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Reading by Example

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Reading by Example

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Reading by Example

The Communication of Religious Knowledge in the *Collationes* of
the Brothers of the Common Life

PhD thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. C. Wijmenga
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

Thursday 2 September 2021 at 14.30 hours

by

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Note to the reader

All transcriptions and translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

Middle Dutch quotations have been normalised for u/v/w and i/j, with punctuation and capitalisation added where appropriate.

Chapter 1: Introduction

On knowing ourselves, from the *Meditations of St Bernard*.

Many people know a lot, yet they do not know themselves. Other people observe and leave themselves; they seek God through these external things and leave their internal things, while God is more internal. Therefore, I shall turn away from external things and climb towards higher things, so that I may know where I came from and where I am going, what I am and what I am made of. And by knowing myself, I may approach knowing God, because as I grow in knowing myself, I draw ever nearer to knowing God.¹

This quotation on the importance of knowing oneself is attributed in the text to the *Sunte Bernaerdus ghedachten* ('Meditations of St Bernard'), that is the *Meditationes piissimae de cognitione humanae conditionis*: a devotional text commonly (albeit incorrectly) attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux. According to the manuscript evidence for the Low Countries, the *Meditationes piissimae* almost exclusively circulated in a (female) monastic or institutional environment.² In this case however it is the beginning of the first text in the First Book of Collations, written by Dirc van Herxen (1381–1457): a collection of texts known as collations, which were intended to be read to a group of students and other interested laypeople on Sundays and feast days to rouse their devotional fervour.³ These meetings, known as *collationes* (singular *collatio*), took place in the houses of the Brothers of the Common Life, and after the reading of a religious text in the vernacular the Brothers offered the visitors an opportunity to converse with them in private, in order to give them some humble advice and personal admonishments.

¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 4r: "**Van bekenninge ons selves uut sunte Bernaerdus ghedachten.** Vele lude weten veel mer hem selven en weten sie niet. Ander lude aensien si ende laten hem selven; god sueken sie overmits desen uutwendighen dinghen ende laten hoer inwendighe dinghe, welken god noch inwendiger is. Daer omme sal ic mij keren vanden uutwendigen dingen tot inwendigen dingen, op dat ic van inwendighen dingen opclymmen moghe tot hogheren dingen. Ende op dat ic moghe bekennen van waen ic come ende werwerts dat ic gae, wat ic bin ende waer of ic bin, ende also biden bekennen mijns selfs moge comen totten bekennen godes. Want also vele als ic toe neme in bekennen mijns selfs, also vele ghenake ic totten bekennen gods."

² J. Reynaert, 'Contemptus in het Middelnederlands', in *Verraders en bruggenbouwers. Verkenningen naar de relatie tussen Latinitas en de Middelnederlandse letterkunde*, ed. P. Wackers e.a., Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen, XV (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1996), 195–98.

³ The collation on knowing oneself is in particular meant to be read on the second Sunday after Epiphany or the first Sunday of Lent, according to the reading key in Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 2v: "Des anderen sonnendaghes [na dertiendach] / Van bekennynge ons selfs I"; "Opten eersten sonnendach inder vasten / Van bekenninghe ons selfs".

With its combination of written texts and spoken word, the *collatio* was a process of communication taking place between religious professionals and laypeople. Both the Brothers and their lay visitors were engaged in the transmission of religious knowledge shaped to fit new contexts – from the religious community of the Brothers to the mixed group coming together in the *collationes*, and into the daily lives of the lay participants. While the process of communication entailed both textual and oral components – the collations were written texts, to be vocalised during the *collatio* – the religious knowledge which was disseminated was essentially textual. The *collatio* introduced or made available to the participating students and laypeople the authoritative texts the Brothers read for shaping their own devotion, such as the works of Augustine, Bernard, or Chrysostom. Through the communal reading of these texts participants gained an understanding of their contents. Moreover, they learned to identify which authoritative authors were worth reading, and whose words carried weight in shaping one's devotion. And beyond that, the *collatio* presented them with the framework through which to interpret vernacular religious texts, as well as the models of how to subsequently exploit or utilise such information: in the *collatio*, the Brothers made themselves an example of how to read and employ religious texts in the pursuit of spiritual advancement. The religious knowledge communicated during the *collatio* thus includes more than the simple transfer of information: the proper understanding of how to interpret and fruitfully exploit such information is in itself an aspect of practical religious knowledge, and it, too, was communicated during the *collatio*. In a sense, the Brothers invited students and interested laypeople to, at least for the duration of the *collatio*, join the textual community they cultivated themselves.⁴

To the lay visitors, the meetings formed part of the vibrant urban religious landscape in which they found a wide array of possibilities to practise their devotion, both publicly and privately: they might for instance join a religious guild or fraternity, attend or participate in religious plays, or seek out private conversations with a trusted father-confessor – not to mention the opportunities for personal devotional reading, something the *collatio* encouraged as well.⁵ The

⁴ On the Modern Devotion as a textual community, see primarily N. Staubach, 'Die Devotio moderna als Textgemeinschaft', in *Schnittpunkte. Deutsch-Niederländische Literaturbeziehungen im späten Mittelalter*, ed. A. Lehmann-Benz, U. Zellmann, and U. Küsters (Münster: Waxmann, 2003), 19–40, building on the original concept of the textual community coined by Brian Stock: B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 90–91.

⁵ See, for instance, J. Van Engen, 'Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church', *Church History* 77 (2008): 257–84. On the textual nature of personal devotion, also see for instance J. van der Laan, 'Enacting Devotion. Performative Religious Reading in the Low Countries (ca. 1470-1550)' (doctoral thesis, University of

collationes gave them another option to participate in a transmission of knowledge with religious professionals, and specifically to engage with the Brothers of the Common Life and the Modern Devout movement. As such, research on the *collatio* could provide new insights into the dynamics of communicating religious knowledge and the interactions between laypeople and religious professionals in the Dutch cities in the later Middle Ages. In short, this thesis aims to find out how the *collatio* functioned as a process of communication of religious knowledge between the Brothers of the Common Life and the students and laypeople they invited to participate in the practice. Such research on the functionings of the *collatio* as an event, however, is challenging, as the practice has left but few traces. It is prescribed in the *consuetudines* or customs of the Brothers of the Common Life which regulated their household, and it occasionally makes an appearance in the exemplary Lives or *vitae* through which the Brothers were commemorated. But no notes recording the conversation or aspects thereof have survived, nor are there records listing the participants engaging in it. The closest material witness still available are the texts which were to be read during the meeting: the collations, collected in books of collations. Yet these do not mention the practice itself or even describe their intended use: the texts present a large amount of religious information gathered from a host of authoritative writers and shaped to provide some helpful words on a given topic. As a result, the dynamic nature of the *collatio*, with its interactions taking place between text and speech and between religious professionals and devout laypeople, is barely reflected in the source material available today. This presents a challenge to reconstructing the process of communication in which the Brothers and their lay visitors were mutually engaged during the *collatio*.

This thesis aims to provide a new approach to the *collatio* as a practice by considering the books of collations in a new light: not for their textual contents per se, but as aids in shaping the communication of religious knowledge. The texts are not the focal point but the lens through which the functioning of the *collatio* can be glimpsed. The main challenge in reconstructing the *collatio* as a practice then lies in recovering a dynamic event involving the oral communication of knowledge solely on the basis of written material. To enable such an approach to the collations, this thesis has taken inspiration from the field of international sermon studies, a field

Groningen, 2020). Joanka van der Laan found that “[religious] literature provided readers with new lenses with which they could view their own lives and their environments and further develop their religious identities. This identity was based on practice, on performance, and on living out the precepts given to them by the books (...)” (quotation on p. 276).

which has developed its own research methods in reconstructing dynamic processes of (oral) communication on the basis of purely textual sources, often with no direct pointers to the situation in which they were to be used. Although the Brothers emphatically denied their *collationes* were acts of preaching – every set of customs or *consuetudines* mentions the lay participants are not to be addressed in a ‘preaching manner’ (see paragraph 2.1) – the methods developed to reconstruct the sermon as a historical event may well be transposed on the *collatio*: both practices utilised a combination of oral and textual modes of communication to shape and transfer religious knowledge, with the intention of having their message take root among the participants and influence their lives. Moreover, both the sermon and the *collatio* were dynamic practices involving multiple participants, yet research on them depends entirely on written material.

1.1 New approaches to the *collatio*

Both the *collatio* and preaching were largely oral events that nonetheless relied heavily on written texts, and which by needs are studied through the medium of textual materials. In practice, both the preaching of a sermon and the reading aloud of a collation are engaged in the same processes of interaction between written text, oral vocalisation, and participating audience. Indeed, the questions Anne Thayer asked in her summary of the field are equally applicable to the *collatio*: “Who heard a live sermon or read a sermon text? How was it received? What difference did it make? Why and how was it subsequently transmitted?”⁶ In order to arrive back at the *collatio* as a practice and a process of communication by using the collations as a mirror, this thesis will make use of the international field of sermon studies by adopting a theoretical framework allowing research on the functioning of sermons as a historical event.

In particular, this thesis has turned to international sermon studies rather than research performed on the Middle Dutch sermon, as that field has largely been centred on the sermon as a text rather than preaching as a liturgical act.⁷ Preaching is often mentioned solely for its

⁶ A.T. Thayer, ‘Medieval Sermon Studies since “The Sermon”’: A Deepening and Broadening Field’, *Medieval Sermon Studies* 58 (2014): 12.

⁷ The ground-work of Dutch sermon studies has been laid by Gerrit Zielemans; see in particular G.C. Zielemans, *Middel nederlandse epistel- en evangeliepreken* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). The primacy of sermon as text is – by necessity – reinforced in M. Sherwood-Smith et al., eds., *Repertorium van Middel nederlandse preken in handschriften tot en met 1550 = Repertorium of Middle Dutch sermons preserved in manuscripts from before 1550*, 7 vols, *Miscellanea Neerlandica*, XXIX (Leuven: Peeters, 2003). The lines Zielemans set out are still influential, as is clearly visible in Th. Mertens, ‘De Middel nederlandse preek: Een voorbarige synthese’, in *De Middel nederlandse preek*, ed. Th. Mertens, P. Stoop, and C. Burger (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), 9–66. For the

function in pastoral care, though an exception can be found in the work of Jelle Bosma, who considered preaching to be intricately linked to medieval society: “the role of the sermon in this period can only be explained within [the] historical and political framework [of the Low Countries].”⁸ Internationally, however, sermon studies have increasingly recognised the importance of the societal context in which a sermon was prepared and subsequently preached: preachers would take into account the current situation in which their audience found themselves, in order to emotionally connect to them and be able to preach more effectively. Preaching was not an isolated affair without context: it was an event, and it constituted an important node in a network of interactions between preacher, audience, and (religious) knowledge.⁹ While the sermon was aimed at influencing its audience, the preacher was in turn influenced by the prospective audience, so that sermon and society can be considered a tightly woven unit with both elements influencing one another.¹⁰

This interaction between sermon and social context has, for instance, been studied by Peter Howard with regard to the situation in Florence.¹¹ Howard stressed the existence of a ‘community of learning’ around the Florentine *studia* of the mendicant orders, a term “impossible to define with precision” yet characterised as a community in which “ideas were shared, developed, and transmitted to the next generation”.¹² As the *studia* were open to the general population, they acted as sites of fermentation for religious thought applicable to daily

monastic context, the codification of preaching into sermon collections has been studied by Patricia Stoop: see in particular P. Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie: de zusters uit het Brusselse klooster Jericho en de preken van hun biechtvaders (ca. 1465-1510)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009).

⁸ J. Bosma, ‘Preaching in the Low Countries, 1450-1650’, in *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period*, ed. L. Taylor (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 328.

⁹ See A. Thompson, ‘From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event’, in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 13–37.

¹⁰ This is strikingly visible in the journal of a young Franciscan preacher who recorded what he preached where and when, and at times noted down how it was received. See Y. Kimura, ‘The “Bildungsroman” of an Anonymous Franciscan Preacher in Late Medieval Italy (Biblioteca Comunale Di Foligno, MS C. 85)’, *Medieval Sermon Studies* 58 (2014): 47–64.

¹¹ P. Howard, ‘The Impact of Preaching in Renaissance Florence: Fra Niccolò Da Pisa at San Lorenzo’, *Medieval Sermon Studies* 48 (2004): 29–44; P. Howard, “‘Doctrine, When Preached, Is Entirely Civic’: The Generation of Public Theology and the Role of the Studia in Florence”, in *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe, 1100-1500*, ed. C.J. Mews and J.N. Crossley, Europa Sacra 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 293–314; P. Howard, ‘Languages of the Pulpit in Quattrocento Florence’, in *City, Court, Academy: Language Choice in Early Modern Italy*, ed. E. Del Soldato and A. Rizzi (London: Routledge, 2017), 31–46. For the importance of space as a part of the preaching context, see P. Howard, ‘The Womb of Memory’: Carmelite Liturgy and the Frescoes of the Brancacci Chapel’, in *The Brancacci Chapel: Form, Function and Setting. Acts of an International Conference: Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 6, 2003*, ed. N.A. Eckstein, Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies 22 (Florence: Olschki, 2007), 177–206.

¹² C.J. Mews and J.N. Crossley, ‘Introduction’, in *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe, 1100-1500*, ed. C.J. Mews and J.N. Crossley, Europa Sacra 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 3.

life. In Howard's view, the presence of laypeople and preachers in the same space was highly conducive to producing sermons that reflected societal issues. The *collatio* proceeded in a rather similar arrangement: a combination of lay and religious peoples in the same space, with an opportunity to exchange information. In effect, the *collatio* constituted a community of learning in which both parties participated.¹³ Sermons preached in the *studia* originated from the interaction between preacher and audience; similarly, the *collatio* was conducted in an interplay of worldly issues brought in by devout laypeople, religious professionals, and a shared text.

A second strand of current sermon research of interest is the emphasis on the importance of regular preaching over the qualities of individual preachers. While preachers like Bernardino da Siena or John Brugman are rightly hailed as great orators, they represent but a tiny fraction of all preaching activity. Far more important than the occasional spectacular sermon was the regular sermon on Sundays and feast days. As the liturgical calendar repeated itself year after year, the ideas repeated in the sermons would become assumptions – “the drip-drip method of inculcating beliefs”, as David d'Avray calls it.¹⁴ Ultimately, it is the repeated exposure to ideas that makes them take hold most effectively. The *collatio*, with its regular nature (every Sunday and on feast days), also exhibits a ‘drip-drip method’ of its own: the frequent readings of collations to interested laypeople introduced them to the spiritual thought of the Modern Devotion. Moreover, the collations were commonly composed of excerpts from and quotations of *auctoritates* which the Brothers of the Common Life deemed especially important (see in particular chapter 5). The collations are thus infused with the spirituality of the Modern Devout, and regular visits to the *collatio* would expose a layperson to a steady drip of religious thought in line with the Modern Devotion. By examining the contents of the (books of) collations, it is then possible to gain an image of what it was the Brothers wished to communicate during the *collationes*. As the collations were meant to be read during the *collatio*, the way in which they are set up could then further illuminate how the process of communication could take place.

Transposing these approaches from international sermon studies onto the *collatio* allows for an exploration of its functioning within the religious landscape of the medieval city, and of the

¹³ See also P.H. Boonstra, ‘Causa Spiritualis Instructionis. The Modern Devout Collatio as a Community of Learning’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 88 (2017): 35–57.

¹⁴ D.L. d'Avray, ‘Method in the Study of Medieval Sermons’, in *Modern Questions about Medieval Sermons. Essays on Marriage, Death, History and Sanctity*, ed. N. Bériou and D.L. d'Avray, Biblioteca Di <<Medioevo Latino>> 11 (Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto medioevo, 1994), 9; Quoted from J. Hanska, ‘Reconstructing the Mental Calendar of Medieval Preaching: A Method and Its Limits: An Analysis of Sunday Sermons’, in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 296.

communication of devotional knowledge between laypeople and religious professionals. This thesis takes the *collatio* as a dynamic practice in which knowledge was exchanged and communicated through close interaction between the Brothers of the Common Life and their visitors. Making use of different forms of communication, the Brothers made an attempt to connect and relate to their audience. Visitors were introduced to the Modern Devout spirituality: the *collatio* brought them into contact with the Brothers and the religious texts they employed for their own spiritual growth. Visiting laypeople were not merely an audience to the *collatio*: they, just as the Brothers providing collations and devotional admonitions, were participants, momentarily joined in the same community.

1.2 Overview of this thesis

The *collatio* as examined in this thesis is primarily tied to the communities of Brothers of the Common Life. As such, the geographical and chronological spread of this thesis is limited to the areas and periods in which the Brothers were active: the cities in the modern-day Netherlands, in particular those around the river IJssel but with outliers to present-day Germany and Belgium, from the late fourteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century. Chronologically, the Brothers of the Common Life seem to have provided their *collationes* since the late fourteenth century, starting with the earliest community around the Heer Florenshuis in Deventer, and maintained the practice for much of the fifteenth, venturing into the sixteenth century as well. The customs of the Heer Florenshuis,¹⁵ dating to the last decade of the fourteenth century, mention how the Brothers gathered to read a religious text and discuss it, while mutually admonishing each other. No laypeople were present during these spiritual exercises, but Brother Johannes Kessel, who died in 1398, is said to have delivered admonitions to visiting students in the entry hall of the Heer Florenshuis.¹⁶ Adapting the customs to the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, rector of the community Dirc van Herxen added provisions for students and laypeople to visit the house and hear a vernacular religious text being read, as well as to receive some personal admonitions. The customs of the house in Zwolle were also taken up by the Collatiehuis in Gouda in the middle of the fifteenth century. Established in 1467, the Brothers of the Common Life in Emmerich (modern-day Germany) first adopted the customs of their mother-house in Deventer, and these

¹⁵ See paragraph 2.1 for a more complete overview of the various customs or *consuetudines* informing this section.

¹⁶ The *collationes* of Johannes Kessel are mentioned in G. Dumbauld, *Analecta seu vetera aliquot scripta inedita* (Deventer, 1719), 38. Quoted from J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 285.

evolved over time. However, a set of customs from Emmerich drawn up in 1562 still contains provisions for students and others (presumably youths) to visit the house for some devout exhortations. Although the mentions in the various sets of customs do not provide a firm cut-off date after which the Brothers no longer provided their *collationes*, it is clear that these meetings were at the least organised frequently and regularly from the late fourteenth century up to the first half of the sixteenth century.

However, identifying instances of the *collatio* actually taking place in a particular location at a particular time has proven to be a challenge, owing to the absence of contemporary sources mentioning the practice. To nonetheless examine the dynamics of the *collatio* as a process of communicating religious knowledge between the Brothers and participating laypeople, this thesis has focussed primarily on the three communities in Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle, which can be identified most clearly as organisers of *collationes* through their *consuetudines* or customs as well as mentions of the practice in the recorded lives of some of their Brothers. The community in Gouda even became known as the Collatiebroeders, and their house was called the Collatiehuis: a clear indication of the importance of the *collatio* for this community in particular. Other communities, like those in Amersfoort, Groningen, or Utrecht, might very well have invited students and laypeople to participate in the *collatio*, and the results of this study would be applicable on those communities as well. However, it is the Brothers in Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle who definitely engaged in the *collatio*, and therefore they are the main focus of this thesis.

The results of this study will be presented in five chapters. Following this introduction, chapter 2 will take stock of the description of the *collatio* in various *consuetudines* or customs of several communities of Brothers of the Common Life, to establish the image of the *collatio* the Brothers wished to maintain for themselves. The passages from the *consuetudines* have in past research been the main source of information on the *collatio* as a result of the general absence of other, more direct source material. Moreover, this chapter will introduce the main source corpus of this thesis, consisting of the collections of texts composed to be read during the *collatio*, known as the books of collations. Although these books of collations do not mention the practice in which they were to be used, this thesis maintains that, as the most direct surviving witness to the practice, they can yield new insights into the dynamic communication of knowledge taking place between laypeople and religious professionals during the *collatio*.

In order to place the *collatio* and ground it into its physical context, chapter 3 will examine the more practical or physical dimensions of the practice: that is, the houses in which it took place,

and the people who were involved. The Brothers invited students and interested laypeople to visit their house in order to participate in the *collatio*, so the practice took place in a semi-domestic setting – even though the Brothers were religious professionals, their houses were still their homes, and often they were repurposed regular houses. Moreover, the locations in which the *collatio* took place exerted an influence on the communication of knowledge: the communal reading of a text in the main hall, common room, or chapel would have had a different impact than the personal conversations in the Brothers’ private rooms. The more intimate setting fostered a more confidential atmosphere, which greatly benefitted the Brothers in rousing devotional fervour. The Brothers were aware of this and strove to know their visitors, as will be explored in chapter 4. While worldly distractions were ostensibly not allowed to have an impact on the *collatio*, this chapter will show that the lay experience and worldly concerns did indeed enter into the relations between the Brothers and their lay visitors, as well as the *collatio* in general. From interacting with their lay visitors, the Brothers were by necessity exposed to lay concerns, and in maintaining these relations they were obliged to take note of the situation outside their walls. The Brothers however recognised that personal, friendly, and informal interactions were of great benefit in communicating religious knowledge, and so they took into account the realities of daily life, as is reflected in the books of collations.

The books of collations – or rather, the texts contained therein – will be further examined in chapter 5, in order to show how they facilitated the communication of knowledge and fully introduced the lay participants to the Modern Devotion. As mentioned above, the communication of knowledge went beyond merely transferring information collected from authoritative sources or engaging the participants in a shared reading culture (though this certainly was part of it): through the *collatio*, the Brothers intended to also communicate how to select and utilise authoritative texts in shaping one’s own devotion. The collations reflect this introduction to the Modern Devotion provided by the Brothers in their *collationes*, as will be shown on the basis of four key themes: one, the importance of having vernacular religious literature; two, preparing for the Four Last Things (Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell), in particular the Last Judgement; three, the *profectus virtutum*, or advancement in virtues; and four, the use of learning to become wise, that is, the utilisation of knowledge for personal devotion. Although the different books of collations examined in this thesis treat the topics differently, this chapter will show that there are some strong overarching similarities between them. In particular, through excerpts, references, and quotations, the authoritative texts the Brothers read themselves are shared with the lay participants of the *collatio*, momentarily

placing them in the same network of texts the Brothers cultivated for themselves. Moreover, the collations reflect that the *collatio* communicated a particular way of reading and making use of authoritative texts to the lay audience in an attempt to have the participants imitate and emulate the spirituality practised by the Brothers themselves.

Having thus established the *collatio* as an opportunity for laypeople to engage with the Brothers of the Common Life and participate in the communication of religious knowledge, chapter 6 will place the *collatio* in its broader context of the late medieval urban religious landscape, specifically alongside the frequent sermon preaching. Although actual preaching in the medieval Low Countries has largely been understudied, this chapter will show that cities in the Low Countries saw their fair share of preaching, and that sermon preaching was both frequent and widespread. Moreover, this chapter will show that laypeople exhibited a genuine interest in both preaching as a performed event as well as the sermon as a written text, thus showing that the *collatio* would have found an audience that was both interested in as well as familiar with religious thought, and well versed in parsing different forms of communicating religious knowledge. Ultimately, this thesis will have shown that through their *collationes*, the Brothers of the Common Life provided the lay urban population an opportunity to participate in the transmission of religious knowledge and engage with the texts and methods of interpretation the Brothers cultivated themselves.

Chapter 2: Establishing the *collatio*

In the introduction to her study on Dirc van Herxen and his First Book of Collations, Lydeke van Beek notes that the *collatio* had a long-running history in the context of the medieval monasteries and universities, and it adopted a new form in the Modern Devout movement – most strikingly among the Brothers of the Common Life.¹ Indeed, the *collatio* organised by the Brothers both referred to older practices and reshaped them. Because of this, a study on ‘the *collatio*’ easily gets confusing, all the more so as different communities maintained a slightly different vocabulary relating to the practice. This chapter will set out the framework for the rest of this study by establishing the definitions used and summarising prior research on the *collatio*. It will first turn to the image of the *collatio* the Brothers maintained for themselves in their *consuetudines*: a set of ‘customs’ or ‘house rules’ to regulate the daily life in their houses. These *consuetudines* were not, strictly speaking, a Rule: the Brothers wished to avoid being seen as a new monastic order, and thus they merely ‘followed the custom of the house’ instead of conforming to a Rule.² Yet as the codified customs shaped living in the community, the *consuetudines* were prescriptive as well, regulating the roles of different Brothers (for instance, the prior, the procurator, or the librarian) and devotional activities, such as prayer, writing, or the *collatio*. Thus, a closer examination of the relevant sections in the *consuetudines* will show how the Brothers envisioned the *collatio*, as well as the terms they used to discuss the practice. Moreover, it will showcase the ambiguity of the term ‘*collatio*’ as part of a long tradition, and from there it will establish the terminology that will be maintained in this thesis.

In its emphasis on the interaction between the Brothers and their visitors and their mutual communication of knowledge, this thesis is charting a largely unexplored aspect of the *collatio*. However, the practice is not completely absent from prior research, as will be shown in paragraph 2.2, which will take stock of the few studies that have examined the *collatio* in more detail. Studies on the Brothers of the Common Life or the Modern Devotion often mention the *collatio*, though this is mostly in passing: the practice had not been subject to extensive research

¹ L. van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord. Dirc van Herxen (1381-1457) en zijn Eerste Collatieboek* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009), 15.

² On the *consuetudines*, see in particular T. Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur. Die Hausordnungen der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben im Bildungs- und Sozialisationsprogramm der Devotio moderna*, Tradition - Reform - Innovation. Studien zur Modernität des Mittelalters 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003).

to date. This thesis, however, will make use of a theoretical framework adapted from sermon studies to reconstruct the dynamic communication of knowledge taking place in the *collatio* by applying it to the closest material witnesses still available, that is, the collections of texts used during the meetings known as the books of collations. These books of collations form the main corpus for this study, and they will be introduced in paragraph 2.3. Taken together, this chapter will thus present the current state of research on the *collatio* and the texts involved in it, and so act as the point of departure for a deeper study on the interactions between the Brothers of the Common Life and their lay visitors.

2.1 The customary *collatio*

As a collection of codified customs or regulations for daily life, the *consuetudines* of the houses of Brothers of the Common Life can be used as a source of information for how the *collatio* was supposed to function, that is, how the Brothers intended it to be. Although they do not contain a historical account of the actual proceedings of a *collatio*, the *consuetudines* reveal the imagined functioning of the meetings. This section will discuss the customs of the houses in Deventer (c. 1390–1400), Zwolle (c. 1415–1424), Gouda (c. 1450–1500), and Emmerich (c. 1562) in order to show that the *collatio* was practised in multiple houses of Brothers of the Common Life over a large period of time. Instead of starting with the oldest set of customs, the customs of the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle will be discussed first as they are the most extensive, and they were drawn up by Dirc van Herxen, who – as second rector of the house and author of two books of collations in the vernacular³ – was heavily involved in the *collatio*. Having discussed the various instances of the *collatio* in the *consuetudines*, this section will also establish the terminology maintained in this thesis to distinguish between the meetings and the texts used therein, and point out the tradition in which the Brothers placed themselves by communally reading and discussing religious texts. Before moving on to a discussion of prior research into the *collatio*, this section will briefly point out that a form of *collationes* was practised among female communities of the Modern Devotion as well, albeit with some differences. However, this thesis is primarily concerned with the *collationes* among

³ While only the First Book of Collations has survived, the chronicler of the house Jacobus de Voecht mentions that Dirc van Herxen wrote two large volumes of collations in the vernacular for the benefit of laypeople participating in the *collatio*: M. Schoengen, ed., *Jacobus Traiecti alias De Voecht: Narratio de inchoatione domus clericorum in Zwollis. Met akten en bescheiden betreffende dit fraterhuis* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1908), 64: *Ipse, ut laici quoque attraherentur ad audiendum verbum Dei, composuit duos magnos libros theutonicos* (...). The reading key in Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 refers to material in the Second Book of Collations as well: see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 93–95.

communities of Brothers of the Common Life for its inclusion of participating laypeople; although occasional comparisons will be drawn to the female communities, they will not be extensively treated. While it cannot be excluded that female communities allowed lay visitors to attend their *collationes* as well, the Brothers made it a point in their *consuetudines* to invite students and other interested laypeople and to interact with them. As it is the communication of knowledge between religious professionals and devout laypeople which forms the main interest of this thesis, the female *collationes* will be acknowledged but not examined at length.

The extensive *consuetudines* of the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle, drawn up around 1415–1424 by rector Dirc van Herxen, make a distinction between two instances of edifying and spiritual conversations: the *collatio (mutua)* and the *ammonitio* or *admonitio*.⁴ The *collatio mutua* is to take place on feast days in the early afternoon, right after their midday meal.⁵ For about an hour, the Brothers will gather in an unspecified place for a mutually encouraging conversation. One Brother is designated as the *custos collationis* or ‘keeper of the *collatio*’. It is his task to read a short and edifying text, and lead the ensuing spiritual discussion; the Brothers should converse amicably and only be concerned with the designated topic. The goal of the *collatio mutua* is that the Brothers may encourage one another in their faith, leading to greater zeal and increased mutual love. The *custos collationis* should not be afraid to correct the Brothers when they lead the discussion to fruitless disputations or arguments.

This *collatio mutua* was partially a ritualised and institutionalised form of a common practice in Modern Devout communities, that is, the habit of mutually berating and encouraging one’s Brothers or Sisters so that they might improve on their shortcomings. For the Modern Devout, one of the benefits of communal life was the social policing; as John Van Engen puts it, “[n]o

⁴ The *consuetudines* of the Brothers of the Common Life in Zwolle are included in Schoengen, *Narratio*, 239–78. For the paragraphs on the *collatio* and *admonitio*, see Schoengen, *Narratio*, 246–48, and, along with a Dutch translation, Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 70–71. The *consuetudines* were adopted by the houses in ‘s-Hertogenbosch and Orthen, and as such are included (transcribed by Gijsbertus Coeverinx in 1584) in G. van den Elsen and W. Hoevenaars, eds., *Analecta Gijsberti Coeverinx*, vol. 2 (Den Bosch: Provinciaal Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen in Noord-Brabant, 1905), 93–115. For the paragraphs on *collatio* and *admonitio*, see 99–101. Compare Th. Mertens, ‘Collatio und Codex im Bereich der Devotio moderna’, in *Der Codex im Gebrauch. Akten des Internationalen Kolloquiums 11. – 13. Juni 1992*, ed. C. Meier (Münster: Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften, 1996), 165–67; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 66–67, 69–72. The Zwolle *consuetudines* have not survived as manuscript, but the full text was included in Jacobus Phillipi’s *Reformatorium vitae clericorum*, printed in Basel, 1494: Schoengen, *Narratio*, CXXVI–CXXXVIII; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 194–95. On Dirc van Herxen and the Zwolle *consuetudines*, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 31–32, 194–95; Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudines vincitur*, 179–200; R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, III (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 233–38; Schoengen, *Narratio*, CXXVI–CXLIX.

⁵ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 246.

virtue was so prized as ‘freely disclosing’ one’s faults and temptations, no spiritual gift so admired as that of listening and finding an apt word in response.”⁶ Self-examination was key on the road to personal improvement, but an individual was often blind to (some of) their flaws. Berating an individual on their minor missteps could open their eyes to new areas in which to make spiritual advances. This function of the *collatio mutua* was especially prevalent among communities of Sisters of the Common Life. For instance, the Sisters in ’s-Hertogenbosch used their weekly *collatio mutua* on Friday to take inventory of their shortcomings, as they were pointed out by the Mother of the community and their elder Sisters.⁷

On Sundays and important feast days, the Brothers are to gather again after the evening meal and after the reading of the Compline to continue the conversation of the afternoon *collatio*.⁸ The evening gatherings also serve as an opportunity for discussing practical matters concerning visitors. The Brothers are to discuss the schoolboys or students in their care – which included both physical care in the form of room and board as well as spiritual care – and those “other people of good intent” who came to them for spiritual instruction.⁹ This way, the Brothers get to know them better, so that they can be even more diligent and conscientious in helping them in their faith. These visitors are mentioned again in the following section of the *consuetudines*, which deals with the *admonitio*.

The *admonitio* is set in the later afternoon, after the vespers. Schoolboys or students and “other good people” are invited to visit the Brothers in their house. A vernacular religious text “of simple matters” will be read to them, which will encourage them to better their lives; in particular, texts on “vices, virtues, contempt for the world, the fear of God, and similar things” are recommended.¹⁰ The *consuetudines* do not explicitly state how the text should be read to achieve this, but the reading is contrasted against the preaching of a sermon: the Brothers should

⁶ J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life. The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 290–92, here 290.

⁷ Elsen and Hoevenaars, *Analecta Gijsberti Coeverincx*, 2:179–80. Also see W. Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries. The Modern Devotion, the Canonesses of Windesheim, and Their Writings*, trans. D.F. Johnson (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 56–61.

⁸ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 246–47.

⁹ On the Brothers’ involvement with the schools, including the establishment of hostels, see Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 144–57. Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Illis etiam Dominicis diebus conferemus de scholaribus vel etiam aliis hominibus bone voluntatis, qui veniunt ad nos causa instructionis, ut illos agnoscamus, et circa eos, qui bone spei videntur, diligentiores existamus.*

¹⁰ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Festivis diebus, postquam divina officia in ecclesia fuerint de vespera expleta, de bona consuetudine consueverunt ad domum nostram venire scolares et alii boni viri, causa spiritualis instructionis, quibus legetur in teutonico aliquis passus Sacre Scripture de materia plana, que ad emendationem vite eos poterit provocare, videlicet de viciis, de virtutibus, de contemptus mundi, de timore Dei et similibus.*

“speak encouragingly, with edifying words, certainly not in a preaching manner but with simple exhortations”.¹¹ The implied distinction between preaching and the *admonitio* is that while the former berates people from the lofty position of the pulpit, the latter is kinder and more understanding, offering friendly advice and admonishment. This is an important formal difference between the two religious activities: the Brothers were not allowed to publicly preach, and especially not organise sermons within their own homes, but they were allowed to provide regular advice and admonition.¹² What otherwise sets the practice apart from the sermon mainly seems to be a difference of scale and of setting: it is concerned with a smaller group of participants who were gathered in the home of the Brothers. Compared to the sermon, the meetings took on a more private character which allowed for personal conversation, more so than the mass communication of the public sermon.

