciscan Johannes Hagen. On its flyleaf, we find the entry: 'This material has been approved by four scholars of the law, confirmed by signature and seal.'³⁰ The Franciscans were reluctant to trust the copying skills of the secular clergy – their Latin was too poor and their

29 *Ne autem nova cuiusvis doctrinae opera per fratres ipsius ordinis incaute et periculose communicari aut publicari contingat, districtie praecipimus, quod novum opus theologicum, iuridicum vel philosophicum, scilicet librum seu libellum, (...) a quocumque fuerit editus vel edita seu editum, nullus frater sine subscripto examine ac ministri et capituli generalis prius obtenta licentia speciali, intra vel extra ordinem publicare, communicare vel copiare praesumat.* Bihl, 'Ordinationes' (cf. note 23) IX, c. 34, 352.

30 *Hec materia per multos utriusque doctores est approbata, subscripta et sigillis roborata, qui doctores nominatim habentur in libraria Lunenburgensi in libro, qui intitulatur Sompnium pauperis.* Manuscript formerly kept in the Münster, Studien- und Zentralbibliothek der Franziskaner Ms OFM 20, fol. 225^{vb}. The manuscript is today in the Diözesanbibliothek Münster. See for a

carefulness limited.³¹ Thus the brothers were to copy necessary texts themselves, which in turn increased the need for members of the order with a sufficient standard of literacy.

The library was just one of several places where books relevant for the friars' spiritual life were stored. Thus it is worthwhile to undertake a sort of tour through a Franciscan convent in order to consider the size and composition of these different book collections: in the choir and sacristy of the church, in the chapter room, in the cloister court and refectory, and in the dormitory or cells, which housed private collections. Size and types of these collections depended on the daily use. Most of these books we usually do not find in library inventories. The most expensive books which were necessary for every spiritual community were those meant for the service of the *choir* and thus for liturgical use. They were kept in the choir on lecterns or in the sacristy in wall cabinets. Often, they were richly embellished volumes with representative decorations; the sorts of volumes included in this category were relatively fixed: Missals and graduals, lectionaries, epistle books, legends and an Evangelistar. As an exception the library catalogue of Youghal also includes the choir books and refers to five choir psalters (*psalteria chori*).³² Additionally there were antiphonaries for responsive singing of

description of the codex Schlotheuber, *Franziskaner* (cf. note 25) 115.

31 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 66.

32 The book inventory of the observant Irish convent in Youghal had been carefully edited by C. O'Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland 1400–1534; from Reform to Reformation*, Dublin 2002, 223–58, here 226. It was a rather small house that possessed a book collection in the choir in 1481 consisting of five parchment Missals, a *Legendary of the Saints* in two volumes, nine Graduals, a *collectorium*, two *martirologia*, *unum grande antifonarium* and two other antiphonaries. The two bibles – one was a representative big one – probably also belonged to the choir.

antiphons, hymns and the psalms. Legends and martyrologies or saints' calendars were also indispensable for the choir library. These choir collections should not be thought of as scanty: the Franciscan convent of Göttingen was not particularly significant and only housed its own local *studium conventuale*. But here alone, as the dissolution inventory of the house in 1533 revealed, forty-seven volumes were partly not chained partly chained to lecterns in the choir.³³

The *sacristy*, in contrast, held books for more complex liturgical celebrations: further missals, *plenaria*, and additional breviaries. Since the sacristy was typically a stone construction and thus protected against fire, the convent archive was traditionally found here or in a room located above it. It is possible that – like the Benedictines – the Franciscans also marked special liturgical places in the convent church with their own literature. At the end of the fifteenth century the observant Augsburg monk Leonhard Wagner, called 'Wirstlin', wrote a *Legendam et historiam de sancto Simperto ad corpus eius in sepulcro* – a special *legendarium* for readings at the graves of the saints, which occurred in context with memorial celebrations.³⁴

In the hierarchy of sacred spaces, the church choir was followed by the *chapter room*. The convent met there daily for readings of excerpts of the rule or statutes – the *scripta ordinis* were found here – to which visitation minutes also belonged.³⁵ Since the monastic reforms of the fifteenth

33 Schlotheuber, *Franziskaner* (cf. note 25) 78. For the chained books in the choir cf. K. Löffler, *Deutsche Klosterbibliotheken*, Cologne 1918, 22.

34 *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz*. III, 1 (Bistum Augsburg), (ed.) P. Ruf, Munich 1932, 46. Here are also listed special *liturgica* for the chapels in the church.

35 An example of a late-medieval chapter book from a Cistercian abbey has recently been edited by Guido Cariboni: G. Cariboni (ed.), *La via migliore Pratiche memoriali e dinamiche istituzionali nel "liber" del capitolo dell'abbazia cistercense di Lucedio*, Berlin

century were always connected to liturgical – or in a broader sense to a ceremonial reform, brothers and monks often had to consult written directions in order to conduct the new and often abbreviated sequence of their prayers. Therefore they needed a current ceremonial or *ordinarium*. A heavily-used copy of such a work in the German language from the Regensburg convent of the Poor Clares has survived.³⁶ In it, one could look up details for the day's liturgical order of service: such as which bells were to be rung at what point, how long matins should run – measured by the number of prayers – or even which prayers were to be selected for which days to precede the day's readings in the refectory. Since departed members of the convent were remembered in the chapter room on the anniversaries of their deaths, special necrologies also found their place there.