The more personal, intimate approach is also present in the second part of the *admonitio*: after the communal reading of a text the Brothers could individually take someone to their rooms for a private conversation for up to half an hour. While the private conversation is still meant to only consider religious and devotional matters – “[the Brothers] should not talk with [the visitors] about useless matters or secular rumours”¹³ – the personal approach is stressed: these individual talks are an option because “a private and confidential encouragement works more strongly for an individual, so that it is good to address them personally and excite them to higher matters based on their condition and needs”.¹⁴ The Brothers were thus expected to be good listeners and wise in their council; to understand what their visitors were going through and how to give them adequate advice. As shown above, the Brothers also discussed among themselves how best to aid their lay visitors: they made an attempt to connect to those who visited them in order to better assist them in their personal faith.

The customs of the Gregoriushuis thus established a distinction between two similar practices: the *collatio* or *collatio mutua* (spiritual conversation among the Brothers themselves to identify personal shortcomings, potentially after the reading of a text), and the two-part *admonitio* (reading of a text with students and laypeople attending, potentially followed by personal

¹¹ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Ad idipsum verbis edificatoriis eos commonere, non quidem per modum predicationis, sed simplicis exhortationis.*

¹² This distinction was clearly of importance, as it appears in every other set of *consuetudines* as well: see below, p. 20.

¹³ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Non debemus (...) de inutilibus aut rumoribus seculi cum eis colloquium habere.*

¹⁴ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Quia vero privata et familiaris allocutio unumquemque plus movet, bonum est, nunc unum, nunc alium in privato alloqui, et secundum statum et exigentiam cujusque ad meliora provocare.*

spiritual conversation). The *consuetudines* of the Collatiehuis in Gouda, dating to the second half of the fifteenth century, are quite similar yet employ a slightly different vocabulary on the practice of spiritual conversations.¹⁵ This is not surprising: the customs of Gouda are largely based on those of Zwolle. Presumably, they were adapted by the fifth rector of the house, Hendrik van Arnhem.¹⁶ The Gouda- *consuetudines* do not make a clean division between the *collatio* (*mutua*) and the *admonitio*, characterising the *admonitio* as a *collatio* for the common people.¹⁷ Among the Brothers themselves, the *consuetudines* specify that the conversation is to take place on the basis of a text read from a book of collations by the rector or, in his absence, the procurator.¹⁸ The description of this *collatio pro communi populo* is largely the same as the description of the Zwolle *admonitio*: on feast days, after the vespers have finished in the parochial church, the *collatio* can take place in the chapel of the Brothers. Compared to the community in Zwolle, the *collatio* in Gouda seems to have been more of a collective effort with everyone involved. The customs mention that once the *collatio* is done, “the Brothers should not stand around or mingle with the secular and the outsiders [like after many sermons?], but each is to go to his room, to turn over and ruminate on what he had heard and how he can use it in the advancement of his spirituality.”¹⁹ Perhaps this was born of necessity, as the community in Gouda had always been limited in size. Yet, as with the *admonitio* in Zwolle, in Gouda too it was not just the reader who was involved in the *collatio*.

In the composition of the *consuetudines* of the Gregoriushuis, Dirc van Herxen did not start from scratch: being a daughter house of the Heer Florenshuis in Deventer, the community in Zwolle could make use of its customs to establish their own. The original *consuetudines* of the Heer Florenshuis date back to the last decade of the fourteenth century, and presumably were

¹⁵ On the Gouda *consuetudines*, see Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 239–49. The Gouda *consuetudines* are included in A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance. A History of the 'Devotio Moderna'* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Reformed Press, 1924), 440–74. For the paragraph on the *collatio*, see 447–448. Hyma erroneously considered these *consuetudines* to be “the original constitution of the Brethren of the Common Life at Deventer”: see C.A.M. Lem, ‘De consuetudines van het Collatiehuis in Gouda’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 65 (1991): 125–43. The Gouda *consuetudines* are kept in Den Haag, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 73 G 22. Also see <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/tekstdragers/TDRA000000003581> [consulted 15-02-2019], where the manuscript is still erroneously attributed to the Heer Florenshuis in Deventer.

¹⁶ Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 240–41.

¹⁷ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: *Diebus etiam festivis finitis vespers in ecclesia parochiali.....[sic] nostris per rectorem ad hoc.....[sic] emet rector pro communi populo facere collationem in ecclesia nostra.*

¹⁸ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: (...) *ex libro qui collacionale dicitur (...) per rectorem aut procuratorem in eius absentia legetur.*

¹⁹ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: *Collacione igitur huiusmodi completa non stent fratres in omni via, neque misceant cum secularibus et extraneis multos sermones, sed ibit quisque ad cameram suam, revolvens et ruminans in corde suo quid audierit aptabique profectui sue spirituali.*

composed by Florens Radewijns himself (c. 1350–1400).²⁰ In rewriting these customs for the Gregoriushuis, Dirc van Herxen also added substantially to the passage on the *collatio*. The text by Florens Radewijns does not offer a clear definition of the term *collatio*; instead it contains a short passage – only eight lines in the edition of Alberts – which prescribes a certain behaviour “during the *collatio*”.²¹ Supposedly the *collatio* took place on feast days or monthly, at an otherwise unspecified moment. Humility seems to be key: the Brothers are strongly discouraged from talking too much or speaking of unrelated things, and instead are encouraged to listen to others, and take from their words whatever is applicable to themselves. There is no mention of potentially visiting students or laypeople, though private conversations and admonitions between Brothers and students or laypeople are mentioned in some of the *vitae* of the community (see chapter 3). The *consuetudines* do not give any further instruction on what to discuss, though with Modern Devout spirituality being firmly rooted in religious texts it is likely that spiritually beneficial texts also shaped the conversation during the *collatio*.²²

The customs of Deventer were appreciated long after they were composed as well: Henricus Diest, a member of the Gregoriushuis in 's-Hertogenbosch, copied and edited the *consuetudines* in the second half of the sixteenth century to include them in a collection of devout exercises.²³ Daughter houses could adapt the customs to their own practices as well, as was done in Zwolle. The house in Emmerich (modern-day Germany) first followed the customs of the Heer Florenshuis as well when it was established in 1467.²⁴ Over time, however, the customs of the house evolved on their own, and the surviving *consuetudines* – drawn up around 1562 – are

²⁰ Theo Klausmann found the manuscript The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek 70 H 79 to contain the Deventer *consuetudines* in 2003; the manuscript was previously thought to contain a personal collection of devotional customs. See Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 154–60. The manuscript dates from c. 1564, but the similarities with a copy of Florens Radewijns' *Exercitium devotum* in Cologne, Historisches Archiv, 8° 145, written around 1400, show the *consuetudines* must have already been in place around that time: Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 156–57. The *consuetudines* have been published in W.J. Alberts, ed., *Consuetudines fratrum vitae communis*, Fontes minores medii aevi 8 (Groningen: Wolters, 1959), 1–13. On the manuscript, see also <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/tekstdragers/TDRA000000001306> [consulted 14-02-2019].

²¹ Alberts, *Consuetudines fratrum vitae communis*, 6: *Item in collatione, sive festorum, sive mensis* (...).

²² See in particular chapter 5 of this thesis on the fundamental importance of authoritative texts to the *collatio*.

²³ Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 168–70. This collection of *Exercitia devota* is currently kept in Amsterdam, UB VII C 17; the *consuetudines* are included on f. 51v–62v. On the manuscript, see also <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/tekstdragers/TDRA0000000007660> [consulted 14-02-2019]. The *consuetudines* have been published in Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 369–76.

²⁴ Johan van Medemblik, the second rector, left the house with an excellent copy of the Deventer *consuetudines* when he died in 1478: Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 263. John Van Engen notes how “no other house maintained such a close and continuous relationship to the house in Deventer” in the later fifteenth century: J. Van Engen, ‘The Virtues, the Brothers, and the Schools. A Text from the Brothers of the Common Life’, *Revue Bénédictine* 98 (1988): 188.

indeed different from those of other houses.²⁵ Still, the Brothers in Emmerich maintained a practice of gathering on feast days to listen to a religious text being read and to discuss it among themselves, labelled *colloquium*. To guide the discussion, the librarian makes sure there is a text suited for reading on that particular day. Like the *collatio* in Deventer and Zwolle, these discussions are not to be theological disputations or concerned with useless topics: the conversation needs to be directly beneficial to personal devotion. This set of *consuetudines* also contains an additional warning: the Brothers should never talk “too much about women”.²⁶ The *colloquium* is only for the Brothers amongst themselves; visitors are only allowed when they are well known.²⁷ However, students “and others” (*et ceterorum*) are invited to visit on feast days for the *admonitio*, which also involves devout exhortations and is aimed primarily at the youth.

A common element in these four sets of *consuetudines* is that the Brothers of the Common Life framed the *collatio* as a meeting quite different from a preaching event. Instead of reading a vernacular religious text ‘in a preaching manner’, visiting laypeople were to be humbly admonished and personally exhorted. The Brothers in Emmerich explicitly wanted their *admonitiones* to be delivered in a ‘*collatio* manner’, and not as preaching.²⁸ The *consuetudines* of Gouda and Zwolle also place the practice variably termed *admonitio*, *collatio*, or *colloquium* as very much differing from the *sermo*: in Gouda the Brothers offer “edifying words to rouse the people, not in the form of preaching but as simple exhortations”,²⁹ and in Zwolle visitors are advised in the same way.³⁰ Despite engaging in a similar process of communicating religious knowledge, the *collatio* is presented as largely different from preaching: where the sermon is implied to have a more severe tone and a strict hierarchy between preacher and audience, the Brothers suggest their reading and spiritual discussion are heartfelt, simple, and

²⁵ On the *consuetudines* also see Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 262–72. The *consuetudines* of Emmerich are included in W.J. Alberts and M. Ditsche, eds., *Fontes historiam domus fratrum Embricensis aperientes* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1969), 78–115. For the paragraphs on the *colloquium* and *admonitio*, see 100–102. The text also contains a chapter on the *admonitio mutua*; however, this chapter is not relevant to the issue under consideration here as it deals with how the Brothers should admonish each other often and without fear. The Emmerich- *consuetudines* are kept in Xanten, Stiftsarchiv Hs. 43.

²⁶ Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam domus fratrum Embricensis aperientes*, 100: *Absit semper colloquiis loqui multum de mulieribus*.

²⁷ Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam domus fratrum Embricensis aperientes*, 101: *Non leviter admittantur colloquiis nostris alieni nisi valde noti*.

²⁸ Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam domus fratrum Embricensis aperientes*, 102: *Fiant admonitiones non per modum sermonis sed per modum simplicis collationis*.

²⁹ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: (...) *verbis edificatoriis populum commovere, non quidem per modum predicationis, sed simplicis exhortationis*.

³⁰ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: (...) *ad idipsum verbis edificatoriis eos commonere, non quidem per modum predicationis, sed simplicis exhortationis*.

humble. This distance between the *collatio* and preaching was maintained to prevent or refute accusations of unlicensed preaching: to publicly provide sermons required permission from the local curate, which the Brothers did not have. Thus, the *collatio* was presented as an opportunity for charitable admonishments and friendly words of advice on the basis of authoritative texts. In that case, the *collatio* was not only permitted but perhaps even required: every devout Christian was not only obliged to care for their own soul, but had a duty to humbly correct others as well. This defense was set out by Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen in the fifth and sixth chapters of his *Super modo vivendi*, where he firmly established the legitimacy of providing *collationes*, finding support in the Bible, Papal decretals, and multiple authoritative authors, such as Jerome, Gregory, Bede, and Chrysostom.³¹ The question of whether providing *collationes* is allowed does not feature overly strong in the books of collations, but it does appear: the collations on lay access to religious texts in the vernacular also touch on the issue of offering humble admonitions to fellow devout Christians (see paragraph 5.1).

When they began to hold their *collationes*, the Brothers of the Common Life had not invented a wholly new practice.³² In the 42nd chapter of his Rule St Benedict established the reading of an edifying text to provide the monks with some material for nightly rumination, suggesting John Cassian's *Collationes patrum* (where *collatio* has the meaning of 'devout conversation') or the examples set forth in the *Vitaspatrum* as especially adequate for this purpose. Most monastic orders subsequently kept the habit of evening readings accompanied by spiritual conversations. Starting in the twelfth century, the *collatio* begins to shift towards an academic discussion or educational exercise; in the mendicant colleges around the thirteenth century universities the term can also mean an evening sermon.³³ Increasingly the term began to denote a type of sermon; though this never becomes the sole meaning: '*collatio*' remains a highly contextually defined word. For instance, Peter Howard found that in a collection of sermons of the Dominican Fra Bartolomeo Lapacci Rimbertyni (1402–1466):

³¹ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 281–83; J. Van Engen, 'Devout Communities and Inquisitorial Orders: The Legal Defense of the New Devout', in *Kirchenreform von Unten. Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen Und Die Brüder Vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, ed. N. Staubach, Tradition - Reform - Innovation. Studien Zur Modernität Des Mittelalters 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 82–85.

³² For a more extensive overview, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 61–65.

³³ O. Weijers, *Terminologie des universités au XIII^e siècle*, Lessico Intellettuale Europeo 39 (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1987), 372–78; O. Weijers, 'Le vocabulaire du collège de Sorbonne', in *Vocabulaire des collèges universitaires (XIII^e-XVI^e siècles). Actes du colloque Leuven 9-11 avril 1992*, ed. O. Weijers, CIVICIMA Études sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du moyen âge 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), 18–19. Also see J. Hamesse, "'Collatio' et 'reportatio': deux vocables spécifiques de la vie intellectuelle au moyen âge", in *Actes du colloque 'Terminologie de la vie intellectuelle au moyen âge' Leyde/La Haye 20-21 septembre 1985*, ed. O. Weijers, CIVICIMA Études sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du moyen âge 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1988), 78–82.

[t]he word ‘collatio’ indicates that the sermon was preached, and also that it was the basis for in-house conferences known as ‘collations.’ Occurring at least once a week, collations were occasions on which the friars of a particular order, and often lay people as well, came together (...) to explore the moral implications of teachings by ‘notable authorities’ for the life of the city [Florence].³⁴

Thus, when Deventer Brother of the Common Life Johannes Kessel (d. 1398) delivered admonitions to students visiting the Heer Florenshuis, he was but one part of a long tradition of spiritual and intellectual exercises dating back to the medieval universities – in particular the Sorbonne in Paris – and the mendicant colleges, and even further back to the Desert Fathers.³⁵ As the Brothers of the Common Life made a conscious attempt to model themselves on the Desert Fathers, they likely took their inspiration directly from them, going to the roots of the tradition, rather than adding another branch to it.³⁶

Moreover, the Brothers of the Common Life were not the only branch of the Modern Devotion which practised the *collatio*. Within the monastery of Windesheim readings combined with mutual exhortations took place as well, in which both ordained and lay brothers joined – Henricus Balveren (d. 1414) even encouraged the lay brothers to actively participate.³⁷ The *collationes* held by brother Albert Wynberghen (d. 1433)³⁸ and second subprior of the monastery Arnold Marwic van Kalkar (d. 1434)³⁹ were accessible to visiting laypeople as well. Female communities of the Modern Devotion engaged in the *collatio* as well; it has already been noted above how the Sisters regularly gathered to mutually berate and admonish each

³⁴ Howard, ‘Languages of the Pulpit’, 36–37. Despite the similarities with the *collationes* of the Brothers of the Common Life, I have not found any other connection between the two.

³⁵ These *collationes* of Johannes Kessel are mentioned in Dumbarton Oaks, *Analecta*, 38. Quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285.

³⁶ On the importance of the Desert Fathers on the Modern Devotion, see in particular M. van Dijk, ‘Disciples of the Deep Desert: Windesheim Biographers and the Imitation of the Desert Fathers’, *Church History and Religious Culture* 86 (2006): 257–80; M. van Dijk, ‘Performing the Fathers in the Devotio Moderna’, in *Die Devotio Moderna. Sozialer Und Kultureller Transfer (1350-1580), Band 2: Die Räumliche Und Geistige Ausstrahlung Der Devotio Moderna - Zur Dynamik Ihres Gedankenguts*, ed. I. Kwiatkowski and J. Engelbrecht (Münster: Aschendorff, 2013), 227–44.

³⁷ K. Grube, ed., *Des Augustiner propstes Iohannes Busch Chronicon Windeshemense und Liber de reformatione monasteriorum* (Farnborough: Gregg International, 1968), 109: *Et in collacionibus, antequam in festis diebus eas inchoaret, primum interrogavit ab aliquo laycorum magis expertorum, quid de ultima collacione audita corde retinisset, id cunctis corampositis palam pronunciaret, omnes ad auscultandum hoc modo incitativo volens provocare.*

³⁸ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 201.: *Diebusque festivis laycorum collacioni propter donatorum statuta communiter interfuit consciencie satisfaciens.*

³⁹ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 70: *Laycis enim die festo in ambitu monasterii de regno dei faciens collacionem manibus complicatis (...).*

other. Of particular note are the *collationes* in the monastery of Diepenveen under the care of father-confessor Johannes Brinckerinck, friend of Geert Grote and first rector of the monastery. His *collationes* could be based on the reading of a religious text, but he also expounded on sermons the Sisters had heard previously. He was also wont to ‘improvise’ on a topic suggested by the Sisters when he asked them what kept them busy at the time.⁴⁰ What makes this instance remarkable is that the Sisters in attendance kept notes and from these (re)constructed the oral transmission of knowledge as written collations, so that Brinckerinck’s words could be preserved for the benefit of the community. The Sisters working on them thus were co-authors of the collations of Brinckerinck as we have them now.⁴¹ Of Sister Liesbeth van Delft (d. 1423), for instance, it is said: “Whenever our honourable father Johan Brinckerinck used to perform *collatio*, [she] sat with him and wrote it down from his mouth on her tablet. And what we have of these was mostly gathered by her.”⁴² Later on, the collations were compiled and edited to form a thematically organised collection by rector Rudolph Dier van Muiden (d. 1459).

While Brinckerinck was exceptionally famed for his *collationes* in Diepenveen, he was not the only one providing exhortatory speeches to a female religious community, potentially following a communal reading with exposition or discussion.⁴³ In Leiden, for instance, *collationes* were held in the chapels of St Ursula (regular canonesses), St Agnes (tertiaries), and St Michiel (tertiaries).⁴⁴ The tertiaryaries of St Catharina-Schagen acquired the right to perform *collationes* freely; the Sisters of the Common Life of St Agatha could engage in daily *collationes* in their

⁴⁰ Quoted from A. Bollmann, *Frauenleben und Frauenliteratur in der Devotio moderna: volkssprachige Schwesternbücher in literarhistorischer Perspektive* (Proefschrift: Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 2004), 542: “Op een tijt inder colacien vragede hie eenre alte devoter suster, ghehieten suster Jutte vander Beck, wat sie goedes ghedacht hadde, als sijne maniren ondertijden weren, dat hie ymant wat vragede ende daer dede hie dan sijne cacie op.”

⁴¹ See Th. Mertens, ‘Ghostwriting Sisters: The Preservation of Dutch Sermons of Father Confessors in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Century’, in *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, ed. A.B. Mulder-Bakker, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts 11* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 121–41; Th. Mertens, ‘Postuum auteurschap. De collaties van Johannes Brinckerinck’, in *Windesheim 1395-1995: Kloosters, teksten, invloeden*, ed. A.J. Hendrikman (Nijmegen: Centrum voor Middeleeuwse Studies, 1996), 85–97.

⁴² Quoted from Bollmann, *Frauenleben und Frauenliteratur*, 545: “Als onse eerwerdighe pater heer Johan Brinckerinck collacie plach toe doen, soe sat Elizabeth ende screef dat uut synen monde in hoer tafele. Ende dat wy daer van hebben, heeft sie meestlick vergadert”.

⁴³ C. Lingier, “‘Hongerich Na Den Worden Godes.’ Reading to the Community in Women’s Convents of the Modern Devotion”, in *Lesen, Schreiben, Sticken Und Erinnern. Beiträge Zur Kultur- Und Sozialgeschichte Mittelalterlicher Frauenkloster*, ed. G. Signori, *Religion in Der Geschichte: Kirche, Kultue Und Gesellschaft 7* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2000), 130–31.

⁴⁴ While these communities were nominally Franciscan, they remained largely independent from the Franciscan Order. Instead, they were tied to the Chapter of Utrecht, which was founded in 1399 and is now considered part of the Modern Devotion. See B. Roest, H. van Engen, and G. Verhoeven, ‘De clarissen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden’, in *Monastiek observantisme en Moderne Devotie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008), 45–47; K. Goudriaan, ‘De derde orde als onderdeel van de Moderne Devotie’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 74 (2000): 9–32.

own chapel from 1459 onwards (the Sisters adopted the Augustinian rule in 1460).⁴⁵ It is implied that some of these communities allowed laypeople to visit during the *collatio* and attend the meetings as well: the convents of St Clara Nazareth and St Catharina-Schagen were ordered to only perform *collationes* with the doors closed (that is, in private) when services were being held in the parochial church.⁴⁶ If the doors were open (making the *collatio* a publicly accessible affair), the *collatio* might draw laypeople away from the church. The *collatio* as a practice thus was well known across the Modern Devotion. Although this thesis focusses specifically on the Brothers of the Common Life, they were not the only ones who considered it an important practice to communally read a text and add some personal remarks of admonitions.

From the *consuetudines*, it is clear that it was not uncommon for communities of Brothers of the Common Life – as well as in other Modern Devout communities – to collectively read and discuss a religious text, and that on Sundays and feast days students and other interested people could visit for some devout admonitions. While this activity is variably called *admonitio*, *collatio*, or *colloquium* in the *consuetudines*, this thesis opts to consistently use the word *collatio* because of its resemblance to the Middle Dutch *collacie* or modern Dutch *collatie*, the terms which are commonly used in the available source material as well as the secondary literature. Even among the Brothers in Zwolle, it seems the term *collatio* was used for what, according to the *consuetudines*, was the *admonitio*: chronicler Johannes de Voecht wrote that Dirc van Herxen brought his listeners to great devotion when he *fecit collacionem*, “as we do among clerics”.⁴⁷ Notably, the Middle Dutch *collacie* as well as the modern Dutch word *collatie* could and can be used to denote both the practice of *collatio* and the text that was read during the *collatio*.⁴⁸ To clearly distinguish the two aspects – both the dynamic practice as well as the

⁴⁵ M. van Luijk, ‘Bruiden van Christus. De tweede religieuze vrouwenbeweging in Leiden en Zwolle, 1380-1580.’ (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2003), 74. For the connection of these communities to the Modern Devotion, see 27–29; for the status of the houses, see 30–34.

⁴⁶ Van Luijk, ‘Bruiden van Christus’, 74.

⁴⁷ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 64: *Sed et idem ipse aliquando eis fecit collacionem (...) sicut clericis facimus*.

⁴⁸ The terms *collatio* and *collacie/collatie* are indeed highly context sensitive, even in Modern Devout sources. In some cases, it might simply mean ‘collected’ or ‘a collection’, from the Latin verb *conferre*, for instance, in the *cartularium* of the Heer Florenshuis: Deventer, Stadsarchief 1056 no. 1, f. 44v: *Hec sequens copia tractatus (...) ex collatione wilhelmi krijt*. In other cases, it might refer to a meeting or gathering: the word *collatie* frequently appears in the municipal financial accounts of Deventer, where it refers to a type of council meeting with food and drink on a feast day, for instance in 1453: NL-DvHCO, HCO Stadsarchief Deventer, Stadsarchief, ID 0698, Cameraars, inv. nr. 202576:351, p. 6: “It. op den selven dach [=Onser Lieven Vrouwen dach Assumptio] scepenen ende Raet ter collacien op die Steerne [=a tavern] wantet der vier hogetide een was 1 lb. 17 kr.” In some instances, *collatie* can even be synonymous with ‘sermon’. Such is the case with the so-called *Jhesus collacien*, in which Christ and the Holy Spirit preach to a Franciscan Tertiary during Lent. See P. Baaij, ed., *Jhesus collacien. Een laatmiddeleeuwse prekenbundel uit de kring der tertiariissen* (Proefschrift: Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1962); Th. Mertens, ‘Private Revelation and Public Relevance in the Middle Dutch Sermon Cycle “Jhesus Collacien”’, *Medieval Sermon Studies* 53 (2009): 33–42.

textual base – this dissertation uses the term *collatio* to refer to the practice: the reading of a devotional text to an audience, potentially followed by discussion or personal exhortations. The text that was used or was intended to be used will be referred to as a collation – which in the English-language literature has mostly been used to denote the practice, whereas the texts read during it have not received a particular designation at all⁴⁹ – and the collections of texts intended for use in the *collatio* which form the main corpus of this thesis (see below, paragraph 2.4) will be referred to as books of collations. As well as mirroring the vernacular, this terminology makes it less confusing to maintain the distinction between *collatio* and collation, while emphasising the connection between different modes of communication.

2.2 The *collatio* and the Brothers of the Common Life in prior research⁵⁰

Prior research on the Brothers of the Common Life frequently mentions the *collatio*, often to illustrate their educational activities and outreach to the public. However, the practice itself rarely gets more than a passing glance, despite it being considered “a peculiar form of catechesis” intrinsically linked to the Brothers of the Common Life during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵¹ In the academic biography of Dirc van Herxen, dating from 1926, Philippina Knierim recognises his pastoral activities but does not dwell on the medieval praxis. As the First Book of Collations was not yet rediscovered at the time, the *collatio* is acknowledged in passing but not explored further.⁵² Cornelis van der Wansem maintained a narrower definition of *collatio*: only the conversations between the Brothers in the evening are labelled as such, while the Brothers also provided *preekjes* (‘little sermons’) to the lay population.⁵³ This characterisation, however, has not taken hold, and it would have been disputed by the Brothers themselves. As the previous section showed, the surviving *consuetudines* stress the need to perform the *collatio* “not in a preaching manner.”⁵⁴ The

⁴⁹ For instance Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 284–88. Compare the English summary in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 249–61.

⁵⁰ This *status quaestionis* is only concerned with the research on the *collatio* among the Brothers of the Common Life, thereby leaving out the *collatio* practised by the Sisters of the Common Life or other Modern Devout communities. For the *collatio* in female communities (in particular Diepenveen), see W. Scheepsma, *Deemoed en devotie. De koorvrouwen van Windesheim en hun geschriften* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1997), 70–74; Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries*, 56–61, 76–82.

⁵¹ A. Troelstra, *De toestand der catechese in Nederland gedurende de vóór-Reformatorische eeuw* (Groningen: Wolters, 1901), 147–48.

⁵² P.H.J. Knierim, *Dirc van Herxen (1381-1457), Rector van het Zwolse fraterhuis* (Amsterdam: H.J. Paris, 1926), 58–59.

⁵³ C. van der Wansem, *Het ontstaan en de geschiedenis van der Broederschap van het Gemene Leven tot 1400*, Publicaties op het gebied der geschiedenis en der philologie, vierde reeks 12 (Leuven: Universiteitsbibliotheek/Universitaire Uitgaven, 1958), 123.

⁵⁴ For instance Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *non quidem per modum predicationis*.

Brothers did not intend to literally preach, not even a little sermon; the *collatio* was supposed to be a humble exhortation with room for mutual conversation.

In the meantime, Jan Deschamps had identified part of Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations. The manuscript had already been rediscovered in 1925 by Willem de Vreese, but only in 1959 did Deschamps recognise it as the first part of the First Book of Collations.⁵⁵ Deschamps also found a second manuscript in Utrecht, which contained both the first and the second part of the First Book of Collations.⁵⁶ Later still he claimed to have found the Second Book of Collations, but this identification is yet to be confirmed.⁵⁷ Even so, none of the rediscovered books of collations were known to Regnerus Post when he finished his imposing *The Modern Devotion*. Post mentions the *collatio* only thrice: combined, half a page of examination of the practice in a total of nearly 700 pages.⁵⁸

In 1992, Thom Mertens presented a paper during the colloquium, 'Der Codex im Gebrauch', which was published as an article in 1996.⁵⁹ Mertens was the first who published on the *collatio* at length, maintaining the distinctions between *collatio mutua* and *admonitio* as they are found in the Zwolle- *consuetudines*, whilst also acknowledging that the Modern Devout used the term *collatio* in a large variety of circumstances. He also touched upon some surviving books of collations and on several collations which were written *post facto*, originating in female convents.⁶⁰ As to his description of the *collatio* with laypeople in attendance, Mertens' article

⁵⁵ On the discovery of this manuscript, see W. de Vreese, 'Die materie van den sonden', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 1 (1927): 191–203. The manuscript is now kept in Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek BPL 2231. On its identification as the First Book of Collations, see J. Deschamps, 'De Dietse kollatieboeken van Dirc van Herxen (1381-1457), rector van het Zwolse Fraterhuis', *Handelingen van het XXIIIe Vlaams Filologencongres*, 1959, 186–93. For a more extensive account, see L. van Beek, 'Gelukkige momenten in de handschriftenjacht. Handschrift BPL 2231 in het vizier', in *Aangeraakt: Boeken in contact met hun lezers. Een bundel opstellen voor Wim Gerritsen en Paul Hoftijzer*, ed. K. van Ommen, A. Vrolijk, and G. Warnar, Kleine publicaties van de Leidse Universiteitsbibliotheek 75 (Leiden: Scaliger Instituut, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, 2007), 34–42; G. Warnar, 'A Medieval Dutch Homiliary and the Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta', in *Manuscript Studies in the Low Countries. Proceedings of the 'Groninger Codicologendagen' in Friesland, 2000*, ed. A.M.W. As-Vijvers, J.M.M. Hermans, and G.C. Huisman, Boekhistorische Reeks, III (Groningen: Forsten, 2008), 319–29.

⁵⁶ Kept in Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek 3 L 6.

⁵⁷ Kept in Amsterdam, UB I G 47. Deschamps first voiced his suspicions in 1959, and he identified the work as the Second Book of Collations in 1987: Deschamps, 'De Dietse kollatieboeken van Dirc van Herxen [1959]'; J. Deschamps, 'De Dietse collatieboeken van Dirc van Herxen, rector van het Zwolse fraterhuis', *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 1 (1987): 408–12. However, the reasons for his certainty are unclear, and L. van Beek doubts the attribution, calling for a close analysis of the manuscript: Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 94–95. Such an analysis, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis; while intriguing, the manuscript will not be included as one of the books of collations under investigation.

⁵⁸ Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 236, 245, 593.

⁵⁹ Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex'.

⁶⁰ Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex', 170–81. On the books of collation of Dirc van Herxen Mertens refers to Deschamps, yet he does not mention the supposed Second Book of Collations.

is essentially a paraphrased account of the *admonitio* on the basis of the *consuetudines* of Zwolle: the prescriptive text is taken as a clear representation of how the meetings would have occurred. However, despite acknowledging that the written collations obscure any indications of a true dialogue between the Brothers and their visitors, Mertens considered it a certainty that the *collatio* for students and interested laypeople would often take the form of an admonishing sermon.⁶¹

A first, exploratory examination of the texts in relation to the *collatio* was only published in 1993 by Fons van Buuren, who pointed out the links between several collations and the liturgical year.⁶² In his monumental study on the Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life published in 2008, John Van Engen also devoted several pages to the *collatio*, considering it the Brothers' "preaching in effect" while acknowledging their hesitation to call it preaching.⁶³ Van Engen mainly delved into the legal defence of the practice by Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, and he looked at the surviving *consuetudines* for an account of the *collatio*. He also found several Brothers who were involved by going through Jacobus de Voecht's *Narratio* and *vitae* from the community in Deventer (see chapter 3). Shortly thereafter, research on the First Book of Collations was taken further by Lydeke van Beek, who examined the position of the work in Dirc van Herxen's complete oeuvre, and who took the first strides in a textual analysis of some of his collations.⁶⁴ The use of the First Book of Collations and the proceedings of the *collatio*, however, remained in the background: the practice was acknowledged and tentatively explored but not examined much further. My own attempt to embed the *collatio* in a theoretical framework of communication of knowledge was published in 2017 as the result of preliminary study into the *collatio* as a 'community of learning': a dynamic practice where religious knowledge was shared and communicated between the Brothers of the Common Life and visiting laypeople.⁶⁵ This article opened the way for the current thesis by introducing the topic and establishing a theoretical framework to allow research on the *collatio* to go beyond textual

⁶¹ Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex', 168: "Sicherlich nahm auch die *admonitio* für Schüler und interessierte Bürger oft die Form der ermahnenen Predigt an."

⁶² A.M.J. van Buuren, "'Wat materien gheliken op sonnendage ende hoechtijde te lesen.'" Het Middelnederlandse collatieboek van Dirc van Herxen', in *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*, ed. Th. Mertens e.a. (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1993), 245–63.

⁶³ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 281–88, quote on p. 284.

⁶⁴ L. van Beek, 'Hellepijn of hemelpoort? De vier uitersten in het Eerste Collatieboek van Dirc van Herxen (1381-1457)', *Madoc* 18 (2007): 96–103; L. van Beek, 'Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen. Devote opvattingen over huwelijk en kuisheid in het Eerste Collatieboek van Dirc van Herxen (1381-1457)', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 80 (2009): 281–312; and in particular Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*.

⁶⁵ Boonstra, 'Causa Spiritualis Instructionis'.

analysis and towards considering the meetings an opportunity for laypeople and religious professionals to exchange knowledge, and to both contribute to the circulation of information.

This short exploration of the available literature on the *collatio* among the Brothers of the Common Life shows there is, in fact, rather little available. While the *collatio* is often acknowledged, its dynamic nature has remained largely ignored. This does the *collatio* an injustice, as it entails more than simple conversations between Brothers and laypeople or top-down instructions. The use of texts in the vernacular reveals a communication of knowledge between religious communities and the urban population, knowledge that could be further disseminated and employed in personal devotional practices. The Brothers of the Common Life opened up their houses and invited interested laypeople to engage in the communal reading of a text followed by humble exhortations. As this thesis will show, the invitation for students and laypeople to join in the *collatio* entailed more than a temporary visit to the Brothers: it encouraged the imitation of the Brothers' own outlook towards using religious texts for personal devotional improvement.

2.4 A religious text in the vernacular: the surviving books of collations

Of the dynamic, oral communication of knowledge during the *collatio* no known direct traces remain: the spoken word is fleeting and forever lost to time. Whereas preached sermons at times were written down by the preacher or his listeners, similar accounts have not been found for the *collationes* of the Brothers. What does remain, however, are the texts around which the readings were constructed: vernacular religious texts stood at the core of the *collatio*, as according to the *consuetudines*, any such text of some substance could be used as the basis for the *collatio*. Possible options include Lives of the Saints,⁶⁶ or even the exemplary Lives or *vitae* of great names within the Modern Devotion,⁶⁷ notebooks or *rapiaria* of the Brothers,⁶⁸ or texts from the genre of *speculum*- literature.⁶⁹ The Brothers of the Common Life read extensively to advance in virtue and ascend spiritually; their familiarity with beneficial devotional texts allowed them to choose a suitable text to read in the *collatio*. To aid in the selection of texts suitable and

⁶⁶ On the basis of its table of contents – which follows the liturgical calendar rather than the structure of the text – Mertens has suggested Deventer, Stads- en Athenaeumbibliotheek 101 F 9 was used as a book of collations as well: Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex', 172.

⁶⁷ The Brothers in Emmerich made use of the *dicta et facta* from Geert Grote and Florens Radewijns during their own *collationes*: Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam*, 101.

⁶⁸ See Van Engen, 'The Virtues, the Brothers, and the Schools'; also Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex', 172.

⁶⁹ As suggested by P. Bange, *Spiegels der Christenen. Zelfreflectie en ideaalbeeld in laat-middeleeuwse moralistisch-didactische traktaten*, *Middeleeuwse Studies*, II (Nijmegen: Centrum voor Middeleeuwse Studies, 1986), 232.

profitable for a lay audience books of collations were composed, most famously by Dirc van Herxen, of whom chronicler Jacobus de Voecht attests that he wrote two large books of vernacular collations.⁷⁰ The books of collations are thus the most direct witnesses of the meetings as they provided the focal point – the religious texts spurred further discussion and exhortations. The books and the individual collations they contain reveal in themselves the process of communication during the *collatio*.⁷¹ The sober text did not cause distractions, while paragraph marks, rubricated titles, and underlined *auctoritates* all helped to structure the text (see, for instance, Figure 1 on p. 37). The First Book of Collations and the book of collations London, BL Add. 10287 also provided the user with a table of contents, so that a specific collation could be found quickly. The First Book of Collations kept as Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 even includes a reading key, guiding the choice of collation for the *collatio* on a specific day. While theoretically any text could be used for the *collatio*, these books of collations were specifically designed to be used for the collective reading.

The collations contained within these books show how the Brothers engaged with their visitors: the topics they wished to discuss, and the manner in which they communicated their devotional knowledge.⁷² Moreover, the collations are bound up in a web of authoritative texts, showcasing how during the *collatio* the Brothers made use of their own textual experience to communicate the Modern Devout spirituality. Four books of collations thus form the main corpus for this dissertation: Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations, the anonymous Book of Wedlock, and the unnamed books of collations kept as Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287. These will be used as a 'textual mirror' to examine the *collatio* through its reflection in the books of collations.⁷³ In the following, the books of collations will be introduced as surviving

⁷⁰ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 55–56, 64. Also see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 27, 78–79.

⁷¹ Compare E. Rebillard, 'Sermons, Audience, Preacher', in *Preaching in the Patristic Era: Sermons, Preachers, and Audiences in the Latin West*, ed. A. Dupont et al., A New History of the Sermon 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 93: on the relation between preaching, sermons, and modern research, Rebillard notes that "[t]hough in most cases we have no direct record of the texts as they were actually delivered, sermons, more than other texts, bear traces of the process of communication itself. Thus we need to understand what we can learn about this process through the evidence of sermons."

⁷² A table of contents of the examined books of collations has been included as Appendix 1.

⁷³ This selection excludes the manuscript Brussels, KB 2559-62, which includes a part on f. 180r–253v supposedly identified by Deschamps as a book of collations (quoted from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 175–76. This identification is maintained in K. Stoker and T. Verbeij, *Collecties op orde. Middelnederlandse handschriften uit kloosters en semi-religieuze gemeenschappen in de Nederlanden*, vol. II, *Miscellanea Neerlandica* 16 (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 219. However, the manuscript does not have a table of contents or a reading key to aid its potential use during the *collatio*; nor do its supposed collations carry clear headings to mark their subject; nor is the term collation used in the text itself. For these reasons, I do not consider the manuscript to be a book of collations.

material objects, that is, as the manuscripts in which they are kept; an important aspect of the collations since they are not loose texts, but are grouped together in a single manuscript.

Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations survives in two manuscripts, though one of them is incomplete: manuscript Leiden, UB BPL 2231 contains only the first part, the collations on the vices. The full First Book of Collations also includes a part on virtues and is kept as Utrecht, UB 3 L 6.⁷⁴ The collations present in both versions are no different from each other, and for this reason any reference in this thesis to the First Book of Collations is made to Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 unless otherwise noted. Van Herxen's First Book of Collations draws extensively from a Latin book of collations he had composed earlier – his *collationale* – of which two remaining copies are known: Brussels, KB IV 124 and Utrecht, UB 8 E 29. These Latin books of collations were used during the *collationes* among the Brothers themselves, when they read and discussed a religious text. The relation between Dirc van Herxen's Latin and vernacular books of collations is one of translation and adaptation: to make the texts suitable for use during the *collatio* with students and interested laypeople, Van Herxen not only translated the collations but he modified them as well. References and quotations are expanded for the vernacular collations, and a number of collations are left out while a few new ones are added.⁷⁵ The changes reflect a desire to adapt the Latin *collationale* to a new audience: not the Brothers amongst themselves, but the lay visitors who also wished to participate in the open *collationes*.

Of the two manuscripts containing the vernacular First Book of Collations, Leiden, UB BPL 2231 is the older one. The main text of the manuscript was copied around 1425–1450 by a single scribe, with a second scribe later making correction in the texts and adding the table of contents, the rubrication, and the page numbers. This second scribe also added an ownership mark on f. 3v which ties the manuscript to the monastery of Gaesdonck, near the city of Goch (in modern-day Germany).⁷⁶ A later note, supposedly from the middle of the sixteenth century, confirms this as it states that Goch “lies three or four hours from Bommel.”⁷⁷ The manuscript

⁷⁴ For a more detailed description of the physical manuscripts, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 205–8.

⁷⁵ On the the Latin *collationale* as well as its relation to the vernacular book of collations, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 106–24, 130–51.

⁷⁶ Leiden, UB BPL 2231 f. 3v: “Item dit boeck hoert in dat regulieren cloester in der Gaesdonck bi Goch”.

⁷⁷ Leiden, UB BPL 2231 f. 1v: “Goch, leit 3 of 4 uiren van Bommel”. The precise location of this ‘Bommel’ is unclear: De Vreese suggests it refers to Zaltbommel, which would tie the manuscript to the monastery Sint-Pieterswiël. Van Beek questioned this claim, as Zaltbommel might not have been reachable in the time stated; on a suggestion of J. de Putter, she suggests a link to Maasbommel, near Oss. This would still make a distance of some 45 km as the crow flies; quite the distance to cross in 3 to 4 hours. Perhaps the note refers to Bommel, near Nijmegen, which is only some 30 km from Goch; a distance which seems more feasible to cross in the given time span. Compare De Vreese, ‘Die materie van den sonden’, 196; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 205n7.

does not contain any contemporary traces of use, such as marginal notations; nor does it have any decoration with the exception of a decorated initial on f. 4r. The parchment used to copy the First Book of Collations is not of a particularly high quality, leading Van Beek to remark that “overall, the codex conveys a neat, yet sober impression.”⁷⁸

The full copy of the First Book of Collations Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 has more decorations, though it is by no means lavishly embellished: the description ‘neat, yet sober’ is equally applicable. The entire manuscript is copied on paper by the same scribe between 8 March and 21 July 1445, as the colophon on f. 195v attests.⁷⁹ In total, the manuscript has five decorated initials: the very first collation opens with a blue initial embellished with red, with red linework going down the margin.⁸⁰ The second part of the Book – on virtues – also opens with an illuminated initial, now in red and with green and grey decoration and linework.⁸¹ The book is still in its original contemporary leather binding with brass locks, clearly establishing the unity of the First Book of Collations. This is further reinforced by the table of contents, which lists all individual collations for ease of use. Moreover, the manuscript contains a reading key, suggesting or prescribing the use of specific collations on specific days.⁸² Manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 is the only book of collations which contains such a reading key. An ownership mark on f. 1r ties the book to the tertiaries of St Agatha in Amersfoort, though it is unknown whether it was written there or at what point it entered its library: the ownership mark is written in a different hand than the rest of the text. The use of the manuscript among the tertiaries of St Agatha is unclear; it is not known whether they used the collations themselves or kept the text for the benefit of their father-confessor to read during *collationes*.

Both copies of the First Book of Collations are quite large books – manuscript Leiden, UB BPL 2231 measures some 250 by 177 mm with Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 coming in at 297 by 215 mm – yet the sheer number of pages is what truly gives them their size: the Leiden version contains 149 folia, and the Utrecht version comprises no fewer than 197 folia.⁸³ The unwieldy size of the manuscripts might inform how they were used, as their weight makes it unlikely they were

⁷⁸ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 79: “(...) de codex biedt over het algemeen genomen een verzorgde, maar sobere indruk.”

⁷⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 195v: “Dit boec is ghescreven int jaer ons Heren M CCCC ende XLV. Ende het is begonnen des manendages na midtvasten ende gheeyndet op Sunte Marien Magdalenen avont”; quoted from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 206.

⁸⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 4r.

⁸¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 106r.

⁸² On this reading key and its possible relation to the liturgical calendar, see Van Buuren, ‘Wat materien gheliken’.

⁸³ Measurements taken from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 205–6.

held up when they were read during the *collatio*. More likely, the Brother performing the reading would make use of a lectern or table, or be seated with the book on his lap. It is unlikely the First Book of Collations was used in the preparation of new collations by providing a general source of inspiration or for reference. For one, the collations as they are presented are ready for use: they provide a clear narrative with a good selection of relevant sources. Moreover, the references given in the collations are too general to easily find a specific source; ‘a sermon by Augustine’ does not readily guide the reader in the hunt for more material.⁸⁴ The manuscripts themselves bear no traces of such a use, either: at no point is the text annotated; there are no *notae* in the margins – there are only the clear paragraph marks and rubrication to guide the reader along the text, and help them keep their place when reading aloud.

The two books of collations kept as London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549 are not identical, yet they share a core collection of some 20 collations. To this number, the Brussels version adds another 10 collations (for a total of 30 collations), whereas the London version contains four unique collations (for a total of 24).⁸⁵ While the texts are not labelled as collations in the manuscripts themselves, they strongly resemble the collations in the First Book of Collations and the Book of Wedlock: reasonably short texts on a clearly defined subject, making use of *auctoritates* and *exempla* to bring a point across. The choice of subjects and the spirituality expressed in the texts are also very similar to those for the other books of collations.

The London manuscript seems to be the older of the two: Deschamps supposes it was written around 1460 in the area around Utrecht.⁸⁶ An ownership mark and colophon are written on f. 2r; though both have at some point been rendered largely illegible: a large part is scratched out, and other words are lost through the degradation of the manuscript over time. The entire manuscript is written on parchment in the same hand, as are the headings of the collations. The London version shows some traces of use, in that at several points a *nota* sign is added, or *exempla* in the text are marked with a red “exempel” in the margin. The initials alternate between red and blue ink; other than that, the only decoration of the book of collations is the initial on f. 7r (in red and blue, with linework in the same colours). The manuscript as a whole

⁸⁴ This is especially clear when compared to the Latin *collationale*, written by Dirc van Herxen for internal use: the references made in the Latin texts are far more precise – see paragraph 5.1 for an example. Also compare the section on the Book of Wedlock in this paragraph, below.

⁸⁵ On the physical manuscripts, see primarily J. Deschamps, ‘Middel nederlandse vertalingen van Super modo vivendi (7de hoofdstuk) en De libris teutonicalibus van Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen. Dl. 2’, *Handelingen van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal-en Letterkunde* 15 (1961): 213–14. Also see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 180–86.

⁸⁶ Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 214.

has two more embellished initials, on f. 2v and f. 86r (both in blue, with red linework). Most of the manuscript is taken in by the collations (f. 7r–85v), though it also contains on f. 2v–6v a section with prayers (the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*) and elements of Christian doctrine (such as the Twelve Articles of Faith and the Ten Commandments), and nine Lives of saints and three *exempla* on f. 86r–132v. This suggests that, while the manuscript could be used to provide collations for the *collatio*, it might also have functioned in the preparation of new collations or allowed for impromptu *collationes* explaining these important elements of the Faith. The pages preceding the book of collations proper provided a quick reference to such lists as the Twelve Articles of Faith, whereas the saintly Lives and *exempla* following it could be scoured for inspiration, or be inserted into a new collation. Meanwhile, the index on f. 4v–5v, listing the collations with their page numbers in order, allowed the reader to quickly find a collation ready for use.

Manuscript Brussels, KB 19549 has a more worldly character, as it also includes collations on dancing and gambling. Deschamps placed the origin of the manuscript in Holland around 1470.⁸⁷ Written on paper, the manuscript was copied by a woman: a colophon on f. 140r asks the reader to pray “a Hail Mary for the (female) writer, for the love of Jesus. God be praised.”⁸⁸ However, the manuscript does not have an ownership mark, so that it is unclear whether it belonged to a female religious community as well. In any case, the subjects of the collations – and the way in which they are treated – closely respond to the other books of collations, so that an origin under the influence of the Modern Devotion seems likely. Throughout, the plain text is only embellished with red initials, paragraph marks, or the underlining or rubrication of *auctoritates*. After the last collation the text immediately continues from f. 115v in the same hand with an adaptation of the Middle Dutch text *Des coninx summe*.⁸⁹ A devotional text aimed at laypeople in its own right, the inclusion of *Des coninx summe* in this book of collations reflects the notion that any devout text could be used as a collation.⁹⁰

As the manuscripts London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549 share a large number of the same texts, even when compared on the level of individual words or phrases, there is clearly a connection between them. They are not the same book of collations: some collations have the

⁸⁷ Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 214.

⁸⁸ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 140r: “Een *Ave Maria* voer die scrijfter, om die mynne Jhesu. God si ghelooff”.

⁸⁹ D.C. Tinbergen, *Des Coninx Summe*, Bibliotheek van Middel nederlandse Letterkunde (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff’s Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1907), 203.

⁹⁰ See P. Bange, ‘The Good Pastor in Late Medieval Dutch Texts’, *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 83 (2003): 132–33.

same heading and subject yet present different texts (see, for instance, how both manuscripts present the issue of religious literature in the vernacular, discussed in paragraph 5.1). Precisely how these manuscripts relate to each other – whether they share a common source, originated in related communities, or made use of the same translation(s) – is as of yet unclear, and lies outside of the scope of this thesis. Parts of the collation on vernacular literature are also found in four other manuscripts: Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek 9661; Leiden, UB Ltk. 224; Kassel, Landesbibliothek Ms. Theol. Fol. 56; and Brussels, KB 2285-301.⁹¹ Deschamps also suggests a link to the Collatiehuis in Gouda. Supposedly, the Brothers there owned a book of collations in the vernacular starting with the words ‘Petrus Damiani’, which, indeed, are the first words in both London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549, though Deschamps only noted this with regard to the Brussels version.⁹² Van Beek deemed this link ‘promising’ and confirmed that the collations would fit in quite well with the interests of the urban population of Gouda, but she did not explore it any further.⁹³ In her work on Hendrik Herp, first rector of the Brothers of the Common Life in Gouda, and his *Spiegel der volcomenheit*, Anna Dlabáčová was more convinced of the connection between Brussels, KB 19549 and the Collatiehuis, as she also noted the inclusion of *Des coninx summe* and examples taken from the *Vier ustersten*, *Vitae patrum*, and Thomas of Cantimpré’s *Bonum universale de apibus* – texts which were also certainly available in the library of the Collatiehuis.⁹⁴ It is not impossible that either of the two books of collations considered here has a direct connection to the house in Gouda, but, while intriguing, such a link has yet to be proven.

A somewhat atypical book of collations is found in manuscript Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I. Unlike other books of collations, the so-called Book of Wedlock (*Boec vander echtscap*) mainly deals with two major themes rather than a multitude of subjects: the justified availability of religious knowledge to laypeople, and several aspects of marriage, ranging from the physical to the spiritual. The other books of collations provide a far larger range of topics. The manuscript, written on both paper and parchment leaves, effectively comprises two books, titled the *Boec vander echtscap* (‘Book of Wedlock’) and the *Boec vander reynicheit der weduwen staede* (‘Book on the Purity of the Widowed State’).⁹⁵ These titles are present in the manuscript itself,

⁹¹ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 182n105; Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 213.

⁹² Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 213n1.

⁹³ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 184–85.

⁹⁴ A. Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie. De Spiegel der volcomenheit van Hendrik Herp en de dynamiek van laatmiddeleeuwse tekstverspreiding*, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen*, CXLIX (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 36.

⁹⁵ For a more detailed description of the manuscript, see J. Deschamps, ‘Middelnederlandse vertalingen van Super modo vivendi (7de hoofdstuk) en De libris teutonicalibus van Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen. Dl. 1’, *Handelingen*

both in Middle Dutch (on f. 134v and f. 169v, respectively) and in Latin (f. 140r). The manuscript has been identified as a book of collations by Deschamps, who suspected the manuscript to have been composed in ‘some house of the Brothers’ in the Eastern Low Countries in the first half of the fifteenth century.⁹⁶ The author might even have known Florens Radewijns: on f. 24r, he remarks how a monastery in Prague celebrates the Divine Office in the vernacular “as all who went to school there well know”.⁹⁷ Though he was not the only one to study in Prague, Radewijns did indeed receive the title *magister artium* in that city.

The Book of Wedlock also contains more texts than a collection of collations.⁹⁸ The first thirteen texts (on f. 1r–106r) are each labelled a collation at the top of the page, and indeed are reminiscent of the collations written by Dirc van Herxen. Following these texts, however, is a text in Latin on sexual relations of married couples (f. 106v–120r), which is more like a treatise; the Book of Wedlock then continues with another four texts in the vernacular on the spiritual marriage which are identifiable as collations by their form, even though they are unmarked in the manuscript. The Book of Wedlock closes with a Middle Dutch translation of Geert Grote’s *De matrimonio*, and another Latin text which considers sexual intercourse. Immediately following this is the Book on the Purity of the Widowed State (f. 140r–168v), a lengthy text on the spiritual blessings widows can enjoy through chaste and sober living. The text is written in the vernacular and discusses fifteen points on the love between man and wife as well; yet its length makes it unlikely it was used as a collation. Still, the Book on the Purity of the Widowed State was very much part of the same unit: the text is written in the same hand as the Book of Wedlock and perhaps composed by the same author. Moreover, the switch between the two

van de Koninklijke Zuidnederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal-en Letterkunde 14 (1960): 74–77; P. Bange, ‘Inv. No. 54’, in *Moderne Devotie: Figuren en facetten: tentoonstelling ter herdenking van het sterfjaar van Geert Grote, 1384-1984: catalogus*, ed. A.J. Geurts (Nijmegen: Katholieke Universiteit, 1984), 162–67. Also see P. Bange, ‘So is echtscap goet mer sy is niet te raden aen te gaen; kanteekeningen bij een vijftiende-eeuws collatieboek’, in *Codex in context. Studies over codicologie, kartuizergeschiedenis en laatmiddeleeuwse geestesleven, aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. A. Gruis*, ed. Chr. de Backer, A.J. Geurts, and A.G. Weiler (Nijmegen/Grave: Alfa, 1985), 37–52; Mertens, ‘Collatio und Codex’, 173–74; Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 300–301; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 178–80.

⁹⁶ Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 1’, 76.

⁹⁷ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 24r: “Ende die Slaven hebben een cloester off monster te Praghe in Bohemien, daer sij in singen ende lesen hoeren gotliken dienst in Slaefschier spraeken, als sij wael weten die daer ter scholen gelegen hebben”. Deschamps already suggested this link to Florens Radewijns: Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 1’, 76–77.

⁹⁸ For a schematic overview of the texts contained in the Book of Wedlock, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 247–48.

books occurs on the same page and is duly noted: “Here ends the Book of Wedlock, composed of [texts in] the vernacular and in Latin; now follows [the Book] on the State of Widows”.⁹⁹

Thom Mertens did not consider the Book of Wedlock a proper book of collations but suspected it was read in place of the *collatio*; where the text had *collacie* as a heading, it would have meant ‘chapter’. However, Mertens also notes that the Book of Wedlock might have functioned in small groups where parts were read in place of mutual admonishment – a setting which rather closely resembles the *collatio*.¹⁰⁰ Lydeke van Beek considered this an unlikely scenario: the included Latin texts rather suggested a use by a religious professional, in the context of their apostolate.¹⁰¹ Another option is that the manuscript was used by a religious professional as a book of collations during the *collatio* or to compose new collations. At several points in the manuscript a *nota* is written in the margin, and throughout, authoritative texts are clearly labelled (underlined in red) with references to specific places. In the context of the *collatio* a Brother could use parts of the text to prepare his own collations, while having the option to fall back on the vernacular collations when the need arose. The vernacular collations are ready to be read in the *collatio* as they are, yet the identification of *auctoritates* present in the text would give the Brothers enough handholds to look for further literature in preparation.

⁹⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 140r: *Explicit liber de matrimonio mixtum de vulgari et latino opositus. Sequitur de continencia viduali*. Curiously, on f. 134v the end of the Book of Wedlock is also noted in the vernacular: “Hier eindet dat boec vander echtscap (...)”. The Latin text on f. 134v–140r thus exists as a part of the Book of Wedlock, as well as not being part of it.

¹⁰⁰ Mertens, ‘Collatio und Codex’, 174.

¹⁰¹ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 180.

Figure 1 London, BL Add. 10287 f. 59r

Opening of a collation on marriage, with paratextual elements structuring the collation marked.

Despite having their own peculiarities, the books of collations thus have strong similarities in their presentation of religious texts in the vernacular to be used during the *collatio*. This observation is equally true for the texts they contain, the individual collations. Though they are found in different books of collations and deal with a variety of topics in differing ways,¹⁰² some common elements can be identified to define what is ‘a collation’. The contents of a given collation are commonly indicated with a (rubricated and/or underlined) heading at the start of the text, marking the beginning of the collation. A larger initial, two or three lines high, also draws attention to the beginning of the collation. The

discussion of a topic can differ drastically between collations: some present a variety of authoritative excerpts to make their point, others translate one or two relevant authoritative texts dealing with the subject. In both cases, however, the collations explicitly attribute their message to the original sources by naming them and referring to the texts from which the collation is composed. Some collations are more precise in their attribution than others, but rarely do they claim their words as fully their own.¹⁰³ The attributions are clearly marked by underlining and/or rubrication as well. Paragraph marks are used to structure the texts. This is not only the case when the collation discusses a clear list of items (though if such is the case, the items are generally clearly numbered as well) but also when a new point is presented. When the collation contains one or more *exempla* – and they frequently do, to the point that sometimes collations

¹⁰² For an analysis of the contents of several collations, see paragraph 4.2 as well as chapter 5 in general.

¹⁰³ An exception to this is the collations on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* in the First Book of Collations; see paragraph 5.5. The collations on having religious texts in the vernacular are also not attributed to Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen despite being adaptations of his work – instead, they refer to the authoritative texts Zerbolt used himself. See paragraph 5.1.

are composed from *exempla* exclusively – these are generally clearly marked: the word *exempel*, underlined and/or rubricated, is included in the text (in a form such as, ‘On this point, we can find an example...’) or in the margin of the page. As the books of collations contain little in the way of decoration – at most, simple linework adorns a select few initials – this makes for a sober, highly readable page in which the information is neatly presented.

The collations are thus clearly structured, and their information is presented in such a way as to aid its communication. The reader of the text could easily navigate the book of collations, making use of the paratextual elements provided – including the table of contents in the manuscripts Utrecht, UB 3 L6, Leiden, UB BPL 2231, and London, BL Add. 10287, and the reading key in Utrecht, UB 3 L 6. Some of these elements, such as the clear identification of authoritative sources, were likely included in the vocalisation of the text during the *collatio*. The references are not set apart from the rest of the text but are fully included in the collation; rather than a note in the margin, the collations introduce their sources and include them in the running text. They seem to be for the benefit of the listener, not the independent reader: in most cases, the reference is only to the *auctoritates* or at most a specific work, making it difficult to look up the original citation.¹⁰⁴ The division of a text into a number of clearly defined points, structured with paragraph marks, would also translate well to the oral communication of knowledge in the *collatio*: lay audience were well accustomed to such techniques, for instance, from regularly attending the sermon. Preachers were eager for their message to be remembered by their audience, and the methods used by the preacher to compose, recall, and deliver his sermon allowed his audience to follow its overall structure and store it in their own memory.¹⁰⁵ In the collations, and subsequently during the *collatio*, the Brothers made use of the same techniques by presenting a clear ordering of information, with the overall structure of the text as well as its authoritative sources clearly signposted. The collations also frequently employ *exempla* to illustrate or emphasise a point – just as for sermon preaching, the *exemplum* was an

¹⁰⁴ The more precise references in the Book of Wedlock might therefore suggest a more hybrid use of the manuscript as both a book of collations as well as a source book for a religious professional looking to find something on the topic of marriage. Compare Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 180; Mertens, ‘Collatio und Codex’, 174.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, K.M. Berg, ‘On the Use of Mnemonic Schemes in Sermon Composition: The Old Norwegian Homily Book’, in *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. R. Andersson, Sermo 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 221–22.

excellent way of getting a message across and making sure the attending laypeople could remember it.¹⁰⁶

2.5 Conclusion

Building on a long history of devout conversations and collective readings of beneficial texts, the Brothers of the Common Life gave their own interpretation to the *collatio*. In the *consuetudines* or customs of their houses, they included the practice as they envisioned it: students and interested laypeople were invited to visit the house of the Brothers, where they could hear a vernacular religious text being read and receive some humble advice and admonitions. Across the religious movement of the Modern Devotion several variations of the practice are noticeable – for instance, in communities of Sisters of the Common Life the Sisters mutually berated and admonished each other during the *collatio* – but they all depended on the active engagement of its participants to facilitate the communication of knowledge. As this chapter has shown, the *collatio* has long been recognised as an outreach from the Brothers of the Common Life to the urban laypeople or an aspect of their pastoral activities, yet it has never been subjected to a thorough examination. A lack of suitable source material likely is to blame for this: the *consuetudines* are prescriptive of the practice rather than descriptive, and the most direct witnesses – the books of collations – do not explicitly mention their intended use. Still, by examining them from an angle of communicating religious knowledge, they may well yield information on their role in the meetings and how the Brothers interacted with their lay visitors.

¹⁰⁶ See K.A. Rivers, *Preaching the Memory of Virtue and Vice. Memory, Images, and Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, Sermo 4 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), esp. 187–207.

Chapter 3: Placing the *collatio* and its participants

Since the *collatio* has never been extensively studied, much of the practice is unexplored or at least only discussed in general terms. Specific aspects of the meetings, such as the spaces in which they took place or the people who were involved in them, are hard to come by despite their importance. In inviting laypeople to participate in the *collatio*, the house of the Brothers of the Common Life constitutes a place of knowledge or *lieu de savoir*: a physical location where knowledge was communicated and in which the location itself exerted an influence on the communication of knowledge.¹⁰⁷ The interactions between the Brothers and their visitors would take different forms depending on where they took place: for instance, the reading to the collected audience in a common room or chapel differed from a private conversation in the Brothers' own bedroom or cell. The 'physical' or 'practical' dimensions of the *collatio*, from the spatiality to the people involved, inform the communication of knowledge taking place.

The following chapter will delve into these 'practical' aspects of the *collatio* in order to show how the circulation of religious knowledge was partially shaped by the various spaces in which the practice took place, and to recover some of the participants who were involved with the meetings. Houses of the Brothers were generally located in or near the city centres, close to the parochial church. Because of the central location of their houses, the *collationes* of the Brothers were quite accessible to the students and interested laypeople – especially when they had visited the services in church beforehand. Any churchgoers planning to attend the *collatio* did not have to travel far (see chapter 6). The houses were not always constructed as religious convents from the start but could have started out as regular homes, donated to the Modern Devout community, bought by those wishing to establish a devout community, or brought in by one of the early members. For instance, when Florens Radewijns took up the position of vicar of the St Paul's altar in Deventer's St Lebuïn in 1381, he was granted the use of a house in the Engestraat.¹⁰⁸ When the first Brothers of the Common Life clustered around Radewijns, this house became the original Heer Florenshuis, which was connected to another house in 1383. From 1391, the

¹⁰⁷ On the concept of *lieux de savoir* and the importance of spatiality on the communication of knowledge, see C. Jacob, *Qu'est-ce qu'un lieu de savoir?*, Encyclopédie numérique 2 (Marseille: OpenEdition Press, 2014), <http://books.openedition.org/oep/423>.

¹⁰⁸ A.G. Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege kerk. De geschiedenis van de huizen van de broeders van het Gemene leven in Nederland*, Middeleeuwse Studies, XIII (Nijmegen: Centrum voor Middeleeuwse Studies Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 1997), 4–6. Also see Van der Wansem, *Ontstaan en geschiedenis*, 53–56; Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 198–205.

Brothers inhabited a larger house in the nearby Pontsteeg, which they acquired from the widow Zwedera van Ruinen. The Collatiehuis in Gouda also used to be a regular home, owned by priest Dirk Florisz. He gifted the building – together with a small library and a yearly stipend – to the local Chapter of Sion in 1425, on condition that two or three Canon Regulars from the local monastery of Stein would live there and provide a ‘devotional speech’ to the common people every Sunday after the vespers.¹⁰⁹ In Zwolle, however, the Gregoriushuis was specifically constructed for a small community of some five Brothers.¹¹⁰ There was no clear template for the physical establishment of a community of Brothers of the Common Life; they worked with what they got.

Thus, when students and laypeople visited the Brothers to attend the *collatio* they entered a regular house, albeit one occupied by a religious community. This means the *collatio* took place in a quasi-domestic setting: the house was home to the Brothers. The setting made the *collatio* more informal, as the physical and emotional distance between the Brothers and their visitors was lessened, allowing a more personal approach. This is true for the reading of a text to the collected audience, but even more so for the individual conversations between one Brother and a visitor. The spatiality of the *collatio* thus was beneficial to the process: the semi-domestic, semi-religious setting of the house of the Brothers rendered the meetings more intimate and interactions more personal, thereby aiding the communication of knowledge between the lay visitors and their hosts.

3.1 Devotion in a semi-domestic setting

The descriptions of the *collatio* in the *consuetudines* make it clear that interested students and laypeople were invited to visit the house of the Brothers of the Common Life to hear a good text being read and receive some devotional admonitions. This means that for the participating laypeople, the *collationes* were a double introduction to the world of the Brothers: in the first case quite literally, and in the second metaphorically. The visitors entered the physical house and home of the Brothers, and in hearing the text and receiving the personal exhortations they came into contact with the spirituality of the Modern Devotion as well. The precise position of the *collatio* inside the houses, however, is largely an educated guess. Though the location of

¹⁰⁹ J.H. Carlier, ‘Het Fraterhuis of Collatiehuis op de Jeruzalemstraat’, *Bijdragen Oudheidkundige Kring Die Goude (Gouda)* 5 (1947): 52–53.

¹¹⁰ A.G. Weiler, *Monasticon fratrum vitae communis, Tl. III: Niederlande* (Brussels: Archives et bibliothèques de Belgique, 2004), 423–24. For the later developments of this house and other buildings, see 424–427.

the houses and in some cases the dimensions of the buildings are known – for instance, because of archaeological surveys – no interior floor plans showing the individual rooms of any of the houses exist.¹¹¹ The map of the house in Zwolle included in Schoengen’s edition of De Voecht’s *Narratio*, for instance, gives a good overview of the buildings and the surrounding streets, but it does not reveal specific rooms within the buildings.¹¹² As a result of the Brothers inhabiting regular living houses, their homes likely had a larger room or hall in the front of the house, along the street, with a room further back containing the hearth, and a separate kitchen. The hearth room often had sleeping spaces, as did the floor above it. The upper floor and attic were also commonly used for storage.¹¹³ At least one room in the house held the library – an important room for the Brothers indeed.

Certainly every house had at least one room large enough to contain a small gathering, as the Brothers themselves needed a communal space as well – for instance, to practise their own *collationes*. In the early days of the first Brothers of the Common Life, prior to moving to a new house in 1391, Florens Radewijns had set aside one of the rooms in his house in Deventer for the *collatio* the Brothers practised together.¹¹⁴ They could also gather in Florens’ private room, “sitting on the ground as if these honourable men were children”.¹¹⁵ Whether hosting the *collatio* was the only function of this room is unclear; in any case, Geert Grote is said to have provided *collationes* during meal times, and “his table had a neat place where he would put his books, from which he would read something good to his visitors”.¹¹⁶ The Gregoriushuis in Zwolle was potentially equipped with a separate room dedicated to the *collatio* as well: in his chronicle of the house, brother Jacobus de Voecht refers to one of the rooms as [*camera*] *collationum*. De Voecht mentions the room being used as a makeshift sickroom for himself and a fellow brother, Hubertus Guesden, after they had fallen ill. To accommodate them two beds

¹¹¹ See, for instance, J. Assink, R. van Beek, and H. Hasselt, ‘Materiële nalatenschap van Zwolse fraters en scholieren. Een archeologisch onderzoek in één van hun huizen’, in *Domus Parva. Het eerste huis van de Moderne Devoten te Zwolle*, ed. J. Hagedoorn and I. Wormgoor (Zwolle: Zwolse Historische Vereniging, 1987), 19–55; G. Berends, ‘De gebouwen van het fraterhuis in Zwolle’, *Bulletin KNOB* 73 (1974): 88–98.

¹¹² Schoengen, *Narratio* – the map is included between the numbered pages ccxiv and 1 but is not numbered itself.

¹¹³ R. Meischke, ‘Het laat-middeleeuwse burgerhuis in het Noorden en Oosten van Nederland’, in B. Dubbe, *Het huisraad in het Oostnederlandse burgerwoonhuis in de late middeleeuwen*, in *Thuis in de late middeleeuwen. Het Nederlands burgerinterieur 1400-1535 : tentoonstelling in het Provinciaal Overijssels Museum van 5 oktober tot 31 december 1980*, by J.W.M. de Jong (Zwolle: Waanders, 1980), 14–19.