The actual location for meditation and silent reading, however, was the cloister, located to the north of the church, the so-called *Kollations-* or *Lesegang*. Many cloisters were specially equipped and provided with opportunities to sit. We cannot prove definitely that the Franciscans placed texts here for meditation, as we know for certain in the case of Cistercian monasteries. Cistercians typically provided a wall chest for books or *armarium* in the northeast corner of the cloister, where the north went over into the east passage. It offered monks books for private reading and meditation.³⁷

2006. A chapter book was probably also the *Liber in quo continentur scripta ordinis videlicet regula, declarationes, statuta, speculum disciplinae ad novicios* from the Franciscan convent in Youghal, see Clabaigh, *Franciscans* (cf. note 32) 228.

36 A.E. Schönbach, *Mitteilungen aus altdeutschen Handschriften*, Hildesheim / New York 1976, 1–54 (vernacular rule of the Poor Clares of Regensburg) and at 55–58 (*Ordinarium*). Both were probably used in the chapter room.

37 Cf. M. Mersch, „Gehäuse der Frömmigkeit – Zuhause der Nonnen: zur Geschichte der Klausurgebäude zisterziensischer Frauenklöster

In comparison, a small library was certainly maintained for daily reading aloud during meals in the *refectory*. This state of affairs persisted into modern times, as Christian Plath has shown for the Thuringian Franciscan province.³⁸ This collection included items such as the Golden Legend, Lives of the Fathers, writings of Bonaventure, exegetical writings of the Church Fathers, sermons, or *exempla* collections. In Göttingen the refectory collection consisted of fifty-three books. We know from other convents that these volumes often bore library signatures and were seen as belonging to the main library.³⁹ Literature for daily reading aloud during meals was of special meaning for the communities. In fifteenth-century observant convents we find specific types of literature, among them the works of Jean Gerson († 1429) or Johannes Nider († 1438). Following a general custom, on Sundays the *Rationale divinorum* of Guillaume Durand († 1296) was read which transmitted basic knowledge of the liturgy and its spiritual meaning.

As we have seen *private use of books* was the original means of supplying the clerical brothers with literature. And even after the *Ordinationes* of Benedict XII in 1336 demanded the creation of libraries in all convents, *private*

im 13. Jahrhundert', in: *Studien und Texte zur literarischen und materiellen Kultur der Frauenklöster im späten Mittelalter: Ergebnisse eines Arbeitsgesprächs in der Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, 24. - 26. Februar 1999*, (eds.) F. Eisermann / E. Schlotheuber / V. Honemann (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, 99) Leiden 2004, 45–102.

38 C. Plath, 'Die Bibliotheken der Thüringischen Franziskanerprovinz bis zur Säkularisation', *Jahrbuch für Mitteldeutsche Kirchen- und Ordensgeschichte* (forthcoming).

39 See the study on table readings of the female Dominican convent St Katharina in Nuremberg, B. Hasebrink, 'Latinität als Bildungsfundament. Spuren subsidiärer Grammatikunterweisung im Dominikanerorden', in: *Schulliteratur im späten Mittelalter*, (ed.) Klaus Grubmüller (Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 69), Munich 2000 49–76.

possession of books was still usual. Benedict XII decreed that first the library of a convent should be sufficiently supplied, but that remaining works could be distributed among the brothers.⁴⁰ The allocation was conducted by the guardian with the agreement of the convent and normally remained in force *ad vitam* – so that these books could be taken along in the case of transfer to another convent or during a study sojourn. In such cases, there was a risk that books could be lost over time, so that around 1360 the Florentine guardian Bernhard Guascone mandated that books granted for life should be produced annually for the examination of the custodian, the guardian or librarian.⁴¹ In addition to books distributed by the superiors, brothers could keep books they had copied for themselves as their own possession. Their collections grew from both sources.⁴²

40 *Postquam vero quilibet conventus fuerit libris praemissis hoc modo munitus, de aliis libris fiat distributio, primo fratribus eiusdem conventus habilibus et indigentibus, deinde, si facta distributione huiusmodi libri superfuerint (...) distribuantur aliis fratribus ex eadem custodia tantum, cuius erit ipse conventus. Distributiones autem huiusmodi fiant per guardianum, de consensu conventus et de licentia ministri.* Bihl, 'Ordinationes' (cf. note 23) XI, c. 4, 365.

41 *Item quod omnes fratres de custodia florentina et extra custodiam, qui habent libros armarii ad vitam, teneantur semel in anno custodi, guardiano et amariste presentialiter demonstrare.* M. Bihl, 'Ordinationes fratris Bernardi de Guasconibus, Ministri Provincialis Thusciae pro bibliotheca conventus S. Crucis, Florentinae (1356–1367)', *AFH* 26 (1933) 141–64.

42 In 1510 the library of the convent of Fribourg in Switzerland contained about ninety manuscripts. Over half of them had been collected by two friars, Friedrich of Amberg and Jean Joly, P. Ladner, 'Zur Bedeutung der mittelalterlichen Bibliothek des Franziskanerklosters Freiburg', in: *Zur geistigen Welt der Franziskaner im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert. Die Bibliothek des Franziskanerklosters in Freiburg/Schweiz. Akten der Tagung des Mediävistischen Instituts der Universität Freiburg vom 15. Oktober 1993*, (eds.) R. Imbach / E. Tremp (Scrinium Friburgense, 6) Fribourg 1995, 11–24.