¹¹⁴ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285.

¹¹⁵ D.A. Brinkerink, ‘Biographieën van beroemde mannen uit den Deventer-kring’, *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 28 (1902): 17: “Als sij onderlinge toe samen colazie hadden in hoers paters camer, soe plegen die weerdige manne neder te sitten op die eerde, alsoftet kynder hadden geweest”.

¹¹⁶ D.A. Brinkerink, ‘Biographieën van beroemde mannen uit den Deventer-kring’, *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 27 (1901): 418: “Want hij hadde een bequaem steedeken bij sijn tafel, daer hij buecke lechde, uyt welken hij sinen gasten wat guedes plach te leesen (...)”.

had been placed in the *collationum*; apart from these, the room contained a small table and a hearth or fireplace.¹¹⁷ This room might have been at the front of the house, as a small sideroom to the hall: such rooms were commonly used as a shared office and bedroom, with a bed and a fireplace.¹¹⁸

From around 1410 the Brothers in Zwolle also had a main hall and a chapel, likely sites for the *collatio* in their own right.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the *consuetudines* of the Collatiehuis in Gouda state the *collatio* should take place in their chapel, which was located in the front part of the house and thus easily accessible from the street. However, it is possible the men and women had to visit the *collatio* separate from each other – with the men visiting the communal dining room or *refter* in the back instead.¹²⁰ The initial year of construction for the chapel is unknown, but around 1462 a new and larger chapel (perhaps up to 23.40 by 10.70 metres) was built under rector Hendrik van Arnhem.¹²¹ The chapel with its five altars, cemetery, and another portable altar was initially consecrated on 15 August 1462, and it was consecrated once more around 1474–1476.¹²² Whether it was exclusively open to female visitors or allowed a mixed audience, the Collatiehuis was not alone in using the chapel for the *collationes*: female communities (Sisters of the Common Life or affiliated communities) in particular did likewise. In some cases, they were even allowed to open the doors of their chapel during the *collatio* so that interested laypeople could visit them as well. The sisters of St Agatha in Leiden, for instance, had obtained permission in 1459 to have daily *collationes* in their chapel, during which they could open their doors when no services were being held in the parochial church.¹²³ This provision reveals that with the doors open, the daily *collationes* were accessible to the general population as well and could draw people away from the sermon, thus costing the parish visitors and income.

¹¹⁷ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 162: *Quamdiu ergo potuimus, sedebamus ad unam mensulam juxta ignem in camera, scilicet collationum, ubi et dormiebamus.*

¹¹⁸ Meischke, ‘Het laat-middeleeuwse burgerhuis’, 12–14.

¹¹⁹ From 1480 the Brothers also provided a number of guest rooms. All these buildings stood apart from the actual ‘house’ that was the Gregoriushuis (as well as later the *Domus parva*). See the floor plans in J.T. Teunis, ‘Bouwgeschiedenis en restauratie van Praubstraat 14 en omgeving’, in *Domus Parva. Het eerste huis van de Moderne Devoten te Zwolle*, ed. J. Hagedoorn and I. Wormgoor (Zwolle: Zwolse Historische Vereniging, 1987), 23; M. Caron, ‘Materiële cultuur van het Fraterhuis te Zwolle (1400-1500)’, in *Domus Parva. Het eerste huis van de Moderne Devoten te Zwolle*, ed. J. Hagedoorn and I. Wormgoor (Zwolle: Zwolse Historische Vereniging, 1987), 63. The exact layout of any of the rooms within the buildings remains unclear.

¹²⁰ A. Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: (...) *pro communi populo facere in ecclesia nostra*. Compare Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege kerk*, 147.

¹²¹ J. Taal, *De Goudse kloosters in de middeleeuwen* (Hilversum: Paul Brand, 1960), 58–62; Carlier, ‘Het Fraterhuis of Collatiehuis’, 56.

¹²² Taal, *De Goudse kloosters in de middeleeuwen*, 59–61; Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege kerk*, 147.

¹²³ Van Luijk, ‘Bruiden van Christus’, 74.

Still, even if a house was equipped with a designated room for the *collatio* among the Brothers it is possible the *collatio* with lay participation was held elsewhere. In Deventer, for instance, lay brother Johannes Kessel (d. 1398) gave *collationes* to students in the entry hall of the house.¹²⁴ Florens Radewijns presumably had done the same: a story from the *Speculum exemplorum*, printed in 1481 by Richard Paffraet, mentions how before Thomas a Kempis became a monk, he and other students visited the Brothers in Deventer to hear the proclamation of God's Word in the entry hall of their house (*atrium*).¹²⁵ The value of these visits is emphasised as Thomas has a vision of the Virgin Mary attending this meeting and

Figure 2 Reconstructed floor plan of the Gregoriushuis, Zwolle.

Image reproduced from Assink, Van beek, and Hasselt, 'Materiële nalatenschap van Zwolse fraters en scholieren', 23. Original drawing from C.R.G. Hofstee, 'De gebouwen van het Fraterhuis te Zwolle' in *Een zuivere, eenvoudige, standvastige geest... De Moderne Devotie te Zwolle*, ed. N.D.B. Habermehl e.a. (Zwolle: Zwolse Historische Vereniging, 1984), 42-48, here 43.

embracing the participants – except for Thomas himself, who had been slacking off in his Marian devotion. Yet the Brothers might also have provided *collationes* in their chapel, which stood on the same ground where now the modern Geert Groote Huis is located.¹²⁶ The reason why the *collatio* sometimes took place in one location and at other times elsewhere, however, is unclear.

¹²⁴ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285.

¹²⁵ B. Kruitwagen, 'Het „Speculum Exemplorum”', *Bijdragen voor de Geschiedenis van het Bisdom van Haarlem* 29 (1905): 388–90.

¹²⁶ This is now Lamme van Dieseplein 4. See the website of the museum: <http://www.geertgrootehuis.nl/> [consulted 21-02-2019]. Weiler, *Monasticon fratrum vitae communis*, Tl. III: *Niederlande* does not directly mention a chapel or its construction, but it does relate that at some point (in the early sixteenth century?) the chapel contained a decorative plate with the names of the founders and benefactors: p. 143.

To the physical (dis)comfort during the *collationes* only informed conjecture is possible. The inventory of the Collatiehuis in Gouda, dating to the middle of the fifteenth century, mentions a metal firepot or brazier: it seems *collationes* in the winter months did not need to be heard in the abysmal cold.¹²⁷ The Gregoriushuis in Zwolle at least had a fireplace in its *camera collationum* to make the meetings more comfortable. During the communal part (the reading of the collation) the listeners would presumably be seated. The same set of inventories from Gouda also lists a number of cushions or pillows to sit on, which might have been used during the meetings. Between 1447 and 1450 – the period in which Hendrik Herp was rector – additional seating cushions were purchased. As the community of Brothers of the Common Life was rather small – the same inventories list four beds and sets of linen, and nineteen cushions – these were likely to be handed out to visitors.¹²⁸

None of the inventories of other houses have survived – at least, not where it concerns the furniture or any utensils – so it is unclear whether this was standard practice or a peculiarity of the Collatiehuis. Quite possibly other communities either gathered the available chairs, benches, or cushions to provide seating for their visitors, or they too owned a number of moveable seats. While the Brothers maintained their *collationes* did not constitute a form of preaching, the physical posturing of their visitors might be comparable to those attending a sermon: listeners often remained standing, though some preferred to sit down. Woodcuts and paintings depicting preaching events often show visitors in different poses, including sitting on small chairs or stools, or simply on the ground. The title page of *Brugmans boeck ende zijn regel* (a catechetical work attributed to the famous preacher Johannes Brugman) to give but one example, shows one member of Brugman's audience sitting on a three-legged chair with a high back (below, Figure 5 in chapter 6).¹²⁹ Moreover, visitors might have brought their own seats: some individuals owned so-called sermon chairs (*preekstoeltjes*) to bring to church so they could listen to the sermon in relative comfort.¹³⁰ By design these chairs were small and portable, so it is quite possible that they could easily pull double duty and allow the owner a handy seat to listen to the *collatio*, if the Brothers did not already provide seating. Alternatively,

¹²⁷ Gouda, SAMH 0091.16 (Lijsten van huisraad en boeken, met het Collatiehuis van de Heilige-Geestmeesters ontvangen, en een opsomming van huisrenten, toebehorende aan het Collatiehuis, ca. 1438–1447/1456. 1438–1456).

¹²⁸ The suggestion that these were used during the *collatio* is from Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie*, 34–36; also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 72.

¹²⁹ The incunable is kept in Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg im Breisgau, Ink. K 4449.

¹³⁰ See B. Dubbe, 'Het huisraad in het Oostnederlandse burgerwoonhuis in de late middeleeuwen', in *Thuis in de late middeleeuwen. Het Nederlands burgerinterieur 1400-1535: tentoonstelling in het Provinciaal Overijssels Museum van 5 oktober tot 31 december 1980*, ed. J.W.M. de Jong (Zwolle: Waanders, 1980), 29, 37.

participants could sit on the floor, unknowingly – or perhaps consciously – mimicking the first fathers of the Modern Devotion quoted above, when they gathered in Florens Radewijns’ room, “sitting on the ground as if these honourable men were children”.¹³¹

The reading of the collation thus took place in a common room, facilitating a small group of participants. The *consuetudines* of Zwolle further state that after the reading the visitors should be addressed privately and one by one, in order to take their personal situation into account and more effectively call upon their religious fervour.¹³² The second part of the *collatio* – the personal admonition – was thus of a more private nature and likely took place in a more intimate setting. Whether the participants moved to a different location (such as the hallway or a different room) or retreated to a private corner of the room is unclear. Yet the Brothers offered an even more intimate conversation in allowing the lay participants to visit their rooms and speak privately for a short time – no longer than half an hour, the *consuetudines* of Gouda and Zwolle both stipulate, presumably to keep the conversation to the point and not allow it to devolve into small talk and gossip.¹³³ The Collatiehuis, famed in particular for its *collationes*, offered the option for conversation of this kind even outside of the *collatio*: whereas the customs of Zwolle take precautions against too lengthy conversations in the context of the *collatio*, those of Gouda mention laypeople visiting the Brothers’ rooms “to have conversation at this time [i.e. as part of the *collatio*] or at any other”.¹³⁴

Especially in the Collatiehuis in Gouda it is noticeable how the physical movement deeper into the house of the Brothers coincides with the more intimate conversation. To facilitate the individual part of the *collatio*, five or six small cells were constructed in 1446, while Hendrik Herp was rector.¹³⁵ These were located under the roof of the house, in the attic. As with the set-up of the common room, the inventory of the rooms of the Brothers – whether they had any furniture beyond a bed – is unknown. Possibly the Brothers also used their room to copy books, in the absence of a *scriptorium*.¹³⁶ They would at the least keep a religious text in their room

¹³¹ Brinkerink, ‘Biographieën 2’, 17: “Als sij onderlinge toe samen colazie hadden in hoers paters camer, soe plegen die weerdige manne neder te sitten op die eerde, alsoftet kynder hadden geweest”.

¹³² Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Quia vero privata et familiaris allocutio unumquemque plus movet, bonum est, nunc unum, nunc alium in private alloqui, et secundum statum et exigentiam cujusque ad meliora provocare.*

¹³³ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448; Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: (...) *non debemus eos diucius et ad longius ultra dimidiam horam apud nos tenere (...).*

¹³⁴ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: *Quando eciam ad cameras nostras tunc vel aliquo alio tempore locuturi nobiscum veniunt (...).*

¹³⁵ Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege kerk*, 147; A.H.L. Hensen, ed., ‘Henric van Arnheims Kronijk van het fraterhuis te Gouda’, *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van het Historisch Genootschap XX* (1899): 17.

¹³⁶ Th. Mertens, *Preken met de pen en lezen met de pen. Moderne Devotie en geestelijke literatuur* (Deventer: Geert Groote Genootschap, 1989).

for their personal meditation, which they might use to illustrate a point made during the conversation. In Zwolle, procurator Johan van Hattem (d. 1485) had students of all ages come up to his room and climb up on his bed to receive some spiritual guidance: the informal and domestic setting of such conversations facilitated a more intense heart-to-heart connection and thus would aid the process of communication greatly.¹³⁷ When the Brother and his lay visitor were already familiar with each other, it would not be surprising for one or both parties to sit on the bed during this personal component of the *collatio*. Alternatively, if seating cushions or portable chairs had been used during the reading, these might be taken up to the room as well, or both participants might remain standing for the 30 minutes or so, at most, that the conversation was to last.¹³⁸ In any case, inviting laypeople into the personal lives of the Brothers shifted the nature of the *collatio* to a more intimate setting, allowing the Brothers' words to take root more easily.

3.2 Conversing with the Brothers

Although the *consuetudines* do not mention if any one of the Brothers specifically was responsible for the *collationes*, it is possible to identify several Brothers who were involved, as collections of Lives of the Brothers occasionally make mention of their prowess in the *collatio*. Such a mention not only provides some additional detail about the *collationes* – such as the people involved or topics discussed – it also shows that the practice was well-established among the Brothers of the Common Life. Moreover, the inclusion of the *collatio* in the Lives means the Brothers themselves considered it an important practice, as virtues exhibited in the Lives were meant to be imitated. Thus, by recovering the names of the Brothers involved in the *collatio*, this section will show that the Brothers of the Common Life valued the practice as a devotional activity and as an opportunity for the communication of religious knowledge.

First and foremost, Dirc van Herxen was a most important figure for the *collatio*, as he wrote several of the texts with the most immediate connection to the practice. He was the second rector of the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle from 1410 to 1457, and likely played an important role in the *collatio* the entire time. Under his rule several houses were established in other cities as 'daughter-communities' of the house in Zwolle: owing to their ties with the Gregoriushuis, the Brothers in Den Bosch, Doesburg, Groningen, and Harderwijk would also have introduced the

¹³⁷ Dumbar, *Analecta*, 184–85, quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 293.

¹³⁸ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: (...) *ad longius ultra dimidiam horam* (...).

collatio in those cities. On the basis of customs of the Brothers in Deventer, Van Herxen composed the *consuetudines* of the Gregoriushuis, which provide the clearest description of the practice as the Brothers envisioned it themselves.¹³⁹ Moreover, his direct involvement in the *collatio* is included in the account of his life in the chronicle of the house in Zwolle: Jacobus de Voecht dedicated a separate, albeit short, chapter on this in his *Narratio de inchoatione domus clericorum in Zwollis*.¹⁴⁰ To attract laypeople to the word of God, he writes, Van Herxen composed two large books in Dutch from which a text could be read to them on feast days, relevant to that day. These were the First and Second Book of Collations, of which only the First Book of Collations has been identified.¹⁴¹ Especially on the important feast days he also presided over the *collatio* himself, “as we are wont to do, standing in the main hall as we do with clerics”, and his heartfelt performance moved the listeners to a fear of God and repentance of the heart.¹⁴²

Several other Brothers can be found who were involved in the reading of a text and administering humble admonitions, albeit none as strongly as Dirc van Herxen. In the course of Jacobus de Voecht’s chronicle a number of Brothers are mentioned in relation to the *collatio*. Brother Petrus Bree (d. 1483) was not very well suited to offering admonitions or engaging in discussions with the youths, though he did do so. He is not at all lauded for the skill he displayed during the meetings but instead is an example of persistence: he did not let his shortcomings hold him back and still actively participated when the clerics exchanged exhortations among themselves.¹⁴³ Priest Johan van Hattem (d. 1485), procurator in Deventer, was very conservative when he presided over the *collatio*: he claimed to be a simple man and only dared to read aloud to the visitors, instead of making a performance of the reading. He was supposedly too humble to compose or give his own collations. For him, and others like him, the books of collations would provide an excellent tool to deliver quality *collationes* as they presented a variety of texts ready for use. John preferred collations on saints, the Four Last Things, chastity, or contempt for the world, topics which are indeed fairly standard for the *collatio* and well

¹³⁹ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 31–32, 194–95; Klausmann, *Consuetudo consuetudine vincitur*, 179–200.

¹⁴⁰ This is chapter 22 of De Voecht’s *Narratio*: Schoengen, *Narratio*, 64.

¹⁴¹ On the Second Book of Collations, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 93–95.

¹⁴² Schoengen, *Narratio*, 64: *Sed et idem ipse aliquando eis fecit collacionem, in palacio stando more nostro, sicut clericis facimus. In magnis et precipuis festis pro omnibus fecit devote et efficaciter, auditores suos movens cordialiter ad Dei timorem et compunctionem cordis*. Also quoted in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 78.

¹⁴³ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 197: *Propter quod minus aptus fuit ad ammonitiones et colloctiones juvenum, ideo tamen non omisit, quando clericis faceret exhortationes bonas tempore oportuno*.

represented in the books of collations.¹⁴⁴ But despite his reservations, he was also visited by numerous students of every age who came up to his room and sat on his bed to hear his spiritual advice.¹⁴⁵

In contrast, Rutgher van Doetinchem (d. 1478), procurator in Zwolle, is outright praised for his *collationes*, confirming that it is an art in itself to deliver a good reading and engage with the visitors. Though the *consuetudines* hold that heartfelt advice is more important than learned eloquence, a measure of eloquence was much appreciated. Rutgherus is characterised as devout and well-spoken during the *collatio*, and particularly well versed in interpreting and moralising the Bible.¹⁴⁶ Fourth rector of the Gregoriushuis Henrik van Herxen (d. 1487) advised his Brothers to precede their *collationes* with a prayer, that God might give virtue to them and their voices. He himself also prayed for those who were to take care of the *collatio*.¹⁴⁷ This suggests the *collatio* did not have a designated Brother to take care of the reading and the rest of the meeting, but they instead took turns. The rector of the community was not exempt from this rotation: the same Henrik van Herxen is said to have loved the *collationes* and *exhortations* to the students.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Jacobus de Voecht included a selection of points Henrik often said in his *collationes*: clearly these were of such virtue that they deserved to be remembered – indeed, the heading of this section reads, ‘On the manner and quality of his admonitions and *collationes*’.¹⁴⁹ In his *collationes* to the Brothers he often stayed with those topics that could incite in them the fear of God: the Four Last Things, and especially Hell and Judgement. It is likely he held *collationes* on the same topics for the gathered laypeople: the Four Last Things were a prime subject for the public *collationes* and are indeed well represented in the books of collations.

In his chronicle Jacobus de Voecht praised more Brothers for the virtues they exhibited in their *collationes*. Brother Willem van Groningen (d. c. 1457) is mentioned as a very intelligent and eloquent man and a good *collationator*. He later became the first rector of the house in

¹⁴⁴ Dumbar, *Analecta*, 184–85, quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285.

¹⁴⁵ Dumbar, *Analecta*, 184–85, quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 293.

¹⁴⁶ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 158: *Similiter et in collationibus fuit devotus et facundus, bonus biblicus, et interpretator et moralizator scripturarum.*

¹⁴⁷ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 181: *Et quod debemus opera nostra et collationes prevenire per orationem. Nam et ipse solebat orare pro eis, qui faciebant collationes, ut esset particeps fructus eorum et Deus daret eis et voci eorum vocem virtutis.*

¹⁴⁸ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 179–80: *Et ita fervebat et amabat facere collationes et exhortationes iuvenibus, ut sepositis aliis negociis et occupationibus ex officio procurature emergentibus, nullo modo volebat, quantum obedientia permittebat, tunc esse absens, quando ad collationes veniebant scolares, vel quando etiam scolas exhibant (...).*

¹⁴⁹ This section in Schoengen, *Narratio*, 180–81.

Groningen, but when he visited Zwolle again for the *colloquium* he also held some *collationes* for the local schoolboys.¹⁵⁰ Such *collationes* were a clear part of the Brothers' pastoral care towards them as well as an opportunity to have the youth know the ideals of Modern Devotion: Petrus van Dinslaken (d. 1487) used his *collationes* to teach proper doctrine to the students of the Latin school in Zwolle.¹⁵¹ Herman Elborch (fifteenth century) did likewise: while his mainstay was in Utrecht, he also provided *collationes* to the schoolboys in Zwolle when he visited the *colloquia* hosted there.¹⁵² This Herman had once been married but became a priest after the death of his wife. He was not accepted as a Brother of the Common Life in Zwolle, but he imitated their behaviour closely; he later was appointed as confessor to the Sisters of St Cecilia in Utrecht.¹⁵³ Interestingly, the *collationes* he held on feast days for the Sisters in their chapel were open to laypeople as well, and he often preached in other public churches too.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps the same thing was going on with the St Ursula house, a community of Sisters of the Common Life in Utrecht. In discussing their father confessor Herman ter Maet (d. before 1457), De Voecht mentions how the religious qualities of the house were known even to secular people.¹⁵⁵ This reputation might have been based on the devotion of the Sisters; the convent had already been enclosed in 1412.¹⁵⁶ However, Herman ter Maet is described as both eloquent and a good *collacionator*, "mature in his morals and well versed in all good things".¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 101: *Wilhelmum de Groeninghen, qui fuit vir magni ingenii et eloquens multum et optimus collacionator. Ipse, tempore colloquii, pro scholasticis solet facere colacionem satis efficaciter et ferventer.*

¹⁵¹ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 209.

¹⁵² Schoengen, *Narratio*, 83: *Cum aliis patribus ad colloquium venire consuevit et facere collationem pro scholaribus.*

¹⁵³ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 82: *Quamvis non fuit acceptus frater domus nostre, tamen seipsum tradidit consilio patris nostri et totus conversus ad Dominum incessit capuciatu, more fratrum nostrorum. Et factus confessor sororum predictarum (...).*

¹⁵⁴ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 82–83: *Et factus confessor sororum predictarum, fuit totus studiosus in scripturis sacris, evadens in solemnem predicatorem verbi Dei, ita ut non solum diebus festivis faceret collationem in capella sua pro sororibus suis et omnibus secularibus advenientibus, sed et rogatus, sepius in aliis ecclesiis publice, devote et optime predicavit.* On the St Cecilia-convent, especially in relation to other convents in Utrecht and Wermboud van Boskoop, see the frequent mentions in H. van Engen, *De derde orde van Sint-Franciscus in het middeleeuwse bisdom Utrecht. Een bijdrage tot de institutionele geschiedenis van de Moderne Devotie*, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen*, XCV (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), esp. 206–207. The Sisters were officially enclosed in 1399, but contacts between enclosed communities and laypeople were not exceptional: Engen, 252–56. Also see the entry on St Cecilia in the *Monasticon Trajectense*: <https://www2.fgw.vu.nl/oz/monasticon/detail.php?ID=146> [consulted 20-02-2019].

¹⁵⁵ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 82: *Hujus ergo viri disciplina, doctrina et sancta vita in se et in domo sua satis clara et famosa fuit Traiecti apud plerosque, etiam seculares (...).*

¹⁵⁶ Van Engen, *De derde orde van Sint-Franciscus in Utrecht*, 316. The Sisters of St Ursula are mentioned a few times in the study of Van Engen, though they are never treated at length. Going by the index, Herman ter Maet is not mentioned at all.

¹⁵⁷ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 82: *Eloquens et bonus collacionator et maturus in moribus et in omnibus bene exercitatus.*

As rector and common Brothers alike were involved in the *collatio*, it stands that no particular role or rank among the Brothers of the Common Life was specifically concerned with writing or delivering the collations or engaging with the students and lay visitors. Each member of the community could be involved with the reading and subsequent private admonitions, provided they had the will to do so. However, the *consuetudines* of the Collatiehuis in Gouda mention the librarian in particular as being responsible for giving admonitions during the *collatio*.¹⁵⁸ In Deventer at least, librarian Petrus Horn (d. 1479) was capable of delivering harsh and severe exhortations which could cut straight to the marrow of the bone, regardless of whether he spoke to students or his fellow Brothers.¹⁵⁹ And Gerhardus van Vollenhoven (d. after 1457), long-time librarian in Zwolle, took care of the *collationes* in the Kadenetershuis, a community of Sisters of the Common Life.¹⁶⁰ Whether his *collationes* were open to the lay public as well is unknown. Yet it is unlikely the librarian in Gouda would be the only one responsible for the *collatio*. At the least the first rector of the community, Hendrik Herp (c. 1410–1477), was also involved in the practice. In the chronicle of the house written by Hendrik van Arnhem he is praised for his eloquence and his pleasant *collationes*.¹⁶¹ Moreover, during Herp's rectorate several cells or bedrooms were constructed in the attic of the house, with the additional purpose of having a small, private space where the Brothers could personally converse with a layperson as part of the *collatio*. Herp's successor in Gouda, Johan Pupper van Goch (d. 1475), continued the activities of the Collatiehuis after Herp had left. Although he knew how to effectively communicate a message, it was the content of his *collationes* that got Johan Pupper in trouble with the local clergy and he left Gouda in 1454, lashing out at the people for their lack of support.¹⁶² As the Collatiehuis had only a small community of Brothers of the Common Life (indeed, Johan Pupper had been the last Brother to leave the house in 1454, and it stood empty for a short while thereafter), it is likely nearly every member of the Collatiehuis was involved in the *collatio*. Still, the librarian would have the important task of making sure a suitable text

¹⁵⁸ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 454: *Iste debet ammonicionem facere tempore collacionis dierum festorum post completorium (...)*.

¹⁵⁹ Dumbarr, *Analecta*, 153. Quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285.

¹⁶⁰ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 95: *Ipse longo tempore habuit commissionem de domo Kadeneters (...), audiendo confessiones earum et collacionando eis et cetera*.

¹⁶¹ Hensen, 'Henric van Arnhems Kronijk van het fraterhuis te Gouda', 17: *Vir bene facundus, conspicuus, industrius et graciosus, fecit tunc deinceps collaciones populo valde gratas quia gratiam verbi habuit*. Quoted from Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie*, 34–35.

¹⁶² On Johan Pupper van Goch, see Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 250–56. On the conflict with the local clergy, see A.G. Weiler, 'The Dutch Brethren of the Common Life, Critical Theology, Northern Humanism and Reformation', in *Northern Humanism in European Context, 1469-1625. From the 'Adwert Academy' to Ubbo Emmius*, ed. F. Akkerman, A.J. Vanderjagt, and A.H. van der Laan (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 317–22.

was available to be read to the visitors. In Zwolle, the much beloved librarian Dirc van Kalkar (d. 1475) is said to have had an excellent memory, which he used in the composition of his *collationes*.¹⁶³ This points to the close relation between the *collatio* and the Brother's spirituality: the *collatio* built on the ideals of the Brothers of the Common Life and communicated their own devotion to the participating laypeople. This is also abundantly clear in the collations (see chapter 5), as the authoritative texts from which the collations are composed are the same as those the Brothers utilised to structure their own devotion.

Nor, indeed, did the Brother need to be ordained as a cleric in order to give useful advice and appropriate admonitions to students and visitors. Johannes Kessel (d. 1398), one of the earliest Brothers of the Common Life, remained a layperson yet delivered admonitions to the Deventer students, who were invited to the entry hall of the Heer Florenshuis.¹⁶⁴ Arnold van Broeckhusen (d. 1451/1452), lay brother in the communities of Hulsbergen, Albergen, and finally Zwolle, gave counsel to devout laypeople while sitting in his chair, writing books in Dutch. Despite being a lay brother, he counselled them "in the manner of our priests and clerics."¹⁶⁵ He was not a priest or ordained cleric, but that did not matter for his ability to offer advice as he was well learned, an important point for the interactions between laypeople, the Brothers of the Common Life, and the local clergy. The Brothers were not allowed to preach or fully act as spiritual counsellors, but they could give humble suggestions and exhortations – like any Christian layperson might. For as long as he was able on account of his age, Arnold also visited the *collatio* with the Brothers around 12 o'clock and in the evenings on feast days. On those days, he also gave good admonitions to the laypeople who would visit for the *collatio*.¹⁶⁶

Whereas several of the Brothers involved in the *collatio* can be traced back through the accounts of individual Lives, the visitors to the meetings are barely characterised and seldom mentioned. Schoolboys, students, or the youths are most often listed in the customs as the prime intended audience for the *collatio*: the customs of Zwolle mention an intended audience of *scholares et alii boni viri*,¹⁶⁷ those of Emmerich refer to the practice as the *admonitio scholarium et*

¹⁶³ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 163–64.: *De domino Theoderico de Kalker, fratre nostro et librario karissimo. (...) Nam cum optimam et fortem haberet memoriam, apte valde et ordinate composuit et fecit collationes suas.*

¹⁶⁴ Dumbar, *Analecta*, 38, quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285.

¹⁶⁵ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 96: *sedit in sede sua scribendo libros teutonicos, et habens accessum devotorum laicorum, quibus more sacerdotum et clericorum nostrorum monita salutis dabat.* Also quoted in Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 293.

¹⁶⁶ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 97: *Ipse, quamdiu potuit, sequebatur conventum et consuetudines nostras, eundo semper ad refectorium et collationem hora duodecima et de sero diebus festis, et laicis faciens ammonitiones bonas.*

¹⁶⁷ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247.

ceterorum,¹⁶⁸ and the Brothers in Gouda conducted their readings *pro communi populo*.¹⁶⁹ The house in Doesburg was granted permission in 1439 to provide *collationes* to male listeners, students from the local school among them.¹⁷⁰ Of the visitors who attended the *collatio* and went back to their daily life as devout laypersons – that is, those who did not later join the Moder Devout movement – only a single name remains without further characterisation. A man named Cornelijs visited and participated in the *collationes* of Hendrik Bruin, Brother in the Heer Florenshuis, and his presence was recorded as a supporting character to Hendrik's devotion. Because of his passion to teach something good to others, Hendrik sometimes forgot where he was or what was happening around him, so it happened that when the bell for the *Ave Maria* rang and everyone dropped to their knees, he remained standing in his fervour to proclaim the Word of God. But at the time, "there was a good man, named Cornelijs, who made sure to stand by him, so the holy man would not be ashamed when he returned to his senses."¹⁷¹ Cornelijs is of course not the protagonist of this story: he is there to emphasise the passionate devotion of Brother Hendrik. But his name is recorded nonetheless, and his role in the story reveals that laypeople attending and participating in the *collatio* were considered an important element by the Brothers as well, and that they were actively involved in the practice.

The layman Cornelijs aside, only a few participants to the *collatio* are known by name. The later theologian Wessel Gansfort (1419–1489) attended the evening *collationes* of Rutgher van Doetinchem while he went to school in Zwolle, and though he did not join the movement proper, the *collationes* of the Brothers were part of his exposure to the Modern Devotion.¹⁷² Brother Arnold van Schoonhoven had been an eager attendee of the *collationes* in the Heer Florenshuis when he was a student in Deventer, and he urged his fellow students to join him. Many supposedly did so, and, touched by the words of the Brothers, removed themselves from the world by entering a monastery.¹⁷³ In this way, some Brothers can be identified as erstwhile participants in the *collatio* because the reading and discussion struck a chord with them and prompted them to take the extra step of joining the Brothers of the Common Life or a different branch of the Modern Devotion. Their attendance at the *collatio* was documented as a vital part

¹⁶⁸ Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam*, 101.

¹⁶⁹ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448.

¹⁷⁰ Weiler, *Monasticon*, 183, also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 72.

¹⁷¹ Brinkerink, 'Biographieën 2', 342, quoted from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 73: "Doe was daer een guet man, gheheiten Cornelijs; dese plach bij hem bliven te staen, opdat die heilige man hem niet schamen en solde, als hij tot hem selven queme."

¹⁷² Schoengen, *Narratio*, 155–57.

¹⁷³ D.A. Brinkerink, 'Biographieën van beroemde mannen uit den Deventer-kring', *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 29 (1903): 33, quoted from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 73–74.

of their conversion. Albert van Kalkar (d. 1482), who eventually became the third rector of the Gregoriushuis, stayed in the care of the Brothers as a schoolboy in the *Domus Parva* in Zwolle, but he was little impressed by their *collationes*: during a reading on Hell, he thought to himself: “you haven’t caught me yet!”¹⁷⁴ However, he found himself drawn to the Brothers afterwards and joined them, to find his own *collationes* being met with the same varying reactions. His *collationes* were harsh and severe, cut to meet the needs of his audience; some were properly terrified by it and improved their behaviour, others made light of his words and continued with their vices.¹⁷⁵ In Jacobus de Voecht’s telling of Albert van Kalkar’s life, the *collatio* thus played an important part: it was the impulse for his conversion and an important element in his spiritual aid towards others.¹⁷⁶

Some participants, such as Arnold Marwic van Kalkar (d. 1434), were inspired by the *collationes* to fully convert to monastic life. According to the *Chronicon Windeshemense* of Johannes Busch, Arnold’s conversion also came about through the readings and exhortations of the devout fathers in Deventer, which prompted him to approach Florens Radewijns who in turn referred him to the prior of the Modern Devout monastery of Windesheim, Johannes Vos van Heusden.¹⁷⁷ This Arnold van Kalkar eventually became the second subprior of Windesheim and held *collationes* of his own which, despite taking place in the monastery, were accessible to laypeople as well.¹⁷⁸ He was not alone in doing so: brother Albert Wynberghen (d. 1433) also held *collationes* within the monastery for laypeople, possibly referring to donates.¹⁷⁹ Some, like Henricus Balveren (d. 1414) actively encouraged the lay brothers to participate in the *collatio*; likely the same held true for the visiting laypeople.¹⁸⁰ The monastery of Windesheim does not even seem to be only one to have opened the doors to allow laypeople to participate in vernacular *collationes*: Werner Keenkamp van Lochem (d. after 1392), first prior of

¹⁷⁴ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 120–21: (...) *dum esset in collatione, quod legeretur materia de inferno, quod primo non curavit, cogitans apud se: „Adhuc me non captivastis.”*. Also told in Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 286.

¹⁷⁵ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 128–29. Also told in Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 285–86.

¹⁷⁶ For the Life of Albert van Kalkar, see Schoengen, *Narratio*, 120–45, 169–74. De Voecht stresses Albert’s *collationes* in two separate chapters: *De zelo ejus et strenuitate in ammonicionibus suis* (p. 128–129) and *De multis exercitiis ejus utilibus valde et efficacia grandi in collacionibus assiduus* (p. 139–143).

¹⁷⁷ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 61: *Sacras lectiones ammonicionisque devotas studencium more scolarium ab ipsis libenter audivit.*

¹⁷⁸ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 70: *Laycis enim die festo in ambitu monasterii de regno dei faciens collacionem manibus complicatis (...).*

¹⁷⁹ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 201: *Diebusque festivis laycorum collacioni propter donatorum statuta communiter interfuit consciencie satisfaciens.*

¹⁸⁰ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 109: *Et in collacionibus, antequam in festis diebus eas inchoaret, primum interrogavit ab aliquo laycorum magis expertorum, quid de ultima collacione audita corde retinuisset, id cunctis corampositis palam pronunciaret, omnes ad auscultandum hoc modo incitativo volens provocare.*

Windesheim, provided ‘open’ *collationes* to the lay brothers, perhaps in the monastery of Thabor (near Sneek).¹⁸¹

The *consuetudines* do not explicitly mention the attendance of women at the *collatio*, and female involvement in the practice is largely absent from the source material. However, it cannot be concluded *a priori* that the lay participants of the *collatio* were exclusively male. In Gouda at least, women could join the *collatio* in the chapel, in the front of the house, whereas men were seemingly guided to the dining room in the back.¹⁸² The female communities that opened their doors during the *collatio*, thereby inviting visitors – such as the Sisters of St Cecilia in Utrecht, where father confessor Herman Elborch on feast days performed his *collationes* in the chapel of the community – surely would not turn away female visitors.¹⁸³ Though the *collatio* was not a preaching event, there are similarities in how knowledge was circulated between religious professionals and laypeople, and as international sermon studies have shown, women played an active part in such processes of communications and were highly interested in preaching as well. For instance, in late medieval France, the majority of attendees of the sermons preached in church seems to have been women, though this is not always reflected in how the preacher addressed the crowd.¹⁸⁴ For their message to take hold among the urban population, preachers partially depended on female networks of communication to circulate their message among a larger audience.¹⁸⁵

In the context of the Modern Devotion as well, women were involved in the communication of religious knowledge. Of sister Kathryn van Arkel (d. 1421), charged with the external affairs of the Meester Geertshuis in Deventer, it is said that “she traveled to towns or farms on business and carried with her a little book (*boexsken*) of devotional materials. From it she read to those

¹⁸¹ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 91: *Laycis nostris in publico faciens collacionem quedam exterius, ut moris est (...)*.

¹⁸² Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege kerk*, 147.

¹⁸³ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 82–83: (...) *diebus festivis faceret collationem in capella sua pro sororibus suis et omnibus secularibus advenientibus (...)*.

¹⁸⁴ Larissa Taylor found that the ratio of male to female listeners could be as high as 1:4. L. Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ. Preaching in Late Medieval and Reformation France* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 31.

¹⁸⁵ C. Muessig, ‘Bernardino Da Siena and Observant Preaching as a Vehicle for Religious Transformation’, in *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. J.D. Mixson and B. Roest, Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 198–201. Female agency was also imperative to the circulation of devotional texts and the textual communication of religious knowledge. See, for instance, K. Gill, ‘Women and the Production of Religious Literature in the Vernacular, 1300–1500’, in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance*, ed. J. Coakley and E.A. Matter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 64–104, which argues for a reconsideration of texts traditionally attributed to male authors to include the role of female participants in the transmission of religious knowledge.

with whom she stayed and ate, even addressing them sharply on points she thought they needed to hear.”¹⁸⁶ Her actions show a dynamic similar to that of the *collatio*: the reading of devotional texts accompanied by personal admonishments. Moreover, the surviving material witnesses of the *collatio* – the books of collations – contain traces of female involvement: the only complete copy of the First Book of Collations, manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, bears the ownership mark of the tertiaries of St Agatha in Amersfoort. Perhaps it was an aid for the father confessor, or perhaps the Sisters used the texts themselves. The colophon on f. 140r of the book of collations Brussels, KB 19549 encourages the user to pray “a Hail Mary for the (female) writer, for the love of Jesus. God be praised,” indicating that the collations were copied by a woman.¹⁸⁷ The communication of religious knowledge was clearly not an exclusively male domain; it is likely women were far more involved in the *collatio* than is reflected in the source material, and that they were present and participating during the *collatio* or similar devotional activities.

3.3 Conclusion

As the *collatio* as a practice has thus far not been extensively studied, it is not surprising that the physical or practical aspects of it have not heretofore been considered. This might give the impression that the available source material would not allow for a consideration of where precisely the meetings took place or who was involved. However, this chapter has shown that such is not the case: though the information is fragmented and spread out over a large number of sources (as well as often scattered within the source texts themselves), by presenting it as a whole it is clear that the spatial and personal dimensions of the *collatio* can to some extent be recovered.

Whether the Brothers of the Common Life constructed their own house or took over an existing building, in either case it became a residential building to them – the house of the Brothers was their home. For the *collatio*, this means that the meetings took place in a quasi-domestic setting which allowed for more informal and personal interactions than a purely religious environment would. Such is already the case for the common rooms in which the reading of a devotional text to the collected audience took place – be that the main hall, the dining room, or the chapel – and even more so when lay participants visited the rooms of the Brothers for a private conversation. Laypeople and religious professionals were already gathered in a close space

¹⁸⁶ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 58.

¹⁸⁷ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 140r: “Een Ave Maria voer die scrijfstter om die mynne Jhesu. God si ghelooff”.

during the reading, and the physical and emotional distance between them only decreased during a one-on-one conversation. This intimate setting was beneficial to the communication of knowledge, as both the Brother and the participating layperson took steps to connect to one another. Indeed, the Brothers recognised the value of maintaining close relations with their visitors and knowing them personally – an aspect of the *collatio* which will be further examined in chapter 4. The communication of knowledge between the Brothers and their lay visitors was influenced and aided by the spaces of knowledge or *lieux de savoir* in which the participants entered: the informality of domestic space enabled more private and personal conversations.

The list of Brothers participating in the *collatio* presented in this chapter confirms that this was a common practice, and that the meetings were considered beneficial both to the lay visitors as well as the Brothers providing the reading and personal conversations. The Brothers' participation in the *collatio* is often mentioned in their chronicles or collections of exemplary Lives, meant to be illuminating to future Modern Devout readers. Though the accounts of their conduct during the *collatio* are likely coloured because of this, it stands that the intention of the *collatio* shines through; if not an actual account of the meeting, it is an idealised representation of it, showing the *collatio* as it was meant to be. The behaviour of the Brothers on display with regards to the *collatio* is the behaviour they were meant to exhibit and that which they would have attempted to imitate. Ideally, the Brother presiding over the *collatio* would be eloquent yet humble, using the way he had with words to touch the heartstrings of his lay listeners and rouse them to religious fervour. He would take care in the reading of the collation, choosing a proper text or composing his own based on the authoritative texts enjoyed by the Brothers themselves. He would open up their house to students and devout laypeople to interact with the Brothers and participate in the reading. Most importantly, he would introduce his audience to the spirituality of the Brothers of the Common Life and guide them through the ideals of the Modern Devotion.

Chapter 4: Relevant and informal: lay participation and worldly topics in the *collatio*

In opening up their house and inviting students and other interested laypeople to participate in the *collatio*, the Brothers of the Common Life enabled their visitors to mingle with the residents of the house. The participants at the *collatio* were in close physical proximity to one another, especially when a visitor wished to have a private conversation with one of the Brothers. As the previous chapter has shown, the *collatio* thus took place in a semi-domestic setting. The more intimate and informal atmosphere allowed the Brothers to connect to their visitors on an emotional level, which greatly benefitted the communication of knowledge – humble advice from a friend is taken to heart more easily than stern warnings from a stranger. The Brothers were well aware of this and tried to cultivate their relations with their visitors: the *consuetudines* indeed explicitly note their intention to build and maintain personal relations in order to facilitate the communication of religious knowledge. This chapter will further investigate the importance of personal and friendly connections, showing that the Brothers remained bonded to the urban laity and maintained those bonds to better instruct and admonish their visitors.

The communication of knowledge during the *collatio* was a primarily oral process taking place on a small-scale, personal level. Familiarity between the participants was beneficial to this process, as the Brothers could then more easily strike the right chords when addressing their visitors. This chapter's first paragraph will show that the Brothers indeed valued the personal connection to the other participants in the *collatio*, as they made the effort to know their visitors and be aware of their situation. The mutual understanding arising out of personal conversations not just facilitated but greatly aided the communication of religious knowledge as intended during the *collatio*. The books of collations do not fully reflect this dynamic, as they were intended to be used during the communal reading portion of the practice; however, other, related sources show that warm relations between laypeople and religious professionals were of great importance to the process. Friendly and personal bonds facilitated a communication of religious knowledge.

In a personal conversation, both parties could exert a measure of control, allowing laypeople to influence the course of the *collatio*. This is especially the case in the private, conversational part of the meeting when a layperson could ask for some words on a specific topic and the

Brother would respond to the visitor's query, but the visiting laypeople also exerted a more subtle and pervasive influence. As the Brothers aimed their collations at a lay audience, they needed to engage with the issues relevant to the visiting laypeople and treat them in an adequate fashion. Even when a collation does not directly refer to lay interests, the lay perspective is constantly present. To show how the Brothers acknowledged such lay demands in their collations, the second half of this chapter will examine several collations on the topic of marriage – a topic which is present in all surviving books of collations. Though marriage is of course a well-known medieval religious metaphor and rife with religious symbolism, the books of collations also – or rather, primarily – consider the worldly marriage and its implications. This includes the subject of sexual intercourse, which is neither shied away from nor condemned outright but is instead condoned, albeit within a set of constraints. This chapter will thus show that although the collations are supposedly written purely by religious professionals, they exhibit clear signs of attention to the lay perspective and thus reveal the audience's influence on the *collatio*.

4.1 Personal interactions as catalysts for the communication of religious knowledge

Apart from the communal reading of a vernacular religious text, the *collatio* consisted of a personal conversation where a Brother could admonish an individual visitor and offer them some humble advice. Though short – the customs dictate the conversation should not go on for more than half an hour – this was not an afterthought but fully part of the *collatio*. For the Brothers who wished to ignore the difficulties of the material world as much as possible this constituted something of a risk. Through frequent interaction a personal bond would develop between Brother and visitor, a bond which presented a double-edged sword. On the one side, the lay visitors remained in the world and brought with them their earthly worries; as the Brother developed a bond with his visitor he would share in the visitor's troubles and might feel engaged with them. The *consuetudines* warn against this risk: the conversations are not to last longer than half an hour and the Brothers “should not have a conversation with them about useless [or even: harmful] matters or worldly rumours”.¹ The customs of Gouda even stipulate that after

¹ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: (...) *non debemus eos diucius et ad longius ultra dimidiam horam apud nos tenere, nec de inutilibus aut rumoribus seculi cum eis colloquium habere* (...).

the *collatio*, the Brothers are to return to their rooms and ruminate on what they have heard, and how it could aid their spiritual improvement.²

On the other side, however, an emotional connection allowed the conversation to strike just the right chords, as will be discussed in this section. When the Brothers were familiar with their visitors, they could more easily identify the challenges they faced and provide some spiritual admonitions accordingly. More importantly, it would make the exhortations take hold: after all, the Brothers wished to truly touch the heart of the visitor to arouse passionate devotion. The Gouda-*consuetudines* explicitly state the wish to touch the visitors' hearts and desires with moving and humble words.³ Those of Zwolle even explain the need to speak to some of the participants privately: some personal encouragement is more effective and can be adjusted to the wants and needs of the individual visitor.⁴ The communal reading with all participants in a single room would speak to the mind; yet the heart was touched when separated from the group, in the privacy of a one-on-one conversation.

The more intimate setting allowed for more direct exhortations, tailored to the demands of the specific visitor. Indeed, for this very reason the *consuetudines* of Zwolle prescribe how the Brothers were to talk about their visitors during their own *collatio mutua*. By discussing the students and other good people amongst themselves, the Brothers could be more diligent in their admonitions.⁵ Sharing their experiences with the visitors would also allow the Brothers to give better exhortations to someone they had not extensively spoken to before. The *consuetudines* do not make explicit mention of the Brothers who were to engage in the personal exhortations, for instance whether they took turns, whether they were assigned randomly to a conversation, or whether a layperson could request a conversation with one Brother in particular. In any case, the frequent visitors would soon get to know most of the inhabitants of the house and would have established familiar bonds with them. These bonds only strengthened

² Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: *Collacione igitur huiusmodi completa non stent fratres in omni via, neque misceant cum secularibus et extraneis multos sermones, sed ibit quisque ad cameram suam, revolvens et ruminans in corde suo quid audierit aptabitque profectui sue spirituali.*

³ Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448.: (...) *motivis et compunctivis verbis corda et voluntates audientium tangere.*

⁴ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Quia vero privata et familiaris allocutio unumquemque plus movet, bonum est, nunc unum, nunc alium in privato alloqui, et secundum statum et exigentiam cuiusque ad meliora provocare.* Compare the Dutch translation in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 71.

⁵ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *Illis etiam Dominicis diebus conferemus de scolaribus vel etiam aliis hominibus bone voluntatis, qui veniunt ad nos causa instructionis, ut illos agnoscamus, et circa eos, qui bone spei videntur, diligentiores existamus.* Compare the Dutch translation in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 70.

with repeated use, immensely facilitating the communication of religious knowledge and shared devotion.

In inviting students and laypeople to attend, the *collatio* facilitated the formation of a community of like-minded individuals gathering around the exchange of religious knowledge. It also encouraged those individuals to cultivate devout relations among themselves: keeping good company, and encouraging and admonishing each other were quite beneficial pursuits. Dirc van Herxen wrote collations on the virtue of keeping good company and warned against the negative influence of characters of lesser moral standing.⁶ In the collation ‘On mutual admonitions’ he also stressed that laypeople should not be focussed solely on their own salvation, but should aid others as well.⁷ The books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287 include such a call for friendly mutual exhortations in their collation on reading vernacular religious texts – simultaneously emphasizing the connection between texts and admonitions as it was utilised in the *collatio*.⁸

The *collatio* thus made use of the fact that religious knowledge was most easily communicated through personal interactions, with frequent interaction based on shared experience yielding the best results. The author of the Book of Wedlock used the first collation in the manuscript to encourage laypeople to mutually berate each other, and in this way teach themselves as well. By quoting John Chrysostom – among other *auctoritates* – he agrees that regular, personal admonitions are more fruitful in cultivating devotion than the teaching of doctrine. Notably, Chrysostom proclaims the personal relationship to be conducive to devotion as well:

Do not, he says, blame everything on your rulers, and do not lay everything on your teachers, because you may educate and teach each other among yourselves. (...) You can learn more from each other than from us, because you are together more often and know each other better, as well as the affairs in your lives; you share more trust, love, and habits. These are no small advantages to teaching each other; they give much opportunities and skill

⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 65r–67v: “Van goeder gheselschap”, and f. 62v–65r: “Van quader gheselschap”, respectively.

⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 160r–162v: “Van onderlinger vermaninge”. On this collation and its Latin counterpart *De ammonicione*, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 136–40.

⁸ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 95r–99v: “Vanden naesten te vermanen en van die heilighe scrite te lesen ende van boecke te hebben”; London, BL Add. 10287 f. 67v–70r: “Vanden naesten te vermanen of te berispen ende vander heiligher scrite te gheloven ende te verstaen ende boken te hebben”. On these collations, also see paragraph 5.1.

because you can comfort one another in your temptations or misfortune, improve your virtues, and admonish your vices.⁹

Moreover, the author of the Book of Wedlock positions himself within this dynamic exchange of religious knowledge and devotional practice. The collations are written at the behest of several eager laypeople, but the author hopes to benefit from the endeavour as well:

Following the words of St Jerome, I wish to write a small collation (...) so that the laypeople and the uneducated folk who do not understand all the holy books may learn something of what is taught in there, and be educated, and I may be educated as well. He who educates others teaches himself as well, so that they can sometimes gather and have him read and teach things that help him for their salvation; especially on holidays, when one should write and read of wisdom, as the wise man teaches.¹⁰

In cultivating a personal connection with their visitors, the Brothers thus achieved two goals at once. It was not only easier for them to communicate devotional zeal and arouse religious passion because of a more empathic relation, but the Brothers benefitted from this exchange as well: in helping others they helped themselves. Illustrative of this is how Gerard Zerbolt, in his *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, encourages the devout to momentarily step down from their spiritual ascension to assist others. Individual devout advice – not public preaching! – is a devotional act in itself, and humble conversations aimed at arousing the feelings of piety are open to all.¹¹

⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 2v: “[Hier off spreket oic Johannes Guldenmont opter epistolen Pauli ad Hebreos xij. c.] En wilt niet, spreek hij, alle dinc den regierres witen en wilt niet alle dinc opden leerres werpen, want gij moecht u selven onderlingen stichten ende leren. (...) Want gij meer gheleert moget werden van malcanderen dan van ons, want gij dicker te samen sijt ende onderlingen malcanderen bet kennet ende den staet van uwen leven, ende oic hebdi meer betrouwens ende mynnen ende gewoente te samen. Ende dit en sijn geen clein vordernissen malcanderen te leren, mer sij geven voel occasien ende bequeemheiden dair toe, want gij malcanderen moget troesten in uwen becoringen of wederspoet, totten doecheden verwecken ende vanden ondoechden berispen”. The reference is to John Chrysostom’s Homilie 30 on Hebrews, here Hebrews 12:15; compare <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240230.htm> [consulted 26-02-2020].

¹⁰ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 3r: “So wil ic na sunte Jheronimus worden een luttel collacien scriven (...) op dat die leken ende die ongeleerde lude die die scriften mit allen niet en verstaen, iets wat hier in geleert mochten wesen ende gestichtet, ende ic mit hem. Want die den anderen leert onderwiset hem selven, op dat sij vergaderen wouden op somigen tiden ende laten hem lesen ende leren dingen die hem dienen mochte tot hoerre ewiger salicheit, ende sonderlingen op heiligen dagen, als men nae des wijsen mans leer wisheit soude scriven ende lesen”. The reference is to Ecclesiastes 38:25/Sirach 38:25.

¹¹ This is the 69th chapter of *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*, the second step in the descent towards one’s fellow man: Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *Geestelijke opklimmingen : een gids voor de geestelijke weg uit de vroege Moderne Devotie*, trans. R.Th.M. van Dijk, Bibliotheca Dissidentium Neerlandicorum (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 329–33; Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *La montée du coeur / De spiritualibus*

Thus, the *collatio* – and in particular the private exhortations as a singular component – was conversational in nature. It was more than a mere (semi-)public reading or an activity resembling a sermon, as both the visiting laypeople and the facilitating Brothers of the Common Life were actively participating. In taking care to know their visitors, being aware of their needs, and rousing their spirits through friendly exhortations, the Brothers opened themselves up to the devout laypeople. The communication of religious knowledge went in both directions: to get the most out of the *collatio*, all persons involved needed to engage with at least one other participant, if not several. Repeated contact between the Brothers and a lay visitor could well evolve into genuine friendship, in itself highly conducive to the communication of religious knowledge and thus amplifying the intention of the *collatio*. The books of collations do not show direct traces of any such friendships, though the Book of Wedlock comes closest in this regard: the author mentions he wrote it at the request of some laypeople who wished to live devoutly while married.¹² Likely the author of the Book of Wedlock knew the laypeople for whom he wrote and they in turn knew him. Perhaps they had met during earlier *collationes* or knew each other before, and maintained contact after the author had become a religious professional. Even if the author only claimed to be approached for his collations as a figure of speech, or to lend significance to his work, it is telling that a lay request is considered a valid prompt to write some collations.

Illustrative for the way in which genuine secular friendship could be entwined with religious fervour is the friendship between Geert Grote and Johannes Cele, who – despite being included in the *Chronicon Windeshemense* – did not join the Modern Devotion or any other religious movement.¹³ Their friendship went back to before Grote's conversion, and Cele aided him in the early days of what would grow into the Modern Devotion: to facilitate Grote's preaching campaign he and Cele travelled to Paris to purchase books from which to draw sermon material. After his conversion as well, Grote sent Cele a large number of letters combining secular business with religious musings and spiritual instructions. Cele kept the letters out of "sincere love" and "a desire to read [them]" according to Thomas a Kempis, showing that secular friendship and pastoral care were certainly not mutually exclusive but instead strengthened each

ascensionibus, ed. and transl. F.J. Legrand, *Sous la Règle de Saint Augustin* 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 394–401.

¹² For instance Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 32r.

¹³ Grube, *Chronicon Windeshemense*, 204–22.

other.¹⁴ Communicating religious knowledge was made more effective by maintaining a personal connection.

Between the Brothers of the Common Life and the lay visitors to the *collatio* was a difference in status, with the Brothers potentially having authority over the other participants. However, such an unequal power structure does not prevent a close personal relationship, as is clearly visible from a collection of texts kept as manuscript Leuven, Maurits Sabbebibliotheek, MS 74 Y 5.¹⁵ Nearly the entire manuscript, which contains a collection of religious texts, letters, and sermons, was written by the same person, presumably a Franciscan friar, and can be dated to the period 1480–1492.¹⁶ The intended audience of the manuscript was a distinguished woman from West-Flanders, married and with children, and the texts are a form of spiritual guidance from a religious professional to his female ward.¹⁷ But more than that, the manuscript reveals a genuine friendship between the two, especially in the letters the friar sent her in 1482. The friar explicitly states that devotion is a core element of their friendship: “I know well that love and the teaching of virtues is one of the bonds of our friendship.”¹⁸ Supposedly the two did not see each other very often, yet they stayed in touch. In one of the letters, the friar assures his friend: “know that as far as I am aware I am bodily healthy, and I hope you are, too”.¹⁹ Their friendship is close enough for the laywoman to invite the friar to her house yet be able to leave it while he was there. On this occasion, both the laywoman and the friar were joined by several other people who participated in a discussion on religious matters – in particular, “thoughts which occur to man and are often very strange – sometimes temptation, sometimes venial sins, sometimes mortal sins”.²⁰ At some point, the woman had to leave on some other business yet the discussion resumed, and the friar continued his reasoning. Afterwards he apparently felt that his words on

¹⁴ Quoted from R.Th.M. van Dijk, ‘Tussen kartuizers en cisterciënzers. De brieven van Geert Grote aan de abdij van Kamp’, in *A Fish Out of Water? From Contemplative Solitude to Carthusian Involvement in Pastoral Care and Reform Activity*, ed. S.J. Molvarec and T. Gaens, *Miscellanea Neerlandica*, XLI (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 129.

¹⁵ On this manuscript, see Th. Mertens, ‘The Middle Dutch Mystical Whitsun Sermons from 1492 Mediating Johannes Gerson’, in *Between Lay Piety and Academic Theology. Studies Presented to Christoph Burger on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. U. Hascher-Burger, A. den Hollander, and W. Janse, *Brill’s Series in Church History* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 79–98; Sherwood-Smith et al., *Repertorium van Middelnederlandse handschriften*, vol. VI: 55–59.

¹⁶ Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 79–80.

¹⁷ For the Low Countries, this form of pastoral care has left fewer traces than it has internationally: see for instance P. Delcorno, “‘Quomodo Discet Sine Docente?’” Observant Efforts towards Education and Pastoral Care’, in *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, ed. J.D. Mixson and B. Roest, *Brill’s Companions to the Christian Tradition* 59 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 179–80.

¹⁸ Quoted from Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 81.

¹⁹ Leuven, MS 74 Y 5, f. 40v: “Alder bemindste joinecfrauwen, weet dat ic noch ben lichamelic ghesont naer mijn beseffen ende ic hope so sijt ghij”. Quoted from Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 82n15.

²⁰ Quoted from Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 82.

the issue were quite relevant to his female friend as well, so he put them to paper for her benefit. This, too, is an example of religious knowledge being most easily communicated through direct personal interaction: the conversation dealt with devotional matters. Moreover, the domestic setting of the devout conversation provided an additional element of intimacy, and the family home was charged with devotional activity. The conversation appears strikingly similar to the *collatio*, as a religious professional is here engaged with a small group of devout laypeople – a form of spiritual guidance stemming from genuine care.

Moreover, the anonymous friar kept the capacities of his ward into account, shaping his spiritual care according to her needs and level of understanding: “I do not write much on Holy Scripture, because you do not have mastered it yet and are not allowed to set your hand to it further than you are taught by us. You have to learn.”²¹ Her ambitions to be educated in religious matters are not denied but instead shaped and guided: with the aid of her spiritual friend, she is enabled to advance in religious knowledge. To this end, the friar included a series of sermons preached around Whitsun 1492 which show a strong inclination towards affective mysticism: informed devotion surpasses academic theology, so that lay piety can be on par with or even above an intellectual understanding of the faith. Indeed, Mertens notes that these four sermons are the completion of “[the] battle for ‘deprofessionalization’ and laicization of mysticism”²²: the translation and communication of religious knowledge between laypeople and religious professionals, in this case severely aided by a close personal relationship. The *collationes* made use of the same dynamic: religious knowledge collected from authoritative texts was translated and communicated to an interested lay audience along relatively informal and personal lines. Being close lay visitors, physically as well as emotionally, allowed religious professionals to recognise laypeople’s spiritual needs and level of understanding and shape their message to be relevant to them. To incite devotion among the participants of the *collatio*, the Brothers had to maintain personal relations with the urban lay population. The letters between the anonymous friar and his female ward in manuscript Leuven, MS 74 Y 5 show how such relations might function: a genuine friendship between religious professionals and laypeople rooted in shared devotion was a large boon to the mutual communication of knowledge.

²¹ Quoted from Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 81.

²² Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 87–98, quote on p. 96.

4.2 With the audience in mind: lay interests are reflected in the books of collations

The aim of the *collatio* as expressed in the *consuetudines* was to encourage visitors in their faith and rouse them to greater religious fervour. Apart from establishing and maintaining personal relations with their visitors, the Brothers of the Common Life thus needed their *collationes* to resonate with the experiences of the lay audience: if the message expressed was not applicable or was incomprehensible, it could not be put into action. Thus, the Brothers needed the collations to take the audience's wants and needs into account. As this section will show, the accommodation of lay interests during the *collatio* is reflected in the collations, emphasising that the meetings were not a top-down transmission of knowledge but a circular process in which laypeople were involved as well. As a process of communication, the *collatio* needed to prepare for and respond to the needs of the lay audience: expounding doctrine was all well and good, but the effect would be lost when the listeners had no way to grasp the finer points or incorporate them in their own understanding of devotion. Religious professionals took note of the level of understanding of their audience and shaped their message accordingly for maximum effect.²³

In the preparation of their *collationes* the Brothers of the Common Life took notice of the challenges and temptations laypeople faced in the world outside. The collations reflect how the religious knowledge communicated in the *collatio* took shape as a compromise between doctrine and daily life. The author of the Book of Wedlock, for instance, states that he wrote:

at the behest of several hungry people who are unlearned or have little learning, especially in Holy Scripture, but who truly desired that someone was to write some good admonitions based on Holy Scripture, on marriage and on some other things that follow hereafter.²⁴

Later on, as he starts his collations on marriage proper, he again explains that he writes to allow laypeople to live devoutly even when married:

²³ This dynamic is not unique to the *collatio* but is for instance clearly visible in sermons as well: see in particular Howard, 'Doctrine, When Preached, Is Entirely Civic'; Rebillard, 'Sermons, Audience, Preacher', 92–97. A striking example of a preacher learning how to anticipate and respond to lay reception is presented in Kimura, 'The "Bildungsroman" of an Anonymous Franciscan Preacher'.

²⁴ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 3r: "Om somiger hongeriger lude wille die ongeleert of seer luttel geleert sijn, sonderlingen inder heiliger scrifturen, die dat merkeliken begeert hebben dat men hem wat gueder vermaningen scriven woude uut der heiliger scriften van echtscappen ende van anderen saken die hier nae volgen sullen".

so in this present collation, I wish to write something in Dutch on the holy sacrament of marriage that is proper and useful to laypeople, and [I do so] at the request from good people who entered the marital state and who want to live proper and Christian lives.²⁵

Thus, religiously motivated laypeople exerted an influence on the *collatio* by communicating their own interests. While it is possible the author of the Book of Wedlock was not actually requested to write these collations on marriage but used the suggestion as a figure of speech, the point stands that he framed his endeavour as accommodating the lay perspective. The two collations on marriage in the First Book of Collations as well are included specifically for laypeople: they are not included in the Latin version of the Book, which was used during the private *collatio mutua*, with only the Brothers attending.²⁶ That this is not the result of a revision alongside the translation is clear, as there are only three collations in total which do not have a Latin version: these two on marriage and a collation on the reading of religious texts in the vernacular.²⁷ Dirc van Herxen evidently recognised the tension between the religious ideal of virginity and the unwed state, and the worldly reality of marriage and sexual intercourse. Collations on the earthly marriage – not, for instance, the spiritual marriage – could address some of the questions and problems laypeople might have when they visited a community of Brothers of the Common Life. The *collatio* offered a chance to address these challenges and provide laypeople with suitable advice. Even if the lay audience did not outright voice their needs and interests, they exerted an influence on the *collatio* in that the Brothers needed to take their experience into consideration.

Engaged in this process of mutual communication of knowledge, laypeople were fully participating in the *collatio*: the meetings were not a top-down affair coming from the Brothers but were more conversational in nature, as all participants contributed to the practice (though perhaps not all to the same degree). The participation of laypeople in the *collatio* is most clearly visible in the topics which were to be discussed, as provided in the books of collations. Despite being composed for a devotional activity, books of collations were not wholly religious in the

²⁵ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 32r: “So denc ic nu in deser tegewordiger collacien wat toe scriven in Duutschen, om orber ende nutticheit wille der leker lude, vanden heiligen sacrament der echtscap, ende dat om beden wil gueder lude die die echtscap aengenomen hebben ende daer gaerne alst te hopen is redeliken ende kersteliken in leven soudē”.

²⁶ For a comparison of Dirc van Herxen’s First Book of Collations and his Latin *collationale* see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 125–60.

²⁷ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 140–51.

sense of expounding doctrine: individual collations also discussed more practical or non-religious business. The collations are essentially timeless: they are not tied to any particular occasion, though their intended time of reading could respond to a specific day of the liturgical calendar.²⁸ The contents of the collations (and indeed their message) remained relevant no matter the moment of reading. Vices like envy or greed were a constant challenge, and should be fought at any time. Reading proper religious texts was always commendable, to provide material for devotional rumination. Warnings against expensive and fancy clothes would strike a note with any audience, since everyone wore clothes – or at least, they should: in 1455, the Deventer city council had someone put in the pillory for “going to pray naked, despite having good clothes in the inn”.²⁹ Over time, this repetition of topics also aided the process of communication: repeated exposure to the same material allowed the message to take hold and be properly internalised. The regular occurrence of the *collatio* – taking place on Sundays and feast days – also provided laypeople with the opportunity to make it a part of their weekly devotional routine. Interacting with the Brothers on a weekly cycle allowed laypeople to fully engage with the message of the *collatio*.³⁰

From the collations, it is clear the Brothers did not shy away from the lay perspective. The texts are helpful, not accusatory, and provide suggestions to combat vices and increase virtues. The collations on marriage are a good example of the lay experience being taken into account, and it is evidently an important subject for the *collatio*: texts on this topic appear in every book of collations.³¹ Indeed, the Book of Wedlock takes the topic of marriage as its prime subject, with the majority of its collations discussing the multiple dimensions of holy matrimony. On the one hand, it is a rather worldly issue and part of (daily) life; on the other, the status of marriage as a sacrament lends it religious significance, not to mention the symbolic (spiritual) components of marriage as a metaphor for the union between man and God.³² However, the emphasis in the

²⁸ See Van Buuren, ‘Wat materien gheliken’, 256–59.

²⁹ NL-DvHCO, HCO Stadsarchief Deventer, ID 0698, Cameraars, inv.nr. 1.22b, f. 8v: “Item dat Thijs enen man ter stupen sloch die naket genck bidden ende guide cledere in die herberge hadde”.

³⁰ The cyclic nature of time was also used in many Middle Dutch devotional works to communicate devotion. By presenting their contents divided in seven parts and tying these to the days of the week, readers were encouraged to read and meditate daily, which “would have made it easier for readers to internalise and memorise the material.” See J. van der Laan, ‘Enacting Devotion. Performative Religious Reading in the Low Countries (ca. 1470-1550)’ (Groningen, University of Groningen, 2020), 221–26, quotation on p. 222.

³¹ See Appendix 1 for an overview of the contents of the books of collations.

³² Something primarily addressed in sermons: see D.L. d’Avray, ‘Thirteenth-Century Marriage Preaching in Context’, in *Predigt Im Kontext*, ed. V. Mertens (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 147–54; A.L. Clark, ‘Here Comes the Bride. Re-Envisioning the Wedding at Cana in the 12th Century’, *Church History and Religious Culture* 95 (2015): 155–81.

Book of Wedlock – and in the other books of collations as well – is on marriage as the joining of man and wife. The religious significance of marriage and its use as a metaphor for the union of Christ and Church, or of God and the devout, are acknowledged but not explored at length. In the context of the *collatio*, marriage is primarily a worldly issue: the collations do not take marriage as a metaphor.

The books of collations all contain different collations on marriage, yet three common themes appear among them. Firstly, the collations are united in their position that it is far better to remain unmarried. Whatever its merits, marriage brings its own set of temptations, burdens, and worries, and so it is preferable to remain chaste and unwed. The collations present a clear link between the married state and the challenge to remain chaste, acknowledging the possibility of physical relations between man and wife. Sexual intercourse is however not condemned outright: comparing the collations shows that barring some restrictions, intercourse is an expected and fully permitted aspect of married life. A third common element to these diverse collations is that in the end, they are quite accepting of marriage, providing advice on how to maintain a devout lifestyle while being married. To communicate these attitude towards marriage, the collations make use of a range of source materials, as will be discussed below. In showing and acknowledging the frequent quotations and references by which the collations present their message, the remainder of this chapter will also make clear that the collations were framed as the communication of authoritative sources, rather than an invention of novel opinions.

The shared point of departure for the diverse collations on marriage is that while it is not inherently bad, the alternative is preferable. The Book of Wedlock phrases it thusly: “marriage is good, but it is not recommended to marry”.³³ This is not a new position: like much of the Modern Devotion, it is firmly rooted in a tradition of *auctoritates* and the Bible, for instance Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians.³⁴ Nor does the author pretend this is a new view on marriage: the sources on which he based himself are well documented in the texts of the collations. It is with good reason the author considers it better to remain unwed than to enter into holy matrimony. The fifth collation in the Book of Wedlock, for instance, likens it to a mill which goes round and round: marriage revolves around fears and worries. Man and wife should take care of each other, that neither of them succumbs to missteps. The eleventh collation

³³ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 99v: “So is echtschap goet mer sy is niet raden aen te gaen”.