Observants everywhere attempted to limit private property, but this was an arduous venture. At the end of the 1460s the Vicar-General of the Observants, Johannes Philippi (1467–1470), emphatically invited the reform convents to place books for private use – including those that had been copied by their owners – in the common library.⁴³ But we should doubt the success of this directive, no matter how energetically proclaimed. In 1498 a Franciscan provincial chapter in Kempten mandated that the brothers should not let their private book collections expand to the point that money would need to be paid for their transport in the case of transfer to another cloister.⁴⁴ And literature for private use was even found in the brothers' cells in the Franciscan house of Göttingen in 1533, although the brothers had taken along all of the books they could carry at their departure.⁴⁵

A good example of the extent and composition of such a private collection is the book bequest of the two Franciscans Hermann and Johannes Sack from the years about 1440.⁴⁶ The careers of the Sacks, who were also biological brothers, are typical for those of educated Franciscans: Hermann became custodian of the Franciscan convent in Munich at the beginning of the fifteenth century

43 *Chronica patris Nicolai Glassberger Ordinis Minorum Observantium (ca. anno 1508), sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad historiam Fratrum Minorum* edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventurae, (AF, 2) Quaracchi 1887, 438.

44 F. Landmann, 'Zum Predigtwesen der Straßburger Franziskanerprovinz', *FS* 13 (1926) 337–66, here 359.

45 Schlotheuber, *Franziskaner* (cf. note 25) 70f.

46 B. Kraft, 'Der Bücherrücklass der Minderbrüder Hermann und Johann Sack', *AFH* 28 (1935) 37–57. Another instructive example is the private book collection of Nikolaus Lakmann, who taught theology about 1446 in Erfurt. In 1461 he was elected Minister Provincial for Saxony; L. Meier, 'De schola Erfordensi saeculi XV', *Antonianum* 5 (1930) 157–73. Some of his manuscripts have survived. See also the collection of the observant Irish lector Maurice Hanlan, O'Clabaigh, *Franciscans* (cf. note 32) 246–50.

and went later to Regensburg as confessor to the Poor Clares there. We encounter him for forty years copying books of theology and spiritual care. Johannes Sack studied at first in Erfurt and afterwards became lector in Speyer.⁴⁷ In 1431 he resumed his studies in Vienna and then went to the Regensburg convent as lector. Shortly before the end of his life, he was invested with the office of custodian of Bavaria. At his death in 1438 he bequeathed his books to his brother Hermann, who in turn left the entire collection (forty-three volumes of diverse content) to their mother house in Munich.⁴⁸ Over time, such legacies allowed the development of splendid collections in convent libraries.

From their detailed wills, the literary profiles of each man can be discerned. Confessor Hermann Sack owned, in addition to liturgical books (missals and breviaries) mostly books for use in the *cura animarum*: he apparently preferred Bonaventure, but also possessed the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, the pericopic moral sermons of Konrad of Waldhausen who died as an influential preacher 1369 in Prague, sermons by Jacobus de Voragine († 1298), a *Quadragesimale* by Jordan of Quedlinburg († 1380), as well as saints' lives he had copied himself. In contrast, Johannes Sack copied natural science and moral texts that he used in his activities as lector, as well as lexical works and grammars. In addition, he also collected astronomical, mathematical and physical science works: The *Naturalia bona moralisata*, as well as historical works like the *Flores temporum* or the *Historia* of Flavius Josephus († about 100). Beside that he had a small collection of Canon Law.

47 Kraft, 'Bücherrücklass' (cf note 46) 41.

48 *Hii sunt libri relictī a fratribus germanis Johanne Sack, custodi [!] Bawarie, et Hermannō Sakch, qui multis annis fuit guardianus Monacensis. Qui libri omnes pertinent ad eorum conventum nativum Monacensem. Ibid.* 57. For the edition cf. *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz*, (ed.) Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Munich 1918–1979, IV/2, 691–95.

Here we recognize the literary horizon of an active, scholarly lector who also taught the *Quadrivium*. And it is certainly no coincidence that Johannes Sack was not a member of the reform branch of the order, for such a large collection with decidedly scholastic, academic texts did not follow the spirit of the dictates of the Observants. The testament tells us that the books of Hermann and Johann Sack were then 'prepared' for the library of the Munich convent.⁴⁹ That is, they were covered with title and signature labels and attached to a chain and iron buckle so that the bindings would not be damaged on the reading desk.⁵⁰ The books themselves should be simple and low-cost – for the use of the brothers not for representation.

An invaluable source for our knowledge of the size and composition of the medieval Franciscan *libraries* – and thus for the intellectual horizon of their brothers – are the library inventories.⁵¹ In his *Ordinationes*, Benedict XII had

49 *Hii libri omnes sunt in asseribus et preparati ad liberariam Monacensem. Ibid.* 695.

50 A good example with the original binding, title and signature labels is the already mentioned *Kannemanncodex* (cf. note 30), Münster, Diözesanbibliothek Ms OFM 20.