³⁴ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 99v: “Als Paulus scrivet inder epistolen”. The reference is to 1 Corinthians 7:9.

expands on the burden of marriage, the main difficulty being that one has to be concerned with their spouse and their children. While married, it is impossible to fully devote oneself to God. Moreover, married people are susceptible to jealousy and fear of their spouse committing adultery. This is illustrated with several stories of adulterous women and how they attempt to trick their husbands, though it is stated that “the same and even worse can be said from bad, unjust men”.³⁵ The collation concludes with some remarks on Adam’s yoke, making the connection between the burden of marriage and that of heavy labour.

In the First Book of Collations the entire first part of the collation on marriage maintains that remaining unwed is the better course. Dirc van Herxen argued for this position by referring to the examples provided by the evangelists,³⁶ first and foremost how Christ himself advised the apostle John against marrying, and instead told him to follow Him.³⁷ As strong an argument against marriage as this is, the collation is quick to add nuance to the statement. Instead of a direct command it is a recommendation: it is good to marry, but even better not to; such was the advice Jerome gave in his letters to Pammachius and to Eustochius.³⁸ However, for some people marriage is even prohibited altogether. Gregory³⁹ asserts that to those who are called to a higher plan (that is, the spiritual life), the lower options (secular life and everything it entails) are unavailable, and St Anthony⁴⁰ warns against looking back after the yoke is taken up⁴¹: it would only lead to regretting the chosen path.

³⁵ Leuven MS 5000 12 B I f. 92r: “Ende al scriven dit die meisters vanden wiven, men sal oic des gelijcs of quader dingen vijnden inden quaden ongerechten mannen”.

³⁶ For a more complete overview of the references and quotations in this collation, see Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 291–95; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 146–51.

³⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169v; quoted from Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 303: “Vanden eersten lesen wi inder historien van Sunte Johan Ewangelisten (...)”. The reference is not attributed precisely, but the *Legenda aurea* in any case mentions John being called away from his marriage: compare A. Berteloot, G. Claassens, and W. Kuiper, *Gulden legende. De Middelnederlandse vertaling van de Legenda aurea door Petrus Naghel, uitgegeven naar handschrift Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 15140*, vol. I (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), 75.

³⁸ Utrecht UB 3 L 6 f. 169v; quoted from Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 303–4: “Hier van scrift Sunte Jheronimus tot Pammachium (...) Ende die selve scrijft oec tot Eustochium aldus (...) Dit zijn Sunte Jheronimus woerde.” Van Beek identified these quotations as references to Jerome’s letters 22 and 48, respectively; see Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 292.

³⁹ Utrecht UB 3 L 6 f. 170r; quoted from Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 304: “Als wi verstaen mogen uut Sunte Gregorius woerde in Pastoralibus (...)” The reference is to chapter 27 of Gregory’s *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*: see P. Schaff, trans., *Leo the Great, Gregory the Great, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series, XII* (Grand Rapids, MI: B. Eerdmans, 1994), 58b.

⁴⁰ Utrecht UB 3 L 6 f. 170r; quoted from Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 304: “Als Sunte Anthonius seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁴¹ Utrecht UB 3 L 6 f. 170r; quoted from Van Beek, 304: “Niemant sprect Christus die zijn hande slaet aen die ploech ende weder omme siet is bequame den rijke der hemelen”. The reference is to Luke 9:62.

Further explanation on this point is taken from what the collation calls a ‘book of marriage’ or ‘book of wedlock’, by which is meant the *De matrimonio* of Geert Grote.⁴² Grote had composed the text in Latin; the translation is possibly Van Herxen’s.⁴³ A married life contains three obstacles for those called to a higher plan: a married man worries how he can please his wife (instead of only pleasing God); carnal lust and worldly concerns threaten to distract one from divine love; and though the most important part of marriage is begetting children, many people do not raise them properly. This first part of the collation leans heavily on *De matrimonio*, though it does more than simply follow the authoritative text. Instead, it provides a sort of template which could be edited and adapted to suit a different interpretation: indeed, Dirc van Herxen generally takes a milder stance with women and marriage than Geert Grote does.⁴⁴

Marriage is thus considered intrinsically linked with physical relations, and part of the reason why remaining unwed is the better option is to remain chaste and virginal. In the collation on marriage in the First Book of Collations this sentiment is relatively unexplored: instead, Dirc van Herxen included two separate collations on remaining chaste as well.⁴⁵ The books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287, however, take the topics of marriage and chastity together in a single collation, titled “How the holy teachers praise maidenhood over marriage”.⁴⁶ In comparison, the collation in the London manuscript is shorter than the one in the Brussels manuscript, though aside from missing the last part the two are the same. The Brussels manuscript also contains another collation on marriage – twice: “How pleasing it is to God to live and die in chastity while married” and “How good it is to live in chastity and remain that way in marriage”.⁴⁷ This is the exact same collation, though it is included twice in the manuscript in two places. As this is the only collation which appears twice, it was likely unintentional and the result of an honest mistake.

⁴² Utrecht UB 3 L 6 f. 170r: “In enen boeke vander echtscap staet daer aldus (...)”. Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 292.

⁴³ For an edition of the Latin text of *De matrimonio*, as well as an overview of the sources used by Grote, see M.H. Mulders, *Geert Groote en het huwelijk. Uitgave van zijn tractaat De matrimonio en onderzoek naar de bronnen* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1941). A vernacular translation seems to be kept in Den Haag, KB 73 H 16 f. 206v-216v, according to the BNM: <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/teksten/TEXT000000007798> [consulted 07-03-2019].

⁴⁴ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 148–49; Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 295–99.

⁴⁵ These collations on chastity run from f. 156r to f. 158r and f. 158r to f. 160r. The First Book of Collations also contains a collation on ‘the evil of unchastity’ on f. 85v to f. 88r.

⁴⁶ These collations run from f. 75r to 79v in Brussels, KB 19549 and from f. 59r to f. 62r in London, BL Add. 10287; both are titled “Hoe die heilighe leerres die joncfrouscap prisien boven die echtscap”.

⁴⁷ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 45r–46v: “Hoe behaechlic dattet gode is inder echscap in reynicheit te leven ende te sterven”; and 106r–107v: “Hoe goet dattet is in reinicheit te leven; oec in echtscap reyn te bliven”.

The part the two books of collations have in common is essentially a list of well-known *auctoritates* who praise marriage but praise virginity even more: Jerome⁴⁸ (quoted six times), Ambrose⁴⁹ (quoted thrice), Augustine⁵⁰ (quoted twice), and Chrysostom⁵¹ and Isaiah⁵² (both quoted once). The collation repeats the point that praising virginity is not the same as dispraising marriage: “Those who are married come to glory as well but they are lower than the maidens who will complete the earth and will be multiplied; but the maidens’ share is in heaven.”⁵³ Several prophets were virgins themselves, illustrating that virginity and purity go together. It is, however, noted that virginity is not holy in and of itself: a devout marriage is better than ungodly maidenhood. But in general, the maidens are better off than the married folk.

At this point the London manuscript cuts off, whereas the Brussels collation goes on to prove maidenhood goes above marriage and the widowed state. Keeping one’s virginity, however, brings its own challenges with regards to social interactions, as “like hay and fire are man and wife together”, according to Jerome.⁵⁴ To prevent such temptations, the collation advises joining a monastery or a beguinage, on the condition that they are not convents which allow personal property or have loose morals.⁵⁵ The collation on maidenhood here becomes a short call for giving children their proper heritage, even if they wish to join a religious community – a curious inclusion of economic affairs in a collation supposedly on marriage.

⁴⁸ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 75r: “Sinte Jheronimus seit (...)”; f. 75v: “die selve seit (...)”; f. 77r: “Sinte Jheronimus seit (...)”; f. 77v: “Die selve seit (...)”; f. 78r. I have not been able to trace these references. However, on f. 76v: “Sinte Jheronimus seit (...)”, this reference is possibly to Jerome’s Letter 48 to Pammachius; compare <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001048.htm> [consulted 07-03-2019].

⁴⁹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 75r: “Sunte Ambrosius seit (...)”; f. 76r: “Sinte Ambrosius spreek”; f. 76v: “Sinte Ambrosius seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace these references.

⁵⁰ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 75r: “Sunte Augustijn seit (...)” and again, “Sunte Augustijn seit (...)”. Both references seem to be to Augustine’s *De bono coniugali*: compare W. Otten, ‘Augustine on Marriage, Monasticism, and the Community of the Church’, *Theological Studies* 59 (1998): 398–400.

⁵¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 76r: “Sint Jan Guldemont seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁵² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 75v: “Mer nu seit men totten joncfrouwen doer Ysayas den propheet (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁵³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 75v: “Die in echtschap sitten die glorieren oec, mer si sijn lager dan die joncfrouwen die die aerde vervellen, sel wassen ende werden vermenichvoudicht. Mer der joncfrouwen scare is inden hemel.”

⁵⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 78v: “Want als vuer ende hoy te samen, so is die man ende dat wijf bi melcander, als sinte Jheronymus seit”. The reference is likely to Jerome’s exposition on 1 Corinthians 7 in his *Against Jovinianus*, in particular chapter 7. Compare <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/30091.htm> [consulted 11-11-2019].

⁵⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 78v–79r: “Als sinte Jheronymus seit: Ende daer om die maechden die haer reynicheit willen behouden, dien ist nut dat si hem pinen te comen in conventen of in cloesteren, daer men in reynicheit levet ende in ghehoersamicheit, ende in gemeen cost sonder eyghen goet. Of willen si hoer eighen cost ende goet behouden dat si dan opt begijnhoven trecken daermen wel ende eerberlic levet. Of sijn si te cranc daer toe of dattet hem niet gheboren en mach, so sellen si hem of trecken vander werlt. (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

As mentioned above, the Brussels book of collations has one more collation on marriage, strangely copied twice in the same manuscript, on how much it pleases God to live and die in chastity even when married. Only a small amount of the collation is actually devoted to explaining how to do so: half the collation is composed of an *exemplum* and a short list of chaste married couples. It starts with a tale of two wise men searching for the chaste Eukaristus and his wife⁵⁶: despite years of marriage they are still pure, having never been ‘tainted’. To avoid the pitfalls of lust they sleep in separate beds and wear a sack at night; in the day they wear clothes so there is not a single moment when they can be tempted by the flesh. The two wise men are in awe of the couples’ chastity. Following this exemplary story is a list of other abstinent couples to repeat the point: marriage without sex is indeed possible, and most praiseworthy. Still, the remainder of the collation makes clear that sexual intercourse is generally an expected part of marriage and as such is not to be condemned outright.

The book of collations Brussels, KB 19549 is not the only instance of this sentiment; indeed, it is also expressed in other collations on marriage. It is present in the First Book of Collations as well, but it is particularly obvious in the Book of Wedlock, where it crops up multiple times. From the fourth collation onwards it becomes a recurring theme as an established part of marriage, preventing the sin of extramarital sex: it allows “man and wife [to] engage in their weakness with each other but no further”.⁵⁷ Sexual relations feature most prominently in the sixth, eighth, and ninth collations, and the manuscript also contains two Latin texts on intercourse which as of yet have never been studied – however, as these texts are not collations, this falls outside of the scope of this thesis.⁵⁸

The Book of Wedlock holds that although some general rules need to be obeyed, intercourse is not inherently sinful. Indeed, the fifth collation reinforces the importance of marital sex as it ties in with two of the three ‘good points’ which should be present in every marriage. Marital sex prevents adultery and is essential for begetting and devoutly raising children (the third ‘point’ is that marriage symbolises the union between humanity and God). Adulterous couples or those who have intercourse for reasons other than begetting children are therefore those who

⁵⁶ I have not been able to trace this *exemplum*. The collation does not give a source either but simply reads: “There were two holy fathers who asked God...”. Brussels, KB 19549 f. 45r: “Het waren twee heilige vaderen die god baden (...)”.

⁵⁷ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 33v: “man ende wijff hoerre crancheit mit malcanderen te gebruiken, mer niet vorder”.

⁵⁸ The first three collations in the Book of Wedlock are not concerned with marriage at all, but instead discuss the right (or even duty) of laypeople to devoutly admonish each other, the importance of proper texts for religious education, and the right to have religious texts in the vernacular.

“do not have Christ, Mary, and the disciples at their wedding but the devil and his cloud of angels”.⁵⁹ These beneficial effects of marital sex are also included in the seventh collation, where they are again tied to the institution of marriage itself: the married state is a noble one because it prevents extramarital sex and produces children.

The sixth collation of the Book of Wedlock takes its theme from Ecclesiastes 3:5, which is quoted in Latin: *[T]empus amplexandi et tempus longe fieri a complexibus scribitur ecclesiastes 3^o*.⁶⁰ ‘A time to embrace’ is taken as the time to go a bit further than merely embracing: “there is a time when the groom takes the bride in his arms and shows her carnal love, and there is a time to stay from that and not do any of it”.⁶¹ Five moments in particular should not be used for sexual intercourse, the first and foremost of which is holidays and saints’ days, for one should be engaged with spiritual matters. Other times are “at holy places”⁶² – presumably meaning when one is on pilgrimage – as well as on fast days, when a woman is pregnant, and “when all good and reasonable men and women know”⁶³ – possibly referring to menstruation. Otherwise, there are three reasons for marriage: to beget children and raise them devoutly, to give each other comfort and support, and to prevent extramarital sex. The collation explicitly recommends ruminating on the seventh chapter of Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he wrote extensively on marriage: not completely discouraging it, but recommending the alternative.⁶⁴

While it is better to remain chaste, sex is an expected part of married life: neither man nor wife has full ownership of his or her body but must give it up to the other, and only in mutual agreement can they withdraw from sexual intercourse altogether. The children born from marriage are also necessary to account for the number of elected souls in heaven. Again, the idea of marriage counteracting temptation and lust is brought up, as even Paul prayed for divine assistance in remaining chaste; this temptation is acknowledged as a true burden, one not easily

⁵⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 46r: “Ende die gene die sonder dese drie guide vergaderen, die en hebben Christum, Mariam ende die discipulen niet in hoerre bruloft mer den duvelen mit sinen engelen wolc”.

⁶⁰ The initial ‘T’ is missing though space for it has been kept free. This ‘sermon-like’ structure of a Biblical theme explored in the collation is also present in the fourth and fifth collations, but not in any others.

⁶¹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 46r–46v: “Et [sic] is een tijt des omvangens, dat die brudegom die bruyt inden arme neem ende toen hoer vleischelike minnen, ende et [sic] is een tijt veer daer aff te wesen ende dat mit allen niet te doen”.

⁶² Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 47r: “Ten anderen mael op heiligen steden is dat ongeorloft”.

⁶³ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 47r: “Ten vijften tijden eest ongeorloft als alle guede redelike man ende wijff wael weten”.

⁶⁴ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 47v: “Waer aff die apostel Paulus seer voel scrivet tot dien van Chorinten inden sevenden capittel”; “In welken capittel hij seer voel seet vander echtschap, ende seer merkelike woerde die voel sins inhebben die je wael ruminiert ende ondercauwet”. The reference is to 1 Corinthians 7.

shouldered by everyone. Examples from St Catherine of Siena and St Syncletica show that even they suffered from lustful and impure thoughts, from which Christ eventually absolved them. The eleventh collation contains a story about St Francis, who was assailed by lust yet overcame it by thinking about marriage – pretending the little snowmen he had just made were his wife, kids, and household, he became so worried he would have to take care of them that he was freed from his temptations.⁶⁵

In the course of the eighth and ninth collations the author gives some advice on how to handle sexual intercourse within marriage. The eighth collation suggests how newlyweds should spend their first nights together: they are to take an example from the biblical Tobias and Sara, whose conduct on their wedding night is a beacon of devotion and heavenly assistance.⁶⁶ Newlyweds are advised to abstain from sexual intercourse for three nights and three days, instead using this time for prayer. On the first night they should take the liver of a fish and burn it over coals, “to let it simmer in the love of God and in fear [for Him]”⁶⁷: the smell would bring the archangel Raphaël to the marital chamber to lock up the devils in the desert. On the second night, the couple’s prayer would allow them to be written up in the Book of Life; on the third night they would be blessed to have good children. Once the temptations are overcome, “he may take the lady in the fear of God and they may, in a reasonable manner, do the works of wedlock; more to beget children (...) than to seek pleasure in impurity”.⁶⁸

The mention of marital sex in the book of collations Brussels, KB 19549 is quite similar. The last part of the collation “How pleasing it is to God to live and die in chastity while married” or “How good it is to live in chastity and remain that way in marriage” briefly deals with sex. It stresses how intercourse, if it is to take place at all, should only take place for the right reasons, at the proper times, and “in a decent and proper manner” without “any improper touching or kissing, because we are Christians and reasonable people and God and the angels see all that

⁶⁵ The same story is included in the the First Book of Collations building on Geert Grote’s *De matrimonio*, and can be traced back further to the *Legenda aurea*: compare Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 305; M.H. Mulders, *Geert Groote en het huwelijk. Uitgave van zijn tractaat De matrimonio en onderzoek naar de bronnen* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1941), 43, 45.

⁶⁶ The collation runs from f. 61v to f. 64v. The initial ‘N’ is missing though space for it has been kept free.

⁶⁷ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 63r: “Als nu inden iersten nacht dese lever gebraden is inder minnen goeds ende inder vresen (...)”.

⁶⁸ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 63r: “Dan inden vierden nacht so mach hij nemen die jonfrou inder vresen goeds, ende mach mit hoer doen in redeliker wise werke der echtscap: meer om kijnder te winnen (...) dan hem selven te sueken in genuechten van onkuisscheiden (...)”.

we do.”⁶⁹ Whosoever does not refrain from such actions and does not confess them commits a grave sin. Sex is not inherently sinful: a married couple is allowed to produce children or comply with their ‘marital debt’, as long as it is done for the right reasons, at the right time, and in the right way.

Sexual intercourse is also one of the five points Dirc van Herxen lists as guidelines to a proper marriage, though it is one in which married couples “should limit and restrain themselves”.⁷⁰ A sexless marriage is most certainly a valid option, but within wedlock sex is essentially fine when performed at the right time – that is, not on feast days, fast days, or when she is pregnant “or otherwise indisposed”.⁷¹ “Acts of indecency” are still not allowed even in marriage, and of course sex has to happen for the right reasons. Sex is only proper and without sin when it occurs to gain children, to prevent the partner from performing “indecent acts”, or to fulfil the marital debt⁷²; other reasons for sex are either a daily or a deadly sin. This ‘marital debt’ is further discussed in the ninth collation of the Book of Wedlock, as one of eight points a man owes his wife. Along with loving her, making sure she is educated in the faith, correcting and admonishing her when necessary, honouring her, governing her justly as head, maintaining her, and providing shelter, he also has to ‘pay the marital debt’ when appropriate. The begetting of children is one of the appropriate reasons for having sex (indeed, in this case it is similar to the physical relations the patriarchs of the Old Testament maintained with their wives, and not sinful at all) but it is not the only one. When the pressure of abstinence gets to be too much, either member of the married couple might ask his or her spouse to pay their dues: “So they commit a gracious sin [i.e. a sin which can be forgiven] out of neglect, and the other person followed the weak person’s will and paid their debt (...) This person does not commit a sin in this, but doubles the holiness of their intent [not to have sex]”.⁷³ Physical relations also provide a remedy against infidelity, and no wife may decide unilaterally to go abstinent – such decisions

⁶⁹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 46r: “Ende dattet oec gheschie mit behoerlicker ende tameliker manieren der natueren, ende datmen scuwe onmanierlicke tasten ende cussen, want wij kersten ende redelike menschen sijn, ende God ende die engelen sien al dat wij doen.”

⁷⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 171v–172r: “Die hoer echtschap wel bewaren willen, sullen inder gemeenschap des vleysches hem matighen ende dwingen”.

⁷¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 172r: “Die tijt sullen si oec bewaren, want na rade der heiliger kerken sullen si hem onthouden in hoechtiden, ende in dagen der penitencien, ende in tyden als die wive drachtich sijn of anders ghebreclie”.

⁷² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 172r: “Die zake sal wesen om kijnder te wynnen daer God van geeert moge werden, of om ongeoorloefte onkuyscheit te scuwen, niet in hem selven maer in sinen gade, of als ene geeyschet wort sijn scout te betalen”; “Onkuysche handelinghe sijn oec ongheoorloft inder echtschap”.

⁷³ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 68r: “So dede hij om dier versumelheit wille een genadelike sonde, ende die ander persoon die den crancken sijns willen volgede ende betaelde sijn schout. (...) dese persoon en doet oic te mael in desen werck geen sonde, mer dubbelt die heilicheit van sinen op sat”.

need to be agreed upon mutually, with consent from both parties. It is more important for women to be submissive or obedient to their husband than to be chaste; under these conditions sex is not a sin. Lastly, impure intercourse is preferable over mindless lust and desire, as in the latter any thought of God is pushed out alongside reason. However, the author of the Book of Wedlock refers judgement on these matters to “wise and learned confessors” because they should not be put into “vernacular books that anyone can read or hear in preached sermons”.⁷⁴ Thus, the books of collations maintain that while it is better to remain unwed and keep chaste, it is still valid to marry and have sexual intercourse within marriage as well. Marriage still allows for a devotional life, though it brings with it burdens and temptations which could be avoided by not marrying.

To make the burdens of married life more bearable, the collations in the Book of Wedlock also provide some advice on how to behave with a number of points which must be present in a devout marriage. The author presents several sets of points necessary for a properly devout marriage, collected across a number of collations. The seventh collation even characterises marriage as a sort of (monastic) order with eight Rules which should be taken into account: it is uncertain whom you end up with (whereas other things can be tried before buying, a woman cannot be known beforehand); once married, one has to stay in that state for life; if the marriage is consummated it prevents a second marriage, and one is forced to ‘pay the marital debt’ even when they do not want to; during a period of illness the ‘marital debt’ cannot be demanded by either party; before entering into marriage the man should confess and take care not to wed a sinful wife; man and wife are to be faithful and correct each other (in particular the man should correct his wife, like a rooster does his hen); there should be no bickering or fighting, because it sets a bad example for the kids; and there can be no adultery. Both man and wife have their own responsibilities to keep a good marriage, and both have responsibilities towards their children – who in turn owe something to their parents. These are all discussed in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh collations. Though the author of the Book of Wedlock deemed marriage an ill-advised path to take, he still maintained devout living is possible when some precautions are in place.

The same approach is taken by Dirc van Herxen in the second half of his collation on marriage. After discouraging taking on a spouse in the first half, he now defends marriage and those who

⁷⁴ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 75v: “Dat wil ic laten onderscheiden enen wisen geleerden biechtvaders inder biechten, welke saken niet en punten te scriven openbaerlic in duutschen boeken die alle man lesen mach off oic in sermonen te prediken”.

have taken a wife. This defence consists of five points, primarily taken from the Bible⁷⁵: man and wife must love each other; the man is obliged to educate his wife (and he should be ashamed if his wife is more knowledgeable than he is); the wife is subordinate to her husband (but this is no licence for cruelty, and if her husband's will goes against God she is allowed to be disobedient); sexual intercourse is not inherently sinful, if it occurs for the right reasons and at the proper times; and the children must be raised devoutly as proper Christians. The collation on marriage by Van Herxen thus hits roughly the same notes as the Book of Wedlock, though it is far more condensed.

The dual approach to marriage made Lydeke van Beek suggest that this might indicate a difference in intended audience, with the first part aimed at the schoolboys and students, and the second part meant for laypeople remaining in the world – the *alii boni viri* mentioned in the *consuetudines*.⁷⁶ While the supporting evidence for this suggestion is circumstantial – as the collation itself does not have any further reading instructions – it is not unlikely this was the case. The two parts of the collation on marriage in the First Book of Collations might very well reflect the intentions of the *collatio* to persuade youngsters to join the Modern Devotion, while not discouraging those who wished to remain in the world instead. This dual stance – marriage is good, remaining unwed is better – is made most explicitly in the *consuetudines* of Emmerich: “[The Brothers] should take care not to exalt one state so much that they seem to depress another, for instance in commending virginity they should not seem to forbid marriage, et cetera.”⁷⁷

Dirc van Herxen gave some more advice on devout living within marriage in a collation under the heading of *Sunte Jheronimus epistel tot Celanciam*, a second collation on marriage.⁷⁸ The letter is a text on how married women of means can live devoutly, which makes it quite relevant as a collation aimed at married people – or married women in particular. The reading key suggests the collation for two separate days: the feast of St Peter and Paul (29 June) and St Martin translatio (4 July).⁷⁹ Van Beek found the collation to be a condensed translation of the

⁷⁵ For a brief discussion of the sources used by Dirc van Herxen for this part, see Van Beek, ‘Tussen de doornen pluk ik de rozen’, 293–95.

⁷⁶ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 149–50.

⁷⁷ Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam*, 102: *Caveant etiam inter loquendum sic exaltare statum unum ne videantur deprimere alium utputa in commendando virginitatem non videantur derogare matrimonio, et cetera.*

⁷⁸ This collation runs from f. 172r to f. 178r. Despite the attribution, it is not written by Jerome but originated from the community of followers around Pelagius: C. Steiniger, *Die ideale christliche Frau: virgo-vidua-nupta. Eine Studie zum Bild der idealen christlichen Frau bei Hieronymus und Pelagius* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1997), 165–67. On the letter *Ad Celantiam*, see 186–193.

⁷⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 3v; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 221.

original Latin text, omitting the last part on chastity within a marriage – surprisingly, Dirc van Herxen did not advise married laypeople to live in abstinence.⁸⁰ It is likely Van Herxen had translated the text himself, as he had done with multiple other texts. The collation contains practical advice on following Christ and obeying God: living devoutly and being married are presented as certainly not being mutually exclusive, and they can be fruitfully combined. Propagated are some well-known virtues within the Modern Devotion: modesty, humility, and prudence instead of pride in one's efforts.

In the letter, Celantia is also given an interesting piece of advice on the reading of the Bible; advice which is included in the collation as well: to find a quiet place where the daily bustle of family life cannot reach her and where the unruly thoughts that arise outside can be put at ease. In this place of rest “you can read Holy Scripture so ardently, spend so many hours in prayer, focus so strongly on the things to come, that you can compare all the unrest of other times with this idleness [or: calm].”⁸¹ The passage on reading the Bible is not a lengthy one, but it is interesting as it encourages lay women to read for themselves and ruminate on the material in private. It explicitly mentions how this should not be to the detriment of their daily responsibilities; instead, religious knowledge will help in performing the daily chores and allow a laywoman to truly be a mother of the family.⁸² This passage is used in the collation on reading vernacular religious literature as well, where it reinforces the message of that collation (see paragraph 5.1). Included in the collation on marriage, the example of Celantia shows how reading and ruminating on the Bible and other religious texts was a beneficial activity not just for the personal soul, but within the context of marriage as well. It essentially embodies the aim of the *collatio*: increased devotion and religious participation allow for better lives in the lay world.

⁸⁰ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 150.

⁸¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 177r: “So grote vlite sal di wesen die heilighe scrift te lesen, so vele stonden dijn gebet te storten, ende te spreken so vaste ende ingheprinte ghedachte vanden toecomenden dingen, dattu alle onlede der ander tijt mit deser ledicheit verlijken [sic] soudste.”

⁸² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 177r: “Mer dat en seggen wi daer om niet dat wi oftrecken u van uwen dingen, mer hier om: doe wijt dat ghi daer leren sout hoedanich ghi u tot uwen dingen bewisen sult. Also suldi regieren ende voeden u gesynne, dat ghi meer ghesien wilt wesen een moeder der uwer, dan een vrouwe.”

4.3 Conclusion

Though the *collationes* were held under the auspices of religious professionals, they were not a top-down transfer of knowledge: the lay visitors were properly participating in the practice, both directly in conversations with the Brothers and more indirectly by influencing the choice of the topics and shaping how they were considered. This chapter has shown how the Brothers acknowledged how religious knowledge is most easily communicated through personal interactions and mutual familiarity, and how they made the attempt to engage with their lay visitors in order to establish and maintain a more informal atmosphere during the *collatio*. They took the effort to connect to their visitors and establish an emotional bond, and encouraged them to disseminate the lessons of the *collatio* within their own circles as well. Familiarity between participating laypeople and religious professionals, familial ties, or even genuine bonds of friendship were highly beneficial to the communication of religious knowledge such as that the *collatio* offered. Visiting laypeople were meant to do more than simply listen to the Brothers reading a text: they were supposed to be participants in the *collatio*, engaging with the Brothers and the message they communicated, and applying what they heard to their own personal situation.

The books of collations also confirm the involvement of laypeople in the *collatio*, in that the collations are especially geared towards the lay situation. The texts explain and communicate religious knowledge relevant to daily life or easily incorporated into private meditation. The collations on marriage in particular reflect the importance of the lay experience in the *collatio*: though the topic of marriage can be explored extensively from, for instance, a mystical perspective, the collations are largely concerned with the physical, earthly marriage and its implications for a virtuous and devout life. Especially striking is that sexual intercourse is not condemned outright or severely discouraged, but considered a common aspect of being married: though a number of restrictions are put in place, the collations maintain that sex distracts from a fully devotional lifestyle but does not prohibit it. Thus, the collations and by extension the *collatio* engaged with the realities of daily life for the lay participants: the Brothers cultivated their relationship with their visitors to know how to connect to them and adequately communicate their message.

Chapter 5: Communicating the Modern Devotion

As the previous chapters have shown, the *collationes* were an invitation for students and laypeople to join the community of the Brothers of the Common Life, at least for a while, to participate in the practice – with the option to take the next step and join the movement of the Modern Devotion proper. As the closest remaining witnesses to the meetings, the collations might show how the Brothers intended to share their convictions and encourage their lay visitors to adopt similar attitudes towards living devoutly – including a strong emphasis on the practical use of religious texts to shape their devotion. This chapter will show that in the books of collations, two major common elements stand out: first, the collations are largely dependent on other authoritative texts, and second, the communication of religious knowledge is accompanied by a model or framework to interpret it as well. Notably, the texts used for the collations are the same ones the Brothers read in order to shape their personal devotion: the collations reflect the texts the Brothers themselves held in high regard as they were constructed by excerpting authoritative texts or combining quotations from multiple sources. Visitors were thus introduced to the texts the Brothers read and how they made use of them: at least momentarily, they were made part of the same textual community.¹

To show the process by which the *collatio* introduced participants to the Modern Devotion, this chapter will examine four specific themes on which the books of collations communicated religious knowledge: the importance of (vernacular) religious texts, preparing for the Last Judgement, becoming ever more virtuous, and knowledge as a means to greater devotion. These topics are present in several books of collations and may serve as examples of how collations in general aided the communication of religious knowledge during the *collatio*. They also reflect some general aspects of the Modern Devout spirituality: the central role of texts, a focus on the hereafter, an emphasis on personal growth in virtue and banning vice, and the idea that learning was to be in service of devotion. The dynamic of communicating a source text as well as the Brothers' approval of it is especially made clear in the collations on having religious literature in the vernacular, which are discussed in paragraph 5.1, though it is notably present in other collations as well. This goes beyond sharing the contents of the Brothers' library: the Brothers also presented their visitors with the framework with which to make use of texts, that

¹ On the Modern Devotion as a textual community, see Staubach, 'Die Devotio moderna als Textgemeinschaft'.

is, they communicated their own approaches to devotional reading in the service of personal spirituality. Paragraph 5.2 for instance will take a closer look at the collations on the Last Judgement, as an example of how the importance of preparing for the Four Last Things (Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell) was communicated in the collations. That the Brothers not only circulated their own textual framework but also presented their own persons as a model to imitate will be discussed in paragraph 5.3, looking at the collations on advancing in virtues. The Brothers themselves constantly strove to overcome their vices and grow in virtue, and the collations show they communicated both this process as well as the texts underlying it to their lay visitors. The final paragraph 5.4 will turn to the idea that knowledge acquired from the *collatio* was meant to be subsequently exploited, that is, to be put to use in personal improvement. Any learning was in the service of devotion, so that there is an important distinction between being learned and being wise. Two collations on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* will be presented as an example of this dynamic. In all, this chapter will show how the collations were effectively introducing participants to the *collatio* to the Modern Devotion and made them an offer to imitate the Brothers of the Common Life – and potentially join the Modern Devotion entirely.

Although the collations do not contain overt instructions on how they were to be vocalised, the text itself suggests the Brother presiding over the *collatio* had the opportunity to do more than merely read aloud in a monotonous voice. The collations share elements with the written sermon in its relation to the preaching act as it also called for a more lively reading when it was preached: a dynamic performance better captured the audience's attention and made the message more memorable.² The *consuetudines* both warn against only pleasing the ears of the audience and urge touching the participants' hearts with warm words; likely the Brothers tried to put fervour and affection in their voices without overdoing it. In any case, the collations offered ample opportunity for dynamic use of voice and gestures to make the reading more engaging: for instance, in a collation containing a number of authoritative quotations, the Brother reading could alternate his voice to distinguish between the *auctoritates*. In such a case, performance aided comprehension. The collations also frequently feature *exempla* making use of a narrative and dialogue, allowing the Brother to make a performance of his reading while also allowing the audience to recognise themselves in the narrative or relate to the people

² Compare V. Berardini, 'Discovering Performance Indicators in Late Medieval Sermons', *Medieval Sermon Studies* 54 (2010): 75–86.

featured therein.³ The books of collations do not engage directly with how they are to be used during the *collatio*, yet they still provide information on how the communication of knowledge took place during the meetings.

5.1 Joining a textual community in the collations

Vernacular religious texts stand at the core of the *collatio*. Not only were the visitors gathered to hear the reading of a devout text in the vernacular, even during the private admonitions texts played a central role. The Brothers of the Common Life themselves shaped their spirituality on the basis of texts, and as they communicated religious knowledge to their visitors, the texts came with it. The collations as well relied heavily on authoritative texts highly valued by the Brothers. This section will show how the collations thus facilitated a dual communication of religious knowledge: a reliance on authoritative texts, and how they were to be shaped and interpreted. By participating in the *collatio*, listening to the reading of a religious text in the vernacular and engaging with the Brothers during private exhortations, laypeople entered into the same textual community the Brothers cultivated themselves: they engaged with the same authoritative texts in a like manner. This sharing of texts potentially went beyond participation in the *collatio*: having taken notice of which authoritative texts were worthy of attention, visitors might have asked the Brothers to read or even borrow a copy for themselves; several communities, Deventer and Gouda among them, had provisions in place to keep track of books lent out to others.⁴ In Zwolle, on feast days students were allowed use of the library under the watchful eye of the librarian, who also had to give permission for them or anyone else to borrow a book. The most important books however were not to leave the house for more than a day, unless the rector gave special clearance.⁵ Religious knowledge could thus be physically exchanged as well, and this exchange, too, went in both directions: the library of the Heer Florenshuis, for instance, also contained books donated to the community by laypeople.⁶

³ See G. Warnar, 'The Discovery of the Dialogue in Dutch Medieval Literature: A Discourse for Meditation and Disputation', in *Meditatio: Refashioning the Self: Theory and Practice in Late Medieval and Early Modern Intellectual Culture*, ed. W.S. Melion and K.A.E. Enenkel (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 69–88.

⁴ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 276–77.

⁵ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 253: *Et ne habeat cottidie accessum scolarium petentium studia, statuatur eis certam horam festivis diebus, que vacat circa eos expediendos. (...) non tamen concedet de his aliquem librum extra domum sine scitu librarii, sed de notabilioribus libris non nisi de consilio rectoris ultra unum diem.*

⁶ C. Santing, 'Learning and the Modern Devotion: Contradictio in Terminis or Inextricably Bound Unity?', in *Die Räumliche Und Geistliche Ausstrahlung Der Devotio Moderna - Zur Dynamik Ihres Gedankenguts*, ed. I. Kwiatkowski and J. Engelbrecht, *Die Devotio Moderna. Sozialer Und Kultureller Transfer (1350-1580)* 2 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2013), 208.

The willingness exhibited by the Brothers to draw their visitors into a shared network of texts and interpretations is particularly noticeable in the collations on having religious literature in the vernacular, and they may serve as an example of how religious knowledge was communicated in the collations and, by extension, in the *collatio*. Collations on having religious texts in the vernacular are included in all known books of collations; even the Book of Wedlock, otherwise mostly concerned with the topic of marriage, contains a collation on having religious texts in the vernacular – as well as two more collations defending lay access to religious knowledge in their own tongue.⁷ Having religious texts in the vernacular was clearly considered an important topic, though this is only apparent from studying the books of collations: it is absent from the suggested topics for *collatio* in the Brothers' *consuetudines*. Writing the customs of Zwolle, for instance, Dirc van Herxen listed only “parts of Sacred Scripture on simple matters, that can urge [the visitors] to better their lives, that is on vices, virtues, the *contemptus mundi*, the fear of God, and similar things.”⁸ His First Book of Collations, however, shows how having and reading religious texts in the vernacular was vitally important.

A common element to all (books of) collations is that they are not fully original texts in the traditional sense of the word, but are composed from authoritative texts. The originality and creativity of the collations lie in how the source material is combined and reshaped, with quotations from different *auctoritates* linked together to allow for new interpretations and a thorough exploration of whatever topic is at hand.⁹ The collations are thus a reflection of the library of the Brothers: the texts that they held in highest esteem were also relied on in the collations. When read during the *collatio*, the collations thus provided a window to what the Brothers read themselves for their own meditation. The *collatio* offered visitors the chance to enter into the textual community of the Brothers of the Common Life by exposing them to a shared set of authoritative texts and a shared interpretation. The collation essentially acts like both a funnel and a sieve: it could draw on the breadth of the religious literature employed by the Brothers of the Common Life and select only the parts that were relevant to the topic at hand. This is especially clear in that even in the collations, the source texts are on full display:

⁷ These collations are found in Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 166v–169v, “Van duytsche boeke te lesen”; London, Add. 10287 f. 67v–70r, “Vanden naesten te vermanen of te berispen, of vander heiligher scrift te gheloven ende te verstaen ende boeke te hebben” and Brussels, KB 19549 f. 95r–99v, “Vanden naesten te vermanen, ende van die heilighe scrifte te lesen ende van boecken te hebben”; Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I, f. 1r–7r, 7r–15v, 15v–31v (three collations on admonishing one's fellow man and reading vernacular religious texts).

⁸ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: (...) *aliquis passus Sacre Scriptura de materia plana, que ad emendationem vite eos poterit provocare, videlicet de viciis, de virtutibus, de contemptus mundi, de timore Dei et similibus*.

⁹ On a similar instance of linking texts to form new interpretations, see for instance M. van Dijk, “Sinte Gregorius seet...” *Werken met een kerkvader in Sint-Agnes, Maaseik*, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 80 (2009): 142–70.

quotations are properly introduced and attributed to the relevant *auctoritates* (e.g. ‘on this point, Augustine said...’ or ‘One reads an *exemplum* in the *Vitaspatrum*...’).

The numerous sources marked as such in the collations do not seem to be added for the benefit of the individual (silent) reader. In most cases, the attribution is only precise enough to identify an author but no more than that: the specific text from which a quotation is borrowed often remains unsaid. This suggests that the attributions are not intended for the reader to look something up, but for the listeners to know who originally composed the information now presented. In comparison, the sources for Dirc van Herxen’s Latin collations as collected in his *collationale* are more precisely identified, allowing the reader to look up or confirm a passage. The Book of Wedlock as well marks its sources quite clearly – and often in Latin, despite the main text of the collations being written in the vernacular – suggesting a dual use of the manuscript as both a book of collations for laypeople and an aid to a Brother looking to write something on marriage. For the other vernacular books of collations, however, the attributions are fully incorporated in the text: sources are introduced and quoted in the vernacular, which suggests they should be vocalised along with the rest of the text. Even so, the identification of sources in the collations is not mere namedropping to add authority to the argument presented during the *collatio*. For one, it anchored the message of the Brothers to a well-known authority on the subject, so as to prove the Brothers did not communicate anything that wasn’t fully supported by the Church. It also made the words of the Brothers worth listening to as the words were not fully their own; they merely repeated what the great theologians had said before them. This same strategy had been adopted by Geert Grote when he set out to preach: he had bought a number of authoritative books so he could show the truth in his sermons, and even when the people did not want to follow him, they should at least read his sources and agree on them.¹⁰ The attribution of quotations or whole passages in the collations is thus akin to the footnotes in an academic study: they confirm the argument of the author by building on expert knowledge, and they point the interested reader (or listener) towards additional literature.

The frequent mention of *auctoritates* is effectively a list of recommendations for the interested layperson who wished to have some further reading: a pointer towards the textual community in which the Brothers themselves were engaged. Mostly the recommendations are made implicitly: frequent quotations would signify an endorsement of the author in questions. The

¹⁰ R.H. Pegel, “‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes.’ Prediking voor de leken in de stad Utrecht in de vijftiende eeuw’, *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht*, 1992, 84.

Brothers likely encouraged their visitors to read for themselves as well during their private conversations. Still, there are some examples of this dynamic in the collations where they become a gateway to other texts. For instance, in the first collation of the Book of Wedlock the author does not wish to dwell overlong on the necessity of seeking out others who have proper knowledge of the Bible, or how simple devotion can be of greater value than academic study. Instead, he refers his audience to some additional reading: specifically Cassianus' *Instituta* and *Collationes patrum*, and the *Vitaspatrum*.¹¹ The author thus encourages laypeople through the medium of collation and *collatio* to read these works, which were available in the vernacular.¹² Later on, in the third collation, the author recommends books that are most profitable to help advancement in virtues:

In particular [it is recommended to read] books about reforming one's life; about acquiring virtues; about holy devout prayers which the Holy Church has ordained to read or to pray; saintly *vitae*; the *Vitaspatrum*; the *Collationes patrum*; the Gospels; the Epistles; and other good devout books of saints or devout people who write on good, simple matters from the Holy Bible.¹³

These recommendations for further reading in the Book of Wedlock merely reveals the dynamic that is already present in every other collation: exposing laypeople to what the Brothers valued, read, and incorporated in their own lives. If their participation in the *collatio* has made them interested, laypeople were set up and enabled to seek out and utilise the source texts for themselves. They were thus encouraged to imitate the approach to texts the Brothers took themselves, to shape their spirituality in a process of constant reading and rumination on the texts.

The surviving collations on having religious texts in the vernacular are similar, but they are not the same. All are highly indebted to the seventh chapter of Gerard Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi*, in which he defends the right or near obligation of laypeople to have the Bible and other

¹¹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 6v: "Vander ander heiligen const ende claer verstant der heiliger scrifturen ellic sonderlingen te verclaren, dat wil ic laten staen, op dat dese collacie niet te lanc en werde. Mer die daer aff weten wil die lese *Instituta*, *Collaciones* ende *Vitas patrum* over mit gemerke, ende hij sall dair schoen dingen af vijnden".

¹² P. Bange found some 35 manuscript with Middle Dutch translations of the *Collationes patrum*, albeit incomplete or as excerpts: P. Bange, *Moraliteyt saelt wesen: het laatmiddeleeuwse moralistisch discours in de Nederlanden*, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen* 99 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 70n30.

¹³ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 25r: "Sonderlingen boeken die tracteren van beteringen des levens, van doechden te crigen, van heiligen devoten gebeden die die heilige kerke gesat ende geordineert heet te lesen off te beden, legenden der heiligen, der *Vader boeken*, der *Vader collatien*, ewangelien, epistolen, ende ander guede devote boeken der heiligen off devoter lude die tracteren vander heiliger scriften van gueder slechter materien".

religious texts in the vernacular.¹⁴ Yet there is a great deal of variety in these collations: they are not merely translations, but also adaptations – with some collations adding more than others. The books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287 also incorporate parts of the sixth chapter of *Super modo vivendi* as well as Zerbolt's *De libris teutonicalibus*.¹⁵ It is unclear why this is; perhaps the author of the collation felt the latter provided more convincing *auctoritates* which were lost when the treatise was incorporated in *Super modo vivendi*. The text of the collation in both manuscripts is largely but not fully the same, even on the level of individual sentences; possibly the two manuscripts made use of the same translation or even shared a common source manuscript.¹⁶

The most extensive collation on religious literature in the vernacular is that of Dirc van Herxen in his First Book of Collations.¹⁷ It is one of the 'extra' collations when compared to his Latin *collationale*: there is no equivalent text in the Latin template on which the vernacular book of collations was based.¹⁸ This must have been a conscious choice when Van Herxen composed the books, as including a Latin collation on vernacular literature in the *collationale* would have taken little effort: the vernacular collation is largely dependent on Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen's treatise *Super modo vivendi*, which was certainly available in Latin in communities of the

¹⁴ On the treatise *Super modo vivendi* (or: *Circa modum vivendi*) and in particular its seventh chapter, see N. Staubach and R. Suntrup, eds., *Was dürfen Laien lesen? Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen. De libris teutonicalibus / Een verclaringhe vanden duytschen boeken* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2019), 37–40; N. Staubach, 'Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Laienbibel', in *Lay Bibles in Europe 1450-1800*, ed. M. Lamberigts and A.A. den Hollander, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium, CXCVIII (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 3–26; Van Engen, 'Devout Communities and Inquisitorial Orders', 64–94; Kors, M.M., 'Die Bibel für Laien: Neuansatz oder Sackgasse? Der Bibelübersetzer von 1360 und Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen', in *Kirchenreform von unten. Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben*, Tradition - Reform - Innovation. Studien zur Modernität des Mittelalters 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 259–63; N. Staubach, 'Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Apologie der Laienlektüre in der Devotio Moderna', in *Laienlektüre und Buchmarkt im späten Mittelalter*, ed. T. Kock and Schlusemann, Gesellschaft, Kultur und Schrift. Mediävistische Beiträge 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997), 221–89.

¹⁵ The first part of the collation seems to make use of the sixth chapter of *Super modo vivendi*, though it is not a complete translation. The second part has been identified by J. Deschamps as a partial translation of Gerard Zerbolt's *De libris teutonicalibus*, and has been published as Deschamps, 'Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2', 215–20. See V. Honemann, 'Zu Interpretation und Überlieferung des Traktats "De libris teutonicalibus"', in *Miscellanea Neerlandica. Opstellen voor Dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, ed. E. Cockx-Indestege and F. Hendrickx, vol. 3, *Miscellanea Neerlandica* (Leuven: Peeters, 1987), 113–24.

¹⁶ Deschamps noted a further connection with Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek 9661, and Leiden, UB Ltk 224; Van Beek also saw a link to Kassel, Landesbibliothek Ms. Theol. Fol. 56 and Brussels, KB 2285-2301. See Deschamps, 'Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2', 213; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 182n105. Brussels, KB 2285-2301 and Leiden, UB Ltk 224 have been published as Staubach and Suntrup, *Was dürfen Laien lesen?*, 190–96 and 197–201, respectively.

¹⁷ On this collation, also see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 141–46.

¹⁸ On the relation between the Latin *collationale* and the vernacular book of collations, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 116–40.

Modern Devotion.¹⁹ The Latin *collationale* was intended to be used during the internal *collatio* without any laypeople present; presumably, to the Brothers of the Common Life, the legitimacy of religious literature in the vernacular was self-evident enough not to be discussed. If the topic came up during internal discussions, it did not warrant its own collation.

Laypeople, on the other hand, would do well to learn of the legitimacy of having the Bible and other religious texts in their own tongue, and for this reason Dirc van Herxen edited and translated the source text to a collation so that it offered laypeople some pointers how they might defend themselves if they were accused of forbidden reading. However, while this was important it was not deemed a particularly special issue: the First Book of Collations only has the one collation on this particular topic, and the reading key in the Utrecht-manuscript treats it like any other collation. While every collation implicitly encouraged reading religious texts in the vernacular, only once a year was an entire *collatio* devoted to the subject with a dedicated collation – that is, the 18th Sunday after the Feast of Corpus Christi.²⁰ The collation was seemingly not considered any different from any other topic: the week before, visitors could hear a collation on pride, and if they returned the week after, they were treated to a collation on manual labour.²¹ The other books of collations do not contain a reading key, but going by their position in the manuscripts the collations on reading religious texts in the vernacular do not seem to hold any more importance than any other collation – their places are not marked with exceptional emphasis. Reading vernacular religious literature was important, but not exceptional: it was simply part of devout living.

Dirc van Herxen starts his collation with a very short introduction, explaining how some people doubt the legitimacy of laypeople reading, owning, and discussing the Bible in the vernacular. The collation aims to provide laypeople with counterarguments should anyone object to them having the Bible and other religious texts in the vernacular: “On these matters, some texts of the saints have been collected from which one can gather what we should feel on this issue, and

¹⁹ On the surviving manuscripts of the Latin treatises *De libris teutonicalibus* and *Super modo vivendi* (or: *Circa modum vivendi*), see the incomplete list in J. van Rooij, *Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen. I: Leven en geschriften* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1936), 285–86. N. Staubach found several more manuscripts: Staubach, ‘Die Apologie der Laienlektüre’, 287n177.

²⁰ As the Feast of Corpus Christi falls on the second Thursday after Whitsun, the collation on vernacular literature would generally form the basis of a *collatio* in autumn.

²¹ According to the reading key: Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 3r. The collation on vernacular religious literature is contained in the second part of the First Book of Collations; the Leiden manuscript, consisting of only of the first part, therefore does not contain this collation.

how we will respond to these points.”²² The anonymous author of the Book of Wedlock takes a similar position: his collation is a conversation or response against those who deny the legitimacy of having religious literature in the vernacular: “and so I wish to begin my disputation with those preachers or against them – however it is said – but remaining kind and civil, who preach against writing and reading Holy Scripture in Dutch and to have books of that kind.”²³ The collations are framed as though they are merely presenting what the saints have said on the issue: they do not invent new arguments but merely repeat how it is found in authoritative texts. Moreover, the author invites others to fortify his position if they have read more extensively on the topic.²⁴ Indeed, at the end of the collation in the Book of Wedlock the author invites those who disagree to write their own treatise; “that one can see who has the best reasoning and the most proof from the Bible, and follow that position”.²⁵ The participants in the *collatio* are thus encouraged to listen critically and agree with the Brothers on the strength of their sources.

In the First Book of Collations, this presentation is concerned with three main questions: whether laypeople are allowed to read the Bible; whether they may have the Bible in the vernacular; and whether the Bible may be discussed outside of the church. The third collation in the Book of Wedlock also discusses these items, though in a way not as structured as that in the First Book of Collation. The collations in London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549, meanwhile, emphasise the third question in particular. For laypeople taking note of the collation of Dirc van Herxen, the question of whether laypeople may have access to the Bible is essentially a moot point even though it is considered at length: “In the first place it is to be proven that it is not only appropriate for laypeople to read Scripture, it is reprehensible when

²² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 166v: “So sijn van desen materien uut ghesocht ende versament scifte der heiligen, daer men uut merken mach wat wi hier inne gevoelen sullen ende antwoerden op die punte voerscreven.” Also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 143.

²³ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 17v: “Ende daer mede wil ic mijn disputacie beginnen mit den predikers, of daer tegen – hoe men dat seggen sal – mer al mit minlicheit, die daer tegen prediken datmen die heilige scriftuer in duutscher tale scrivet of leset, ende daer boeken aff hevet.” The Middle Dutch *disputacie* can mean both ‘a conversation or dialogue’, or ‘a disputation or argument’: see the *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek*, s.v. *disputacie*.

²⁴ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 17v: “Ander lude die oic van minen voelen sijn ende daer meer aff gelesen hebben dan ic bij gebrengen connen”.

²⁵ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 31v: “Ende wie daer tegen spreken wille die scrive daer tegen, dat men besien mach wie die beste reden voert brenget ende meest bewisingen uut der scrift, dat men dien volge”.

they neglect it”.²⁶ Reading the Bible is directly beneficial for daily life: Augustine²⁷ and Chrysostom²⁸ both urged laypeople to read the Bible and model their lives after it. Also mentioned is the so-called letter of Jerome to Celantia, which is also included later in the First Book of Collations to provide instructions on marriage and religious life.²⁹ In *Super modo vivendi*, however, it is included for the advice given to Celantia – a married laywoman – to read the Bible and follow the examples of the saints. At every moment the Holy Bible should be in her hands and in her heart. The same sentiment is expressed by Gregory, who also advised two laywomen to cultivate a strong desire to read the Bible.³⁰

Moreover, in one of Gregory’s homilies he tells of the severely handicapped Servulus, who made sure other people read the Bible to him: “and so it happened that he knew the Bible to the extent that was reasonable for him, even though he did not know a single letter”³¹ – suggesting once more that there is no excuse for not knowing the Bible. The story of Servulus is also included in the collation in Brussels, KB 19549, where it receives a more extensive treatment and is used to illustrate how great virtue comes from having and knowing the Bible.³² Servulus was a poor and crippled man who could not read, but nonetheless he used the alms he received

²⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 166v: “Ten eersten te bewisen dattet niet allene behoerlic is dat leke lude die heilige scrifte lesen, mer oec berispelic is dat si daer ynne versumelic sijn, so horen wi wat sunte Augustinus hier op seit...”. This is also the beginning of the translation of Zerbolt’s *Super modo vivendi*: compare A. Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 52 (1926): 57.

²⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 166v: “So horen wi wat sunte Augustinus hier op seit inder epistele totten greve Bonifacium (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference; the same quotation also appears in Gerard Zerbolt’s *De libris teutonicalibus* and the collation in London, Add. 10287 f.69v-70r.

²⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 166v: “Des gelijcs sunte Johan Crisostimus wat antwoerde, spreek hi is der leken lude die hem ontsuldigen van studieren die heilige scrift (...)”. The reference is to Chrysostom’s second homily on Matthew, section 10; see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200102.htm> [consulted 27 february 2019].

²⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 166v-167r: “Des ghelijc sunte Jheronimus scrivende tot Celanciam, dat niet allene een leec vrouwenaem en was, mer oec inder echt gheset, toehardet se te studieren die heilige scrift (...)”. Compare Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 58–59.

³⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r: “Oec die heilighe vader Gregorius tot twien werliken jonferen scrift aldus: Ic begeer dat ghi mynnen te lesen die heilige scrift (...). Compare Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 59. In *Super modo vivendi* the two maids (*jonferen*) are identified as ‘Barbara and another one’: the reference is to Gregory’s first letter to Barbara and Antonina; see <https://epistolae.ctl.columbia.edu/letter/1246.html> [consulted 27-02-2019].

³¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r: “Die selve heilige vader scrift in eenre omelien vanden heiligen Servulo aldus (...) Ende also ist gheschiet dat hi na sijnre maten volcomelike die heilige scrifte leerde, al en kende hi ghene lettere”. This *exemplum* is mentioned – but not told at length – in both the *De libris teutonicalibus* and the seventh chapter of *Super modo vivendi*. See A. Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” By Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, *Nederlands Archief Voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 17 (1924): 55; Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 59–60. The reference is to Gregory’s homily on Luke 8:4-15; see Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. D.D. Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series 123 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc, 1990), 91–92.

³² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 98r: “Een exempel. Hier van scrijft sinte Gregorius een exempel in eenre ommelien (...)”. The reference is to Gregory’s homily on Luke 8:4-15; see Gregory the Great, *Gospel Homilies*, 91–92.

to buy books of the Bible. He had all kinds of devout people read the books to him and so managed to learn the entire Bible even though he did not know a single letter.³³

The First Book of Collations presents quotations from Chrysostom to further strengthen the argument that laypeople should attend to religious matters before anything else: “Which of you when in his house takes some Christian book in hand and goes over its contents? But with most we find games of chess and game boards.”³⁴ And while people are very quick to learn bold and indecent songs, none of them wants to learn a Psalm or can recite any part of Scripture.³⁵ Craftsmen take great pains to acquire the tools of their trade, even when they are poor, yet they do not buy any books of the Bible from which they might learn how to live.³⁶ Incidentally, this passage shows that collations were not just a collection of excerpts but allowed their authors a measure of freedom in how they adapted their sources. In the source text, Zerbolt laments how laypeople prefer to read books on Roland or the Trojan War over attempting to understand the Bible. Dirc van Herxen chose to omit this passage, whereas the author of the Book of Wedlock includes it and adds mention of Roland’s companion Olivier.³⁷ Even though the collations are no original texts, their originality lies in how they shape and alter other texts.

The importance of reading the Bible for the communication of religious knowledge is further established by Chrysostom. In his homily on John 1:14, Chrysostom advises laypeople to read the daily Gospel passage before going to church, so that they can better understand the sermon and the preacher has less difficulty in explaining it.³⁸ Dirc van Herxen does not dwell on this

³³ The translation of this homily in Brussels, KB 19549 is that of the so-called ‘Bible translator of 1360’: Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 215.

³⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r: “Want segge mi, wie van u als hi in sinen huse is nynt in sinen handen een boec van kerstliker lere ende doer siet dat, onder suekende wat daer ynne besloten is. Mer leider scaecspijl ende worptafelberde vijnt men ghenoech in uwen husen.”

³⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r: “Die selve seit oec op sunte Matheus ewangeli: berispet dat volc dat si snel sijn ydel ende onkuysche sanghe te leren ende voert te brengen, ende trach enen psalme of enich deel vander heiliger scrift te lesen of te onthouden.” The reference is to Chrysostom’s second homily on Matthew; see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200102.htm> [consulted 23 January 2019].

³⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r: “Oec berispet hi ter ander stede dat ghemene volc ende sonderlinge ambochtslude, dat al hoe arm dat si sijn nochtant pinen te verwerven alle instrumenten ende reescap die hem dienen tot horen ampte, mer laten hem duucken dat si niet en vermogen enich boec der heiliger scrift te verwerven daer si uut mochten leren hoe si leven souden”.

³⁷ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 20v: “Ende och leider der liken is huden dages voel die stederpasse lesen Duitsche boeken van Rolant, van Olifier, vanden strijt van Troyen ende van anderen idelen ende onnutten fabulen, dient voel salichliker weer dat sij dien arbeit deden om die heilige scrift te lesen ende te verstaen”. Compare Utrecht, UB 3 l 6 f. 167r–167v and Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 61.

³⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r–167v: “Oec in eenre omelien super Johannem begeert hi dat een yghelic in sinen huse, eer hi ter kerken gae, overlese dat ewangeli, datmen dan na der tijt inder kerken lesen ende beduden sal. (...) Ende ghi sult scarper ende doersiender werden niet allene te horen ende te werken, mer oec ander menschen te leren”. The reference is to Chrysostom’s 11th homily on John, here John 1: 14; see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240111.htm> [consulted 27-02-2019].

point, but the author of the Book of Wedlock expands on the matter. He not only refers back to Chrysostom but also cites ‘the philosophers’ and Augustine to show how reading aids comprehension.³⁹ Knowing the text of the Bible helps to understand it:

Thus, it is proper (as has been sufficiently explained before) that the people know the text of the Scriptures, so that they can understand the explanation of it more easily. And it is therefore a praiseworthy habit when the preachers relate the text of the Gospel or the Epistles at the start of their sermon, so that when the people have received the text, the preacher can more easily imprint on them his explanation.⁴⁰

By having the Bible laypeople can learn from it: “because then they have the option to ask wise and understanding people how to understand it, or wise people may ask them whether they properly understood what they have read”.⁴¹ This sentiment is illustrated with the explanation of Jerome on the episode of the apostle Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, which shows two things: it is proper to devoutly read the Bible, even without fully understanding it, and when the Bible is explained both teacher and student will profit from it.⁴² Both points are elaborated

³⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 28v: “Oic so eest vruchtbaerre ende sekerre die heilige scrifte te hebben in Duutsche overgesat dan alleen te hoeren vanden predikers, als Johannes Crisostomus begeert ende leert dat men doen sal, als vurseit is”. The reference is once more to Chrysostom’s 11th homily on John, here 1:14. Also Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 29r: “Want die gescreven woerde die bliven, mer die gesproken ende allen gehoert die seet men menigherhande voert. Ende also seggen die philosophi: twee sijn der sinnen die leerlic sijn, als dat sien ende dat hoeren, ende die ogen sijn als princen onder den sinnen, als Augustinus seet x^o li^o *Confessiones*”. The reference is to the *Confessiones*, book 10, chapter xxxv.

⁴⁰ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 29r: “Ende daer om eest orbaer als voer genoech geseget is dat die lude den text connen der scrifturen, want sij dan die glose te lichteliker begripen. Ende daer om eest oic een lofflike gewoent dat die predikers inden beginsel hoers sermoens den text der ewangelien off der epistelen plegen te overtrecken, op dat als dat volc den text ontfangen heet [sic], dat sij dan den menschen te lichteliker die glose ende dat verstant indruken mogen”.

⁴¹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 29r: “Ende het is te hopen dat die predikers wouden dat die leken die scrift wael verstonen ende den wil goets wisten ende daer nae leefden. Ende want die text hier aff een fundament is, so ist nutte dat sij dien in Duutschen off in leker tael hebben, want sij dan voel te ledeliker comen aent geestlike verstant dat daer in gelegen is. Want si dan occasie hebben te vragen wisen verstendelen luden om dat verstant, off dat hem wijse lude vrageden off sijt verstonen dat sij lesen”.

⁴² Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 29r–29v: “Alse steet gescreven in *Actibus apostolorum* viij^o .c. van Philippo den apostel, ende den heiligen Eunuch, van wolken [sic] scrivet die heilige leerre Jheronimus in epistola ad Paulinum (...) Voirt seget Jheronimus daer nae (...)”. The biblical reference is to Acts 8:27-38; the reference to Jerome is to Letter 53.5, to Paulinus. See <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001053.htm> [consulted 08-02-2019].

upon: the first with an example from the *Vitaspatrum*⁴³ and a quotation of Origenes,⁴⁴ the second with a passage from Chrysostom.⁴⁵

Yet the Bible should not only be read before attending the sermon, but afterwards as well. By quoting a certain bishop Faustus, the First Book of Collations recommends re-reading the Bible to better comprehend the lessons of the preacher: “When you are in the church, like you are used to, listen eagerly, and read it again in your homes.”⁴⁶ Religious reading should also take place before dinner, to avoid idleness and make sure the mind is nourished as well as the flesh. While this quotation of Faustus is rather short, it touches upon an important element of the Modern Devotion. The advice to re-read the Gospel on which the sermon was based is highly reminiscent of the concept of *ruminatio*: to fully understand a text, the Modern Devout encouraged a process of reading, meditation, and re-reading. As a cow chews the same food multiple times, the reader should keep chewing a text until a deeper understanding was gained, thus aiding spiritual growth.⁴⁷ By including Faustus’ remark, the collation thus encourages laypeople to imitate the Modern Devout reading, and practise in their own houses what the Brothers practised in theirs.

Dirc van Herxen closes the discussion on lay readership of the Bible by citing canon law, as Innocent III praised laypeople who wanted to read Scripture.⁴⁸ This last argument is taken from the opening of the seventh chapter of *Super modo vivendi*, where it is treated more extensively and more precisely. For the collation, however, it was more important to know it was Pope Innocent III who defended lay readership of the Bible, than it was to know precisely where he

⁴³ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 29v–30r: “Als men leset in quinto libro *Vitaspatrum* (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

⁴⁴ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 30r: “Waer aff Origenes seget omelia .xx. super Josue, vander swaerheit des verstandes”. The reference is to Origen’s 20th homily on Joshua: see Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, ed. C. White, trans. B.J. Bruce, The Fathers of the Church 105 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 174–75.

⁴⁵ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 30v: “Waer off spreket Johannes Crisostomus omelien xj super Johanem”. The reference is again to Chrysostom’s 11th homily on John, here John 1:14.

⁴⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167v: “Oec seit die heilighe bisscop Faustus in eenre omelien aldus: Die heilige leren, als ghi gewoen sijt, inder kerken hoert gheerne, ende weder overleset se in uwen husen”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁴⁷ On *ruminatio*, see for instance Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 323–25. Gerard Zerbolt advocates the *ruminatio* as an essential part of devout meditation in chapter 45 of his *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*: Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *Geestelijke opklimmingen*, 282–84.

⁴⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167v: “Na dien dattet geestlike recht oec aldus spreek in woerden Innocentius des derden pawes: Begheerte te verstaen die heilighe scrift ende vlitichlic daer na ander menschen te vermanen en is niet te lasteren, mer seer te prisen”. The reference is to *Decretalium Gregorii papae IX compilationis libri V*, liber V, titulus 7, section 12. See https://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/Chronologia/Lspos13/GregoriusIX/gre_5t07.html [consulted 25 January 2019].

defended it.⁴⁹ Presumably Dirc van Herxen also felt the remark was more at place here as a final, authoritative argument. His collation continues to the second question: whether laypeople may have religious literature in the vernacular. The affirmative answer is already apparent from the preceding part of the collation: it has already been shown how many saints encouraged laypeople to read the Bible; surely they meant for them to have the Bible in the vernacular – “because they should read it so that they can understand it, and try to live accordingly.”⁵⁰ This argument is an addition by Dirc van Herxen and does not appear in the Latin *Super modo vivendi*. In the collation, laypeople are thus once more instructed to use texts to guide their daily lives, as the Brothers themselves do as well.

Both the First Book of Collations and the Book of Wedlock present numerous examples to prove the Bible may be translated into Dutch, on the basis that translating the Bible in general is allowed or even encouraged. As Jerome made clear “in numerous letters and prologues”,⁵¹ both the Old Testament and the New were originally written in the vernacular of the time before being translated into Latin. Many saints translated the Bible or parts thereof if they found themselves preaching to peoples speaking a different vernacular. (Pseudo-)Dorotheus⁵² tells of the apostle Bartholomew, who preached the gospel of Matthew to the Indians in their own tongue. Jerome⁵³ mentions many examples of different peoples who have the Bible in translation, among them the Russians, Slavs, and Armenians. On the topic of translation of the Bible already in existence, Dirc van Herxen severely condensed the source text of Zerbolt. Whereas *Super modo vivendi* lists multiple sources – among them Bede, the *Historia tripartita*, and John Cassian – the collation attributes everything to Jerome.⁵⁴ Why Van Herxen felt this was necessary is unclear; perhaps he deemed the argument more persuasive if it was more concise. As the *Historia tripartita* is quoted at a later point in the same collation, it is clear that he did not cut the attribution here because of a lack of understanding among his prospective audience.

⁴⁹ Compare Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 56–57, which provides the precise location of this quotation: “Est argumentum Extrav. ‘De hereticis’, cap. ‘Cum ex iniuncto’”.

⁵⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167v: “Want daer omme sullen si die lesen, op dat si die verstaen, ende daer na pinen te leven”.

⁵¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167v: “Want als sunte Jheronimus tuget in velen epistelen ende prologen (...)”.

⁵² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168r: “Want als sunte Dorotheus schrift: Doe sunte Bartholomeus dien Indien predicte gaf hi hen over sunte Matheus ewangeli in hoer eyghen tonge”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁵³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168r: “Voertmer als sunte Jheronimus seit (...)”.

⁵⁴ Compare Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 64–67.

The author of the Book of Wedlock adds an additional piece of information on the Slavs: a monastery in Prague celebrates Mass entirely in Slavic, “as all who went to school there are well aware”.⁵⁵ This is an original addition which does not appear elsewhere. It is not impossible the author of the book of collations went to the university of Prague himself, or perhaps he heard the story from Florens Radewijns who had certainly visited the school in that city.⁵⁶ According to the author of the Book of Wedlock, it is unreasonable to think the Bible could be translated into other languages but not into Dutch: “just as God does not exclude any person, He does not exclude any particular language.”⁵⁷ At the end of the collation, having finished with the translation of Zerbolt’s *Super modo vivendi*, the author even returns to the issue of translations. He defends translating the Bible *ad sensum* instead of *ad verbum* by quoting Jerome⁵⁸, and the issue of translations in general by citing two of the Pauline epistles⁵⁹. To close the discussion he presents an example from the *vita* of the venerable Bede⁶⁰, who translated the Gospel of John for the English laypeople “even though it is harder to comprehend than any other Gospel of the Evangelists”⁶¹. And since Bede is still held in very high regard⁶² (something the author of the collation makes abundantly clear⁶³), it seems obvious to him that it is most certainly allowed for laypeople to have the Bible in the vernacular.

The main issue here is not whether laypeople were allowed to read the Bible in the vernacular – they clearly were – but if they should have access to the entirety of it, as well as every other religious text. Zerbolt placed a few restrictions – not on translated religious texts per se, but as a form of moderation: potentially heretical texts or books that were too difficult to easily

⁵⁵ Also mentioned on page 36. Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 24r: “Ende die Slaven hebben een cloester off monster te Praghe in Bohemian daer sij in singen ende lesen hoeren gotliken diest in Sclaefschcr spraken, als sij wael weten die daer ter scholen gelegen hebben”.