51 See in general A. Derolez, *Les Catalogues de Bibliothèques* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, 13), Turnhout 1979. J. Duft, 'Bibliothekskataloge als Quellen der Geistesgeschichte', in: *Die Abtei St. Gallen: ausgewählte Aufsätze in überarbeiteter Fassung von Johannes Duft*, herausgegeben zu seinem 75. Geburtstag, 3 vols. (eds.) P. Ochsenbein / E. Ziegler, Sigmaringen 1990-94, I, 192-202. For the medieval book inventories of the Franciscan Friars (beside Roest) K.W. Humphreys, *The Friars' Libraries* (Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues) London 1990; *Idem*, *The Book Provisions of the Medieval Friars*, Amsterdam 1964. For special research O'Clabaigh, *Franciscans* (cf. note 32), 223-58. A. Schmitt, 'Die ehemalige Franziskanerbibliothek zu Brandenburg an der Havel: Rekonstruktion, Geschichte, Gegenwart', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 60 (2006) 1-175. Schlotheuber, *Franziskaner* (cf. note 25). L. Camerer, *Die Bibliothek des Franziskanerklosters in Braunschweig*. (Braunschweiger Werkstücke Reihe, A 18, der

required each guardian to produce an inventory of all books upon assumption of his office. This inventory was to be verified each year, while the books themselves were to be shown to the librarian.⁵² Most of the inventories are probably lost but some survive and they allow us often to glimpse the old organization of the libraries according to subject groups.⁵³ In certain respects, the library of the Göttingen Franciscans is typical for a simple convent

ganzen Reihe, 60), Braunschweig 1980. K.W. Humphreys, *The Library of the Franciscans of Siena in the Late 15th Century*, Amsterdam 1978. H. Döring, 'Rekonstruktion der Franziskanerbibliothek in Freiberg', in: *Studien zur Buch- und Bibliotheksgeschichte*. Festschrift für Hans Lülfi zum 70. Geburtstag, (eds.) U. Altmann / E.-H. Teitge, Berlin 1976, 128–42. K. W. Humphreys, *The Library of the Franciscans of the Convent of St Antony Padua at the Beginning of the 15th Century*, Amsterdam 1966. O. Clemen, 'Reste der Bibliothek des Franziskanerklosters Zwickau', *FS* 17 (1930) 228–45. H. Mertens, 'Die alte Franziskanerbibliothek in Hannover', *FS* 17 (1930) 97–105. J. Schmidt, 'Die Bibliothek des Franziskanerklosters Weida', *FS* 17 (1930) 90–6. W. Dersch, 'Zur Geschichte der Franziskanerbibliotheken zu Fulda und Salmünster', *FS* 10 (1923) 346–50. G. Abb, 'Die ehemalige Franziskanerbibliothek in Brandenburg. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des märkischen Buchwesens im Mittelalter', *Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie* 39 (1922) 475–99. W. Dersch, 'Die Bücherverzeichnisse der Franziskanerklöster Grünberg und Corbach', *FS* 1 (1914) 438–78.

52 *Ut autem libri in ipso ordine melius valeant conservari, ordinamus quod guardiani in sua novitiate infra unum mensem, postquam officium guardianatus assumpserint, et in conventu suo fuerint, teneantur in praesentia conventus sui facere fieri inventarium de omnibus libris qui in ipso conventu tunc fuerint, eisdem libris dicto conventui realiter demonstratis. (...) (12) Et huiusmodi inventaria renoveantur annis singulis et legantur in praesentia conventus, libris ipsis tunc etiam realiter demonstratis. (14)*, Bihl, 'Ordinationes fratris Bernardi' (cf. note 41) XI, c. 12 / 14, 357. T. Grassmann, 'The Librarian' Role in Franciscan Research', in: *Librarianship and Franciscan Library of the Franciscan*. Educational Conference Santa Barbara, California June 23–26, Washington 1947, 280–342.

53 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 206–09.

library of smaller dimensions. I have compared it with that of several other late-medieval Franciscan convents.⁵⁴ A basic collection specific to the order and common to these libraries emerges clearly, but apart from that, each library had its own particular profile, depending on its size or the presence of a *studium*, or on whether a reform had taken place in the particular convent.

At the dissolution of the house in 1533, the Göttingen collection included almost five hundred volumes. About a third were incunabula or early imprints. The books lay on double-sided lecterns, each of which housed between twenty and thirty volumes. Labels with signature and title were affixed to the front book cover, as it was typical for medieval chained books. Signature labels consisted of a combination of letters in red and numbers in black, the letters indicating the lectern on which the book was stored and the number, its specific position on the lectern. As libraries grew, the series of signatures could be expanded with an additional numeration of lecterns with opposite colors or a combination of letters.⁵⁵ Signature and title labels were usually protected with a thin, transparent plate of horn in an iron frame. Today those frames and the horn plates are often lost. The title label reproduced in key words the contents of the volume. The titles named in the inventories were drawn from title labels, so the inventories do not necessarily reproduce the entire contents of a manuscript, but are intended instead to describe each individual volume.

The Franciscans were able to produce the book binding and book cover by themselves just as they needed them. In the Göttingen Franciscan convent not only the dissolution

54 Schlotheuber, *Franziskaner* (cf. note 25) 116–28.

55 See images 21 and 22 in E. Schlotheuber, 'Die Auflösung der Bettelordensklöster in der Reformation', in: *700 Jahre Paulinerkirche. Vom Kloster zur Bibliothek*. Ausstellungskatalog, (ed.) E. Mittler, Göttingen 1994, 35–40, 71–4, here 55f.

inventory, but also archaeological discoveries in the convent's cesspit, testify to the existence of a small bookbinding workshop in the house.⁵⁶ In this way texts copied by the brothers during studies in Erfurt, Bologna, Oxford or Paris could be made suitable for use in the convent's library. In the Magdeburg convent the Franciscans even printed books! The *Speculum discipline* attributed to St Bonaventure (probably written by his secretary Bernard de Besse), an introduction to the religious life, was printed here by the brothers. It is a unique bookprint with its low-cost book cover, taken from an old manuscript. It still imitates the appearance of a manuscript and has two written texts bound to the printed section.⁵⁷

In their systematic order the Franciscan libraries obeyed the general organization of medieval libraries. Complete or partial copies of the Bible, Bible concordances and glosses filled the first lecterns A and B, accompanied by esteemed exegetical works by authors such as Hugh of St-Cher († 1263), Hugh of St-Victor († 1142), Nicolas of Gorran († 1295) and above all of Nicolas of Lyra († 1349).⁵⁸ They were followed by the Church Fathers, especially Jerome and Gregory the Great, but also by other influential

56 The dissolution inventory of the Göttingen convent mentions: an *ahneboth* [ambos] *ton boyk to bynden nodig, I cleyne thogerickelte dehnen lade mit allerleye boykbyndes gheraide, schrifftfuege* [a letter plunger], *viff boykpressen* and a *klophamer tom boykbynden gehorik*. Schlotheuber, *Franciscaner* (cf. note 25) 78. See G. Laurin, 'Der Binder mit dem Arma-Christi-Stempel. Zur Geschichte der Franziskanerbuchbinderei in Graz', *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 45 (1970) 359–70; in general: P. Lehmann, 'Inventare klösterlicher Buchbindereien', *Jahrbuch der Einbandkunst* 3/4 (1929/1930) 38–40.

57 *Speculum discipline*. Printed in Magdeburg, in the Franciscan convent St. Andreae, 1504. Munich, Bayer. Staatsbibliothek, Res P.lat. 1685 b.

58 See for the text edition: Schlotheuber, *Franziskaner* (cf. note 25) 138–84. The first folio of the inventory with lectern A today is missing.

theologians such as Bernard of Clairvaux and the great reform theologian Jean Gerson. To this basic literature were added the exegetical works of Augustine, Isidore's *Etymologies*, Albertus Magnus († 1280) and the *Diadema monachorum* of Smaragdus of St-Michel († 825). On lectern F the Franciscan convents of Grünberg, Brunswick and Göttingen displayed theological *Summae* and sentence commentaries: the four-volume *Summa* of Alexander of Hales († 1245), the great *Summa* of Thomas Aquinas († 1274), Peter Lombard's *Sentences* († 1160), the sentence commentary of Peter of Tarantaise (Pope Innocent V., † 1276), the *Summa aurea* of William of Auxerre († 1231), Bonaventure's *Commentarii in quattuor libros sententiarum* and the *Quodlibeta* of William of Ockham († 1349). They were necessary insofar as such works organized the scholarly theological knowledge of the period systematically for readers.

In Göttingen, the theological *Summae* were followed by confessors' manuals: the *Summa* of the Franciscan Astesanus of Ast († 1330), the *Summa confessorum* of Johannes of Erfurt († 1340/50), the *Summa* of Raymund of Peñafort († 1276) and of course the well known *Summa angelica* of the Franciscan Angelo Carletti de Clavasio († 1495)⁵⁹. Lectern I housed the encyclopedias of Vincent of Beauvais († 1254), to which the moral *Summa* of Antoninus Florentinus († 1459) and the beloved *Pharetra doctorum*, a collection of sayings by classical philosophers and poets, were added. Sermon cycles, treatises on penance and confession, moral theology texts and penitential sermons were found on lecterns K and L. As a rule, a single lectern (N) was reserved for non-theological works and philosophy, beginning with Boethius and the *Consolatio philosophiae*. In Göttingen, the friars also possessed a couple of Aristotelian writings, among them the

59 See for the Franciscan Confession Handbooks (*Summae*) Roest, *Franciscan Literature* (cf. note 8) 314–55.

Nichomachean Ethics, and a printed version of the *Margarita Philosophiae* of the Carthusian Gregor Reisch († 1525). These titles were accompanied in other convents by astronomical and natural science works that also belonged to a convent's typical equipment. This section was quite thin in Göttingen; in the convent of Grünberg, which housed a *studium philosophie/naturale*, one could examine significantly more classics. Lectern O offered a selection of historical and church-historical works: the *Summa historialis* of Antoninus Florentinus, the *Historia ecclesiastica* of Eusebius of Caesarea († 339/40), probably a printed version of the *Liber chronicarum* of the humanist Hartmann Schedel († 1514), the *Peregrinatio in terram sanctam* of Bernard of Breydenbach († 1497) as well as the historical works of Flavius Josephus. Here, too, the Legends and *Vitae* of St Francis could be found. Two further lecterns were filled with sermon *exempla* and smaller edifying texts. The last lectern of the Göttingen collection was filled with works of canon law; a solid collection of canon law was typical for late medieval Franciscan libraries. The convent had obtained copies not only of the papal decretals, but also of the most usual commentaries: Martin of Troppau's *Margareta decreti* († 1278), Innocent IV's († 1254) five books of commentaries on the decretals of Gregory IX, the *Novella* of Johannes Andree († 1348) and the *Summa Hostiensis* of Henry of Segusio († 1271). Such material was useful in confrontations with the secular clergy, controversies with Rome or in giving advice to members of the laity.

Organisation of the Franciscan library at Göttingen

Lectern A	Bibles
Lectern B	Exegetical works
Lectern C	Bible Concordances
Lecterns D and E	Church Fathers

Lectern G	Theological Summae (Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure etc.)
Lecterns F and H	Sentences and confessors' manuals
Lectern I	Encyclopedias (Vincent of Beauvais)
Lecterns K and L	Sermon cycles, treatises on penance and confession
Lectern M	Praeceptorial (moral theology texts)
Lectern N	Classical and Christian Philosophy
Lectern O	History and Church History
Lecterns P and Q	Sermons, Exempla
Lectern R	Canon (and sometimes Roman) Law

On one hand, the book collections of the Franciscans reveal texts specific to the order, covering a wide range of subjects. Compared to other late medieval libraries the collection's content was conservative – shaped by the specific needs of the brothers. This state of affairs was due to the order's regulations concerning access to books – the community's most valuable property – and its system of scrutinizing texts. However, a closer examination often reveals individual features: We can trace thematic emphases originating from the integration of formerly private book collections made by individual friars during the course of their lives and studies. Whenever a convent was reformed, books that no longer fitted the profile of the Observants disappeared while others deemed important were added. Friends of the Nuremberg Franciscans for example donated numerous humanistic works to the brothers. And here Nikolaus Glasberger, a friend of the humanists at the end of the fifteenth century, worked

himself as a chronicler and helped filling the lecterns.⁶⁰ Thus the libraries tell stories, testifying to a thirst for knowledge and intellectual ambition as well as reflecting the industry of copyists and the needs of their readers.

The care the order invested in its libraries and the education of the friars had a considerable effect on the outside world. It increased the authority and attractiveness of the Franciscan communities. In the eyes of contemporaries the Franciscans were regarded as unmatched in giving reliable information on difficult theological questions. Since brothers returning to their original friaries from the universities or from other centres of education brought the most recent literature back with them, their libraries were often (comparatively) up to date. A fine example is here the library of the Franciscans in Fribourg, Switzerland.⁶¹ Public collections were made accessible to a broader population by chaining books to the pulpits, and in many cases it was even possible to borrow the books. The secular clergy took this opportunity as long as any local competition with the mendicant brothers did not complicate the relationship.

Books could be loaned by the friars. Our Florentine guardian, Bernhard Guascone, himself certainly a book-lover, specified a lending period of fourteen days or a month at most for convent members.⁶² Then, however, the

60 For his activities also towards the Poor Clares in Nuremberg see recently E. Schlottheuber, 'Humanistisches Wissen und geistliches Leben. Caritas Pirckheimer und die Geschichtsschreibung im Nürnberger Klarissenkonvent', in: *Die Pirckheimer. Humanismus in einer Nürnberger Patrizierfamilie*, (ed.) F. Fuchs (Pirckheimer Jahrbuch, 21), Nürnberg 2006, 75–104. See Roest, *History* (cf. note 4), Franciscan reform and humanism 168–71.

61 Ladner, 'Bedeutung' (cf. note 42) 11–24.

62 *Item quod libri qui fratribus ad studium commodantur semper de quindena in quindenam vel ad tardius omni mense pro dispositione guardiani, ad pulsatione campanelle, armariste fideliter resignentur. Et qui contrarium fecerit, sequenti die in prandio a*

book must be returned punctually, at the tolling of the bells. Anyone who failed to comply was made to abstain from wine at the next day's meal – apparently an effective punishment – and the tardy party lost his library access for a month. In 1467 the provincial statutes of Saxony allowed borrowing by non-members of the order (*seculares*), but provided for a 'loan slip' (*cedula recognitionis*).⁶³ Parish priests, burghers and members of the city council used the well-equipped libraries.⁶⁴ In the north and central German libraries I have researched, the legal section was noticeably rich, in Canon as well as Roman law. In the cities, people had a great need for just such resources as a means for resolving their various controversies. Not at least because of this state of affairs, Franciscan refectories were often seen by many German city councils as appropriate venues for their meetings. In this way, libraries enhanced the political and social significance of the Franciscans in their immediate surroundings. Nonetheless opening up the libraries' to secular readers could also be risky. In 1514 a provincial chapter of Dominicans published directives that readers who were not members of the order should put down a deposit. Besides a brother always had to be present to supervise the external reader – and the brother was to exit the library after the visitor!⁶⁵

vino abstinere firmiter teneantur et nichilominus per mensem libris armarii sit privatus. Bihl, 'Ordinationes fratris Bernardi' (cf. note 41) c. 8, 150.

63 *Et libri etiam fratribus sine cedula recognitionis non concedantur, multo minus secularibus, quibus sub cedula recognitionis poterunt de consensu vicarii et discretorum per guadianum ad tempus commodari.* B. Kruitwagen (ed.), 'Statuta Provinciae Saxoniae condita Brandenburgii anno 1467, immutata Luneburgii anno 1494', *AFH* 3 (1910) 8–114; 280–293, here 280.

64 Schlotheuber, *Büchersammlung* (cf. note 21) 242f.

65 *Eciam sub eadem pena prohibemus, ne aliquis liber cathenatus fratri vel seculari sine circographo et sufficienti pignore concedatur. (...) Insuper nullus fratrum quemcumque extra obedienciam ordinis constitutum, insignibus personis et non eorum*

II. The education of children

In some cases Franciscans even took the responsibility for the elementary education of future members of their order. The question of accepting children was a subject of particular interest in the fourteenth century. The demographic break in the religious communities caused by agricultural crisis and plague gave rise to the problem of recruiting new members in a completely new form. Giving children religious status, called *oblation* or donation, had already been a widely used method for replenishing a convent's membership among the older orders in the Early and High Middle Ages.⁶⁶ The reform orders and among them the Franciscans originally rejected it. The order did not need to be concerned with elementary education, because many highly educated men joined its ranks.⁶⁷ The general statutes of Narbonne (1260) could self confidently say that nobody was allowed to enter the order without

famulis exceptis, ad librariam nostram intromittat, nisi ipse vel alius cum eis in libraria maneat et ante ipsum de libraria exeat. G. Löhr, 'Die Kapitel der Provinz Saxonien im Zeitalter der Kirchenspaltung 1513–1540', *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominikanerordens in Deutschland* 26 (1930) 1–260, here 110.

66 See M. de Jong, 'Growing up in a Carolingian Monastery: Magister Hildemar and his Oblates', *Journal of Medieval History* 9 (1983) 99–128. Eadem, *Kind en klooster in de vroege middeleeuwen. Aspecten van de schenking van kinderen aan kloosters in het frankische rijk (500–900)*, (Amsterdams Historische Reeks, 8) Amsterdam 1986. Eadem, *In Samuel's Image. Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*, Leiden / New York / Köln 1996. For the importance of the oblation in the late middle ages E. Schlottheuber, *Klostereintritt und Bildung. Die Lebenswelt der Nonnen im späten Mittelalter*. Mit einer Edition des ‚Konventstagebuchs‘ einer Zisterzienserin von Heilig-Kreuz bei Braunschweig (1484–1507), (Spätmittelalter und Reformation. Neue Reihe, 24) Tübingen 2004, 175–221.

67 Michael Robson named many of them in his fine history of the medieval custody of York, M. Robson, *The Franciscans in the medieval custody of York*, York 1997.

sufficient knowledge of Latin, Grammar and Logic, because 'we have to be an example to the people, having good advice and giving them salutary exhortation.'⁶⁸ The general statutes of Assisi (1279) and Paris (1292) repeat the austere regulations about the age of novices.⁶⁹ But the numerous newly-founded settlements and *Terminieien* further on demanded great numbers of personnel. Despite the normative regulations some problems regarding the age of acceptance must have existed already in the middle of the thirteenth century. Pope Alexander IV (1254–1261), formerly cardinal protector of the order, forbade the Franciscans and the Dominicans to accept anyone who was not at least fourteen years old and the friars were equally prohibited to make profession before the year of probation was completed.⁷⁰ Bert Roest states that younger people were indeed accepted and that they were educated in the now established custodial and provincial schools.⁷¹ The

68 Narbonne, 1260, Assisi, 1279, Paris, 1292, (n. 12) clause 1, 38 (Narbonne 1260).

69 *Ordinamus etiam, ut nullus recipiatur citra XVIII annum, nisi per robur corporis vel industriam sensus seu per excellentem aedificationem, a XV anno et supra, aetas secundum prudentium iudicium suppleatur Ibid.* clause 1, 40.

70 *Vobis de fratrum nostrorum consilio in virtute obedientiae et sub poena excommunicationis auctoritate praesentium districtius inhibemus, ne ante annum probationis elapsam, qui est maxime in subsidium fragilitatis humanae regulariter institutus, quemquam ad professionem vestri ordinis seu renunciationem in saeculo faciendam recipere, nec constitutum infra huiusmodi annum aliquatenus impedire, quo minus infra ipsum ad aliam religionem, quam maluerit, transeat, vel nisi, maior tamen quatuordecim annis existens, professus sit tacite vel expresse, aut evidenter constet, illum vitam voluisse mutare, quod tamen non praesumitur, nisi clara probatione vel competentibus indiciis ostendatur, omnino ad saeculum redeat, sicut de sua voluntate processerit, praesumatis.* *Corpus iuris canonici*, 2 vols., (ed.) E. Friedberg, Leipzig 1879–1881, II, Liber Sextus 3. 14. 2, 1051.

71 Roest, *History* (cf. note 4) 68. For the basic research see L. Oligier, 'De pueris oblati in ordine Minorum', *AFH* 8 (1915) 389–447; 10

general statutes of Assisi (1316) did not change the minimum age for novices (15 years) but made two remarkable exceptions: younger novices lacking the prerequisite of good knowledge of Latin should only be accepted if they were – according to the judgment of the senior members of the convent – capable of becoming literate ‘or if you have to take someone (*oportet recipere*) in order to preserve the family’s memory of the dead.’⁷² These additions show that the Franciscans apparently saw themselves forced to assume responsibility for the elementary education of new members. They could also make an exception for younger individuals who were eager or willing to learn. Consequently most of these new arrivals needed to go through a basic education in Latin before the novitiate started. In a development corresponding to these changes we find basic works of grammar, logic and rhetoric, usually organized together on a separate reading stand for school literature in convent libraries for the first time.

The second exception made in 1316 can only mean that the order saw itself forced to take in candidates when certain families sought the entry of one of their members in order to cultivate the family’s *memoria*. The general statutes of Lyon (1325) already treat the admission of children as a natural and accepted means of entry into the

(1917) 271–88.

72 *Statuimus in principio quod nullus recipiatur ad ordinem nostrum nisi quartumdecimum annum compleverit in etate. (...) Et nullus recipiatur pro clerico, nisi sit competenter instructus in gramatica ‘vel alia facultate’. Quod si alicubi tales haberi non possunt, non recipiantur ad minus nisi qui sunt discretorum iudicio habiles ad predicta, aut nisi oporteat aliquos recipi pro familiaribus obsequiis exercendis.* A. Carlini (ed.), ‘Constitutiones generales Ordinis fratrum minorum anno 1316 Assisii conditae’, *AFH* 6 (1911) 269–302, 508–536, here clause 1, 277.

community.⁷³ The Franciscans had, in the interval since their founding, created their own connections and traditions. Via their work as confessors they cultivated close contacts with the nobility and the urban elite, many of whose members had chosen Franciscan churches as burial sites. In this way they developed the same network of relationships in which the older orders were already trapped. The most important connection in this framework was the presence of multiple generations of the same family in a convent.⁷⁴ These family members assumed the obligation of memorializing the deceased, thus maintaining the ties between the living members of the family and their relatives buried in the convent church. The connections of these families with their ancestors and with the convents in which they were buried could be best sustained through the oblation of relatives dedicated to this purpose. Religious communities had a difficult time refusing the requests of their frequently influential supporters in this regard. Decisions concerning this practice were often described with phrases like *oportet recipere*.

In the year 1430 the reform statutes approved by pope Martin V (*Constitutiones Martinianae*) were supposed to find a new basis for the two contending branches of the

73 *Statuimus in principio quod nullus recipiatur ad ordinem nostrum, nisi quartumdecimum annum compleverit in aetate, praeter illos qui a parentibus ordini offerentur, ita quod quando ad professionem recipitur annus XV sit completus.* Carlini, *Constitutiones* (n. 72) clause 1, 527 (Lyon 1325).

74 Schlotheuber, *Klostereintritt* (cf. note 66) 209f. The Latin written study of Livarius Oliger documents that oblation played an important role for the Franciscans in the late middle ages: *Rebus autem sic inspectis, apparet oblationis puerorum institutum, tum sensu stricto, tum latiore illo indicato, minime restringi ad ordines monasticos, sed – quod saepius negatur vel ad minus ignoratur – et apud Mendicantes, specialius apud Fratres Minores, de quibus hic principalis agimus, passim inveniri, et quidem, si eorum adversariis fidem licet praestare, non parva in mensura, Oliger, Pueris* (cf. note 71) 390.

order. Those statutes forbade the admission of anyone below the age of fourteen, even as an oblate.⁷⁵ But – probably as result of a compromise – they added an exception: If the potential oblate happened to be the son of a powerful family and a refusal would create trouble for the community they could accept him as a child. The nobles apparently urged the convents to take their children. The regulation not to educate children in the convents has to be seen in this context.⁷⁶ Mediation failed and the Observants refused to follow the *Constitutiones Martinianae* after a short while. The reformed wing of the Franciscans categorically rejected oblation,⁷⁷ as we can tell from their complaints at the Council of Constance. They could afford this attitude because in the fifteenth century they were

75 *Statuimus insuper et ordinamus quod nullus recipiatur ad ordinem nisi annum quartumdecimum compleverit, eciam si oblatus fuerit a parentibus, nisi pro scandalo evitando, ut si forsan foret filius militis vel superioris dignitatis.* BF V, 736. See B. Neidiger, 'Die Martinianischen Konstitutionen von 1430 als Reformprogramm der Franziskanerkonventualen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kölner Minoritenklosters und der Kölner Ordensprovinz im 15. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 95 (1984) 337–82.

76 *Per haec tamen nullus fratrum praesumat puerorum scholas regere in conventu, vel extra personarum saecularium, sub poena privationis actuum legitimorum.* BF V, 736.

77 The general statutes of the Observants 1451 make this point unmistakably clear. You can imagine the relevance of the subject when they start their regulations with the following statement: *Statuimus imprimis, quod qui venientem ad ordinem nostrum debet in fratrem recipere diligenter inquirat et attendat sollicite quod recipiendus, ut docet regula, sit fidelis et catholicus, de nullo errore suspectus, matrimonio non ligatus, corpore sanus, animo promptus, legitime natus, debitis expeditus, conditione liber, aetatem attingens XVI annorum ad minus, nulla infamia vulgari maculatus, competenter literatus, vel ad labores fratribus honestos et utiles aptus, aut talis condicionis existens quod eius receptio clero et populo non modicam aedificationem afferat*, Statuta generalia edita apud Barcinonam 1451, in: *Monumenta Francescana*, 2 vols. J.S. Brewer / R. Howlett (eds.), (RS, 4) London 1858-82, II, 81–123, here 83.

enjoying great popularity since they embodied the ideal of religious life in the sense of the *imitatio Christi*. They received support from princes and bishops, who frequently reformed convents according to the Observant rules even against the will of the brothers living in them. Although many highly-educated adults again found their way into the order as a consequence, above all in university cities, nonetheless the entry of minors into the order continued to remain relevant as a way to achieve educational and social advancement. A biography like that of Konrad Pellikan who entered the Observant Franciscan house of Rufach at the age of six towards the end of the fifteenth century is probably no exception.⁷⁸ He made his way through the order's entire curriculum and qualified for the important offices of lector and guardian. He was later considered an important scholar, famous for his knowledge of Hebrew and Greek.

Through their continuous and both systematic and professional approach to education and literature the Franciscans opened a path to the written word, to theology and to the Church to people from all social levels. Often the order's internal education system produced great scholars, men whose names are still known and who contributed significantly to the intellectual development of the medieval church and of society. At the same time they exercised a great influence on their immediate surroundings – by offering the opportunity of education with access to a spiritual and intellectual world to many people whose traces would otherwise have been lost to history.

78 H. R. Velten, *Das selbst geschriebene Leben. Eine Studie zur deutschen Autobiographie im 16. Jahrhundert*, Heidelberg 1995, 88–94. See E. Weneker, 'Pellikan, Konrad', in: *Bibliographisches Lexikon*, VII (1994) 180–3.