⁵⁶ Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 89.

⁵⁷ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 24r: “Want also als god geen uutnemer en is der personen, so en is hij oic geen uutnemer der talen”.

⁵⁸ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 30v–31r: “Als tuget die heilige leerre Jheronimus super epistolam Pauli ad Galathas”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

⁵⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 31r: “Oic so scrivet die apostel Paulus in sijnre ierster epistolen ad Thessalomiende ultimo”. The reference is to 1 Thessalonians 5:27; “Ende des gelikes scrivet hij oic ad Collocenen ultimo”. The reference is to Colossians 4:16.

⁶⁰ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 31r: “So wil ic een punt hier setten dat ic gelesen heb inder legenden des eerwerdigen leerres Bede, des priesters inden cloester der heiliger apostolen sunte Peters ende sunte Pauwels in Wiremuda in Engellant”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁶¹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 31v: “[Bede] ginc enen groten arbeit aen om der leker lude wil, ende interpretierden ende oversatte in leken talen den Engelschen leken luden sunte Johannes ewangelium al uut, dat swaerre is van verstande den menschen te begripen dan enich ewangelium der ander ewangelisten”.

⁶² On the importance placed on Bede during the Middle Ages and the early modern period, see G.H. Brown, *A Companion to Bede*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 12 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), 117–34.

⁶³ See Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 31r–31v: the author tells of Pope Sergius, who asked Abbot Ceolfridus (Ceolfrith) to send Bede to Rome that he might help resolve some important issues. I have not been able to trace this reference.

comprehend should not be available in the vernacular. Not every stipulation was adapted to the collations. Dirc van Herxen retained the requirement that vernacular books should not contain any heresy, referring to the papal bull *Ad apostolatus* issued by Gregory XI in 1376.⁶⁴ Books with heretical texts should be destroyed, or at the least cleaned up by removing the heretical passages. Zerbolt's second stipulation – the information contained within vernacular religious literature should be suitable for laypeople – he adapted: 'suitable to laypeople' means they should be able to understand it and learn how to avoid vices and practice their virtues. This amendment to Zerbolt's view opens up the number of texts available to laypeople, as it acknowledges there is no set difficulty of texts, but if someone is not yet familiar with religious texts they should not yet have access to "high and subtle matters".⁶⁵ This is confirmed with quotations from the Pauline Epistles, where Paul makes a distinction between what is suitable for anyone and what is suitable for those who have made advances in their faith. Milk – simple or basic knowledge of religious matters – is available to all, yet solid food – the more intricate details of such knowledge – only to some.⁶⁶ These passages are also included in the Latin text of *Super modo vivendi*, but Dirc van Herxen wrote them out instead of giving a simple referral, likely for clarity's sake. Two quotations from Augustine⁶⁷ and one from Chrysostom⁶⁸ conclude this section of the collation, discussing – and confirming – whether laypeople are allowed to have religious literature in the vernacular.

⁶⁴ Nikolaus Staubach notes how in *Super modo vivendi*, this frames the entire first major part of the treatise, which both begins and ends with a papal justification. Because of the editing of Dirc van Herxen however, this effect is lost in the collation. Staubach, 'Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Laienbibel', 16–17.

⁶⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168r–168v: "Behalven dit so salmen oec voersien in Duytschen boeken dat si sijn (...) niet van hogen ende subtilen materien, want die niet en dienen leken die noch niet inder heiliger scrift wel gheoeffent en sijn".

⁶⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: "Ghelijc als wi dat hebben bi exempel ende leer des heiligen apostels sunte Pauwel, die seit inder epistel ad Corintheos prima (...) Ende totten Hebreuschen seit hi (...)". The reference is to 1 Corinthians 3:1–2 and Hebrews 5:12–14, respectively.

⁶⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: "Waer van sunte Augustinus seit inden *Boeke van der stat Godes*: Men sal ghehoersam wesen den apostel ghebiedende enen yegheliken (...)". *Super modo vivendi* is no more precise in its attribution, simply referring to *De civitate Dei*: Hyma, 'Het traktaat "Super modo vivendi" door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen', 68. I have not been able to trace this reference further. "Hier van vermaent oec die heilige vader Augustinus sinen brueders wonende inder woestinen, die meest deels al ongeleert waren (...)". Again, *Super modo vivendi* does not offer a more precise location than the *Sermones ad fratres de heremo*: Hyma, 'Het traktaat "Super modo vivendi" door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen', 68–69. The library in Deventer contained a book with these sermons attributed to Augustine: P.F.J. Obbema, *Een Deventer bibliotheekcatalogus van het einde der vijftiende eeuw: een bijdrage tot de studie van laat-middeleeuwse bibliotheekcatalogi. Deel 2* (Tongeren: Drukkerij Michiels, 1973), 154–55, 186. On the textual tradition of these sermons in the Middle Ages, see E.L. Saak, *Creating Augustine: Interpreting Augustine and Augustinianism in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 81–137.

⁶⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: "Mit welken overdracht Crisostimus die seit (...)". *Super modo vivendi* refers to Chrysostom's homily on Matthew 21 in his *Opus imperfectum*: Hyma, 'Het traktaat "Super modo vivendi" door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen', 68. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

The Book of Wedlock largely retains the restrictions Zerbolt placed on lay readership of the Bible, as some of its books are simply too difficult and obscure to be properly understood with only a little smarts and wisdom.⁶⁹ Specifically books on the Incarnation of Christ, and on His life and death are not written in a clear language, even though they are concerned with simple and devout matters, and many books of the Old Testament, the Prophets, and the Apocalypse are too difficult in any case. Thus, once more the main criterium for a general readership is the readers' (in)ability to properly comprehend text; these texts in particular are simply deemed too difficult to understand without proper (formal) religious education. For this reason the warning against the books of Eckhart present in Zerbolt's text is copied as well: not because they are inherently heretical, but because they generally are too difficult for laypeople to understand. However, when the author leaves off from Zerbolt's source text he works to balance out these restrictions. If any book – either in Latin or in the vernacular – contains controversial passages it should not be shunned completely, but instead needs to be subject to close examination so that it can be improved. The bull *Ad apostolatus* is quoted once more to stress this point.⁷⁰ Moreover, even when a book is badly translated it should not be discarded unless it also contains bad morals or heretical thoughts. The text should be judged for its own merits, and not on the quality of the translation. The collation gives a prime example: according to Thomas Aquinas, many mistakes were made in the translation from Greek to Latin of Chrysostom's commentary on the gospel of Matthew. Nevertheless, the translated commentary is held in high esteem because of its worth.⁷¹

The final part of the collation on having religious literature in the vernacular in the First Book of Collations discusses whether it is allowed to teach the Holy Bible or discuss it outside of the church.⁷² Dirc van Herxen, now drawing on the sixth chapter of Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi*, confirms it is – unsurprisingly, as the *collatio* is itself an extraliturgical opportunity to teach and discuss the Bible and other religious texts. Both Zerbolt and Van Herxen maintain a distinction

⁶⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 27r: “Die die simpel menschen niet en connen verstanden noch gecauwen, want sulke boeken te verstaen daer en hoert geen clein cloecheit ende wijsheit toe”.

⁷⁰ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 28v: “Also als oic gebiedet die pauwes Gregorius *in quodam rescripto quid incipit ad apostolatus*”.

⁷¹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 28v: “Als sunte Thomas seget *in epistola felicitis recordacionis Urbano papae 4^o dircam*, welke epistel steet inden beginsel vander heele glosen op sunte Matheus ewangelie, dat die oversettinge der expositien sunte Johannis Crisostomi super Matheum tot voel steden tonrecht is gesat uut den Greecschen tot Latijn. Welke oversettinge nochtant die heilige kerke in groter weerdicheit heet om die grote vrucht die men daer tot trecken mach, als uut den steden daer sij wael overgesattet is”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

⁷² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: “Vanden derden, als of et gheoerloft si die heilige scrift buten kerken te leren of te overspreken”.

between preaching and simple admonitions; an important difference in the context of the *collatio*, which after all styled itself not a sermon but a series of humble admonitions. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul says how his preaching “was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom”,⁷³ by which he means that “‘sermon’ means a speech to some people at a special time, during preaching in public.”⁷⁴ Preaching is forbidden without special permission, especially for laypeople. However, “simple and virtuous admonitions” are never forbidden – thus, the *collatio* is perfectly fine, as it is not a sermon.⁷⁵

The crux of the matter is the interpretation of Christ’s claim in the Gospel of John to have never spoken in secret but always taught in public.⁷⁶ Dirc van Herxen takes up Augustine’s commentary on this section, cutting out an attribution to Chrysostom’s commentary on Mark made in *Super modo vivendi*.⁷⁷ Augustine holds that Christ never said anything He did not intend to be made public. After all, as He said in Matthew: “What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops.”⁷⁸ Thus, as Christ never spoke ‘in secret’ nothing of what He said should be kept in secret – that is, everything should be available to be discussed openly; not just in church but at any place. Moreover, it is especially characteristic of heretics that they wish to keep certain knowledge hidden from others, and therefor people who do not wish to spread the Word are best avoided.⁷⁹ Quotations from the book of Job and Proverbs agree with this: those who keep knowledge to themselves are like thieves.⁸⁰ The final quotation is by Gregory,⁸¹ who also recognises how it is the non-believers

⁷³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: “Daer sunte Pauwel onderscheit in maecte doe hi screef totten Corintheen, seggende (...)”. The reference is to 1 Corinthians 2:4.

⁷⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: “Op welke woerde die glosa seit: Biden sermoene verstaet men redene of sprake die bi sonder tot sommigen geschiede bider predicatie die int ghemene gheschiede”. *Super modo vivendi* refers to a *glosa* as well: Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 46. I have not been able to trace this reference.

⁷⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v: “Mer simpel dogentlike vermaninge sonder solempniteit ofte wise der predicatie is toe geenre steden verboden”.

⁷⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 168v–169r: “Als sunte Johan bescrijft (...)”. The reference is to John 18:20.

⁷⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169r: “Soe sullen wi weten dat als sunte Augustinus seit op die selve woerde (...)”. Compare Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 53.

⁷⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169r: “Als Matheus beschrijft (...)”. The reference is to Matthew 10:27, here from the Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition.

⁷⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169r: “Ende voerwaer alle lere die in deser wise waer heymelic, of gheschiede in heymelicheit dat die ghene diese leerde niet en woude dat si openbaer worde, die waer te vermyden ende te vlien, want dit is proper der ketters dat si sonderlinge dinge leren in heymelicheit, daer sie niet van te tale of te antwoorden en dorven comen”.

⁸⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169r: “Als in hoer persoene sprac Baldach in Jobs boec (...)”; “Van welken oec Salomon seit (...)”. The references are to Job 4:12 and Proverbs 9:17, respectively.

⁸¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169r–169v: “Waer op seit Gregorius (...)”. *Super modo vivendi* refers to the fifth book of Gregory’s *Moralium*: Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 56. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

who want their knowledge to remain secret; it is especially those who are wrong-doers who wish to remain in the dark, as the Lord said.⁸² Thus, while coming together to discuss the Bible might in some cases be said to happen ‘in secret’, it is by no means forbidden: instead, it is quite praiseworthy to admonish others on their vices, and mutually advance in virtues.

At this point the collation in the First Book of Collations grows similar in theme to the collation on having religious literature in the vernacular in manuscripts London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549. Whereas Dirc van Herxen and the author of the Book of Wedlock primarily defend lay access to religious knowledge, reasoning that the subsequent exploitation of such knowledge is mostly an individual affair, the books of collations London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549 join vernacular religious texts directly to the further communication of knowledge. Both these manuscripts contain a collation roughly titled ‘On admonishing our fellows and to read and understand the Holy Bible and to have books’.⁸³ The text of this collation is largely the same in both Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287, even on the level of individual sentences, though they are not identical.⁸⁴ Possibly the two manuscripts made use of the same translation or even shared a common source manuscript.⁸⁵ Curiously, while the first part contains passages which can be traced to the sixth chapter of *Super modo vivendi*, the second part borrows some passages from *De libris teutonicalibus* rather than the seventh chapter of *Super modo vivendi*.⁸⁶ It is unclear why this is; perhaps the author of the collation felt the latter provided more convincing *auctoritates* which were lost when the treatise was incorporated in *Super modo vivendi*.⁸⁷

⁸² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 169r: “Want als onse Here seit (...)”. The reference is to John 3:20. Curiously, this reference is not made explicit by mentioning John, like other references are.

⁸³ Brussel, KB 19549 f. 95r: “Vanden naesten te vermanen, ende van die heilighe scrifte te lesen ende van boeken te hebben”; London, BL Add. 10287 f. 67v: “Vanden naesten te vermanen of te berispen, of vander heiligher scrift te gheloven ende te verstaen ende boeke te hebben”.

⁸⁴ The first part of the collation seems to make use of the sixth chapter of *Super modo vivendi*, though it is not a complete translation. The second part has been identified by J. Deschamps as a partial translation of Gerard Zerbolt’s *De libris teutonicalibus*, as has been published as Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 215–20.

⁸⁵ Deschamps noted a further connection with Rotterdam, Gemeentebibliotheek 9661, and Leiden, Ltk. 224; Van Beek also saw a link to Kassel, Landesbibliothek Ms. Theol. Fol. 56 and Brussels, KB 2285-301: Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 213; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 182n105. Also see Staubach and Suntrup, *Was dürfen Laien lesen?*, 190–201.

⁸⁶ See Honemann, ‘Der Traktat “De libris teutonicalibus”’.

⁸⁷ On the *auctoritates* in *De libris teutonicalibus*, see also R. Suntrup, ‘Der Gebrauch der Quellen in der Argumentation von “De libris teutonicalibus”’, in *Kirchenreform von unten. Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben*, Tradition - Reform - Innovation. Studien zur Modernität des Mittelalters 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2004), 264–76.

The topic of admonishing or offering good exhortations does indeed feature in the First Book of Collations and the Book of Wedlock as well, but these make a slight distinction between the right to read religious literature in the vernacular, and the freedom (or even the necessity) to admonish others so that they are made aware of their shortcomings and can work to improve them. They discuss the issue in a separate collation: for the First Book of Collations, this is the collation ‘Van onderlinger vermaninge’⁸⁸; for the Book of Wedlock, it is the first collation in the book. The books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287, however, consider the two topics part of the same collation, thus reinforcing the institution of the *collatio*: on the basis of texts it is possible to offer some humble exhortations. The Book of Wedlock does mention this topic:

[It is permitted to read books] from which, when they are gathered, someone can admonish another to greater virtue, and they themselves can read for their salvation and the salvation of their soul, so that time is spent profitably; both for him and other people who hear him read or say something good from it that can help him and other people for their salvation.⁸⁹

Such an activity akin to the *collatio* is further defended with a reference to Bede, who in one of his homilies explains how Christ is present in any gathering of devout people.⁹⁰ Thus, such gatherings can never be forbidden.

Still, the First Book of Collations and the Book of Wedlock largely keep to the discussion of lay access to vernacular translations of religious literature. The books of collations London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549 tie having religious literature in the vernacular directly to further communicating the knowledge thus available. Already in the opening of the collation, one of Gregory’s homilies is quoted in which he exhorts his audience to admonish their fellow man, and to not think of themselves as unworthy to do so, alluding to the parable of the wealthy man who went away and left his servants with money to invest.⁹¹ Gregory advises everyone to

⁸⁸ On this collation see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 136–40.

⁸⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 25r: “Ende daer die een den anderen als sij vergaderen totten doecheden uut vermanen mach ende selve sijn salicheit ende stichticheit sijnre sielen uut lesen mach, ende so den tijt nutteliken toebrengen, beide hij ende oic ander lude die hem horen lesen, off daer uut wat guedes seggen dat hem ende anderen luden dienen mach tot hoerre salicheit”.

⁹⁰ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 25r: “Ende hier aff seget die eerwerdige Beda in omelia super 1^o ewangelium sancti Johannis: stetit Jhesus in medio discipulorum suorum”. The reference is to Bede’s *Homilia V*, on Luke 24 and John 20. See Beda Venerabilis, *The Complete Works of Venerable Bede. V: Homilies*, ed. J.A. Giles (London: Whittaker, 1843), 33.

⁹¹ Brussel, KB 19549 f. 95r: “Sunte Gregorius in eenre omelien seit (...)”; the same passage in London BL Add. 10287 f. 67v. I have not been able to trace this reference further. It likely was taken from the sixth chapter of *Super*

seek fellow travellers on God's path, and claims that it is better to give devout admonitions to feed the immortal soul than it is to give actual bread to the mortal body. Jerome agrees on this point, and he strongly stresses the obligation every devout person has to admonish others: every person is not just responsible for his or her own soul; they should also be concerned for others.⁹² Knowing part of the Gospel or just one example of virtue is enough to admonish anyone, at any place. The collation makes an important distinction however: Jerome spoke of admonishing others, not rebuking them – there is a difference, and laypeople offering some devout advice should not think themselves above their fellows.⁹³ This remark does not appear in *Super modo vivendi* yet is present in both London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549, further suggesting the two manuscripts are in some way related: they seem to have used the same source text on admonitions and religious literature in the vernacular, potentially from a third (now lost) book of collations.

The collation then ostensibly moves from discussing admonishing one's fellows to having religious literature in the vernacular, but the two remain intertwined. A group of authoritative voices – Jerome, Gregory, Augustine, Chrysostom, Bede, “and all the saints” – all agree that while laypeople are not allowed to preach, they most certainly may use the Bible to admonish their fellow Christians by saying or reading something good.⁹⁴ The author of the collation backs this up with religious law as well, as a passage in the fifth book of the Decretals supposedly supports the argument.⁹⁵ The two parts of this collation are thus intimately connected: not only is the reading of vernacular religious literature permitted and encouraged, it is almost imperative

modo vivendi: compare Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 48–49. Zerbolt attributes this quotation to Gregory’s ‘fourth homily’, but it is unclear how the homilies are counted. The quotation is absent from the fourth homily in the translation of the so-called Bible Translator of 1360: see for instance Gregorius’ *Omelien*, printed in 1479 by Johan Veldener in Utrecht, f. xviiij recto – xxxi verso, available online at <http://objects.library.uu.nl/reader/resolver.php?obj=001767079&type=2>. Similarities can be found however in Gregory’s homily on Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Talents, f. cclxxx-verso.

⁹² Brussel, KB 19549 f. 95v: “Hier of seit sunte Jheronymus inder ommelie van een confessoer (...)”; the same passage in London, BL Add. 10287 f. 68r-68v. From the sixth chapter of *Super modo vivendi* as well: Hyma, ‘Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen’, 49. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

⁹³ Brussel, KB 19549 f. 96r: “Dit seit Jheronimus van vermanynghe ende nyet van berispinge, want berispinge hevet een ander onderscheit”; the same passage in London, BL Add. 10287 f. 68v-69r.

⁹⁴ Brussel, KB 19549 f. 96r-96v: “Al en moeten die leke lude niet predicken sy moghen nochtans wel horen even kersten vermanen mitten heiligher scriftueren ende wat goets segghen of lesen. Als Jheronimus, Gregorius, Augustinus, Crisostomus, Beda ende ghemeenlic alle die heiliche segghen”. This summation is already in place in the *De libris teutonicalibus*: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 50.

⁹⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 96r: “Ende oec dat gheestelike recht int vijfte boec vanden decretael. Inden geesteliken recht staet ghescreven aldus (...)”; the same passage in London, BL Add. 10287 f. 69r. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

to subsequently spreading the religious knowledge to others, so that they, too, may improve their lives to live more devoutly.

In establishing this position further, the collation is spoilt for choice with regards to *auctoritates*, and the writers of the two manuscripts made different choices in this regard. Both contain the same quotations from Bernard⁹⁶ and Augustine,⁹⁷ but they also go their separate ways. This has little bearing on the overall message of the text, but it does show that in the composition of collations there was a measure of freedom in choosing which arguments to include and which to pass on. The London version contains a reference to the *Speculum peccatoris*⁹⁸ and an extra quotation from Augustine,⁹⁹ while the Brussels version contains quotations from Faustus¹⁰⁰ and Bartholomeus.¹⁰¹ Notably, both versions also cite Chrysostom,¹⁰² and Jerome,¹⁰³ but for different quotations. The Brussels version also adds that even when laypeople gain more religious knowledge, they should not ridicule their preachers or disdain their sermons, and while laypeople are not allowed to preach, they should own and read vernacular books from which

⁹⁶ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 96v–97r: “Sinte Barnaerdus seit (...)”; the same passage in London, BL Add. 10287 f. 69v. This reference seems to be from the *De libris teutonicalibus*, where it is ascribed to (Pseudo-)Bernard’s *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei*: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 66. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

⁹⁷ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 97r: “Sinte Augustijn seit (...)”; The same passage in London, BL Add. 10287 f. 69v. This reference does not appear in *De libris teutonicalibus*; I have not been able to trace it further.

⁹⁸ London, BL Add. 10287 f. 69v: “Int *Spighel der sunderen* state (...)”. Deschamps identified this reference as part of the second chapter of the *Speculum peccatoris*: Deschamps, ‘Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2’, 216n1. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

⁹⁹ London, BL Add. 10287 f. 69v–70r: “Sinte Augustijn seit (...)”. This passage is taken from *De libris teutonicalibus*, where it is ascribed to Augustine’s letter to the bishop Boniface: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” By Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 48. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

¹⁰⁰ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 97r: “Oec so seit Faustus in eenre ommelien (...)”. This passage is taken from the *De libris teutonicalibus*, in which it is a lengthier quotations of Faustus: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 53. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

¹⁰¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 97r: “Men leest van sinte Bertolomeus dat hi doe hi die van Judeen predice (...)”. The mention of ‘Judeen’ (Judea) must be a scribal error where the writer misread ‘Indien’ (India) in his exemplar, as Bartholomew is said to have preach to the Indians in their tongue. The reference is taken from *De libris teutonicalibus*, where it is attributed to Dorotheus: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 56. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

¹⁰² Brussel, KB 19549 f. 96v–97r: “Sinte Jan Guldemont seit (...)”. The reference is taken from *De libris teutonicalibus*, where it is correctly attributed to Chrysostom’s second homily on Matthew, here Matthew 1:1: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 53. London, BL Add. 10287 f. 70r: “Sinte Jan Guldenmont seit (...)”. This quotation is taken from *De libris teutonicalibus* as well: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 52–53. The reference is again to Chrysostom’s second homily on Matthew, here Matthew 1.1, but for a different passage: see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/200102.htm> [consulted 31-01-2019]. Also London, BL Add. 10287 f. 70r: “Die selve seit (...)”. The reference is also from *De libris teutonicalibus*: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 55. The original reference is to Chrysostom’s 11th homily on John, here John 1:14; see <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/240111.htm> [consulted 31-01-2019].

¹⁰³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 97r–97v: “Als sinte Jheronymus spreect (...)”. This reference is taken from *De libris teutonicalibus*, where it is attributed to *diversis epistulis et prologis biblie*: Hyma, ‘The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen’, 55. I have not been able to trace this reference further. London, BL Add. 10287 f. 69v: “Sinte Jeronimus seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

they can learn – as it is written in the Decretals. The story of Servulus, as told by Gregory¹⁰⁴ and here copied according to the translation of the Bible translator of 1360, underpins this message.¹⁰⁵ The author of the collation found this story to be a useful addition to his argument, as it does not appear in full in Zerbolt's *De libris teutonicalibus* or *Super modo vivendi*.¹⁰⁶

The differing yet similar collations on having religious literature in the vernacular in the books of collations show how during the *collatio* knowledge was communicated between the Brothers and their lay visitors. The collations are essentially framed as if they do not contain any new information and do not offer novel interpretations: references are clearly labelled and written out in the text, quotations are attributed to the proper *auctoritas*, and so on. This is a common element of all collations, not just those on religious literature in the vernacular. In listening to a collation being read during the *collatio*, laypeople would be made aware of the sources on which the Brothers of the Common Life drew, and thus they were introduced to the text the Brothers used for their own devotional meditation. In this manner, visitors were brought into contact with both the spiritual thought of the Brothers as well as the methods of utilising texts from which such spirituality arose. From the interaction between multiple texts and *auctoritates* they selected the passages relevant to their current goals, be they a defence of lay access to the Bible or strategies for combatting vice. Through the collations, visitors to the *collatio* entered a shared textual community with the Brothers, gaining access to the texts they valued and the techniques on how to use them.

5.2 Preparing for the Four Last Things

Part of allowing participants into the *collatio* to hear some good points and turn themselves to a better, more devout lifestyle entailed care for the hereafter. Because life was fleeting, precautions must be taken to make sure one could face one's final destination, hopefully with a clear conscience and calm composure. In the books of collations, the Four Last Things – Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell – are well represented; indeed, they were prime topics for the *collatio*. The *consuetudines* list the *timor Dei* – the fear or awe of God – as one of the main

¹⁰⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 98r: "Een exempel. Hier van scrijft Sinte Gregorius een exempel in eenre ommelien (...)". Dirc van Herxen also included a short version of the story in his collation 'Van Duytsche boeke te lesen': Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 167r. The reference is to Gregory's homily on Luke 8:4–15; see Gregory the Great, *Gospel Homilies*, 91–92.

¹⁰⁵ Deschamps, 'Mnl. vertalingen van G. Zerbolt 2', 215.

¹⁰⁶ See C.G.N. de Vooys, 'De Dietse tekst van het traktaat: „De libris teutonicalibus”', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 4 (1907): 121–22; Hyma, 'The „De Libris Teutonicalibus” by Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen', 55; Hyma, 'Het traktaat “Super modo vivendi” door Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen', 59–60.

themes that would encourage laypeople to better their lives, alongside texts on vices, virtues, and the *contemptus mundi*.¹⁰⁷ Geert Grote himself read collations on the Four Last Things during meal times, when he had guests at his table, and the inspiration from the words of God made them fully ignore the quality of the food.¹⁰⁸ Priest John of Hattem (d. 1485), procurator in Deventer, is said to have been very reserved in his *collationes*: in reading to his audience, he had a preference for texts on the Four Last Things (as well as texts on the saints, chastity, or the *contemptus mundi*).¹⁰⁹ Henry of Herxen (d. 1487), fourth rector of the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle, often kept the *collationes* for his Brothers to the Four Last Things, in particular Hell and Judgement.¹¹⁰

For the Brothers of the Common Life, the fear of having to face the heavenly Judge brought about a humble and devout lifestyle in which they could never rest on their laurels and feel safe knowing they had secured a place in Heaven – even more so since taking pride in their meritorious works would earn them a spot in Hell.¹¹¹ The importance they attached to attending to the Four Last Things was communicated to and shared with the participating lay audience as well in the *collationes*. The collations used during the *collatio* show three types of the transmission of knowledge. Most obviously, the texts communicate information on a certain topic, such as the Last Judgement. As the collations clearly label and identify the sources from which they are composed – ‘so says Augustine’, ‘on this Chrysostom writes’ – they also communicate information on the most important *auctoritates*: who they are as well as their opinions on a specific issue. And through it all they share the Modern Devout attitude towards texts and their function in shaping personal devotion, inviting laypeople to adopt the same outlook. This section will take a closer look at these communications of knowledge by examining the collations on the Last Judgement specifically, in order to show how the collations present the lay participants to the *collatio* with a model: how to utilise authoritative texts, and which are the *auctoritates* that should be used.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, those of Zwolle: Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247.

¹⁰⁸ Brinkerink, ‘Biographieën’, 419: ‘Ende vake plach hij over maeltijt sine clacie te maken van dien dingen, die na deser tijt gheschien sullen (...) alsoe dat hij dicwijle ende die mit hem ten eten seeten alsoe vermaket worden mitter gracies des Heiligen Geests uytten woerde Godes, dat sij niet veel en achten op die uytwendige spyse (...)’.

¹⁰⁹ Dumbar, *Analecta*, 184–85, quoted from Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers*, 293.

¹¹⁰ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 180.

¹¹¹ This is the main line of argument in G.H. Gerrits’ aptly named *Inter Timorem et Spem. A Study of the Theological Thought of Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (1367-1398)*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought, XXXVII (Leiden: Brill, 1986). On the centrality of death and the hereafter to the Modern Devotion, also see L. Breure, *Doodsbeleving en levenshouding. Een historisch-psychologische studie betreffende de Moderne Devotie in het IJsselgebied in de 14e en 15e eeuw*, Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, V (Hilversum: Verloren, 1987).

In Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations, the texts on Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell together occupy 17 collations of a total of 80.¹¹² These are only the collations explicitly devoted to them, as many others contain arguments or examples referring to the inevitability of death or the consequences of a certain lifestyle for the afterlife. Of course, the *collatio* as a devotional exercise was in a sense entirely aimed at the hereafter: any personal improvement was meant to prepare for the impending examination of the Lord. With regard to the Four Last Things, the emphasis in the First Book of Collations is on Hell (which has seven collations devoted to it) and Death (encompassing six collations).¹¹³ The subjects of Heaven as well as the Last Judgement comprise two collations each.¹¹⁴ The book of collations Brussels, KB 19549 has a total of seven collations on the Four Last Things: three on Hell, two on Death, and one each on Heaven and the Last Judgement.¹¹⁵ The manuscript London, BL Add. 10287 contains two collations on Heaven and one each for the three other Last Things.¹¹⁶ The Book of Wedlock does not contain any immediate collations on the Four Last Things, which is unsurprising as it is concerned from the outset with the subject of marriage. At most, the collations on the spiritual marriage are concerned with the union between the soul and God, which would last beyond death into eternity.¹¹⁷

According to the reading key in manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, one of the two collations on the Last Judgement in the First Book of Collations was suitable reading for three different days: the second Sunday in the Advent, the ninth Sunday after the feast of Corpus Christi, and on the Monday after Whitsun.¹¹⁸ The suggestion of the Last Judgement for the second Sunday in the Advent is not surprising, as the pericope of that day – Luke 21:25 – readily lends itself to sermons or collations on that topic. In general only three *themata* are commonly connected to the end of times, as only the sermons on Luke 21:25–33 deal with the Last Judgement

¹¹² See the overview in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–33.

¹¹³ The collations on Death can be found as Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 13r–13v; 13v–16v; 16v–19r; 19r–20r; 20r–20v; 20v–21r; the collations on Hell are immediately following: Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 26r–28r; 28r–30v; 30v–32r; 32r–33r; 33r–35r; 35r–36r; 36r–42v. For comparison, most topics only get one or two collations; the themes of penitence, almsgiving, and patience are outliers with three collations each. See Appendix 1.

¹¹⁴ The collations on Heaven can be found as Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 42v–45r; 45r–50r; the collations on the Last Judgement as Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 21r–23r; 23r–26r.

¹¹⁵ These can be found as Brussels, KB 19549 f. 11v–12v; 22r–22v; 22v–30r (Hell); 1r–4r; 4r–11v (Death); 30r–41r (Heaven); and 12v–22r (Last Judgement).

¹¹⁶ These can be found as London, BL Add. 10287 f. 30v–33v; 33v–38r (Heaven); 7r–16v (Death); 16v–24r (Last Judgement); and 24r–30v (Hell).

¹¹⁷ See Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 179–80; Bange, 'So is echtschap goed mer sy is niet te raden aen te gaen', 42, 44–45.

¹¹⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, f. 2v–3v; also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 215, 218–19.

directly.¹¹⁹ For the Monday after Whitsun the reading key specifies it is the second collation on the Judgement that is to be read, without mentioning the reason for choosing one collation over the other.¹²⁰ The Brother taking care of the *collatio* was however still expected to choose which collation was most appropriate at that time and with the attending audience, as these dates are not set in stone: they are suggestions. On the second Sunday in the Advent, for instance, the reading key also suggests collations on the Word of God, loving one's fellow man, or the *contemptus mundi*.¹²¹ Even when working with a complete book of collations, the Brother taking care of the *collatio* could make his own decisions if he wanted to, following his own judgement after reading the room.

Though the use of books of collations seems to bring some sort of rigidity in the *collatio*, with only these texts specifically doctored to be read to the lay visitors, the collations on the Last Judgement in the First Book of Collations and the books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287 also show a certain freedom in the selection and composition of a collation. The two collations on the Last Judgement in Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations, for instance, are composed of a limited number of source texts: Heinrich Suso's *Horologium sapientiae*, a homily by Gregory the Great on Matthew 25:1–13, and the *Legenda aurea*. In particular the first collation – which consists of an excerpt of the *Horologium* and Gregory's homily – does not add much to the source material. Thus, a text did not need to have been originally written as a collation to be used during the *collatio*: if an excerpt of an authoritative text allowed for a suitable reading, it could easily function as a collation. The collations in Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287, meanwhile, are built from several different sources and *exempla*, reflecting how for the Brothers of the Common Life their devotion was constructed from multiple texts: collecting the relevant parts and bringing them in line to be applicable to a specific topic.

This approach, however, does not exclude using larger sections of texts if they were readily applicable without presenting further references. Indeed, the first collation on the Last Judgement in Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations is not so much an original

¹¹⁹ M. Sherwood-Smith, 'The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons and Its Role in the Dutch Translation of the Homilies of Gregory the Great', in *The Last Judgement in Medieval Preaching*, ed. Th. Mertens et al., Sermo 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 79–85. While Luke 21:25–33 is listed as the *thema* for 18 sermons, the remainder of the article suggests this was likely a typo.

¹²⁰ The reading key states 'On the Monday (...) On the judgement of God XVIII' ('Des manendages (...) Vanden oerdel Godes XVIII'), XVIII being the medieval page number on which the second collation on the Last Judgement starts. Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 3r; also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 218.

¹²¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 2v; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 215.

composition as it is a combination of two excerpts, with little connection between them apart from the subject matter. They are, however, properly labelled within the text, as the collation opens with the message: “On the Judgement of God from the book named *Horologium*: there the Disciple of Wisdom says as follows”.¹²² The excerpt stems from the seventh chapter of the first book of Heinrich Suso’s *Horologium sapientiae*. For its inclusion in the First Book of Collations, Van Herxen made use of the Northern Dutch translation, which was composed around 1400 and the most popular translation in Modern Devout communities.¹²³ The collation on the Last Judgement is not the only place where Dirc van Herxen made use of Suso’s work: four other collations are based on the *Horologium* as well, with another three collations containing excerpts of it.¹²⁴ Within the First Book of Collations, Suso’s influence is not all that great. In the context of the Modern Devotion, however, his work was rather popular: Geert Grote highly recommended the *Horologium* on his reading list, and the text was a favourite in Modern Devout communities.¹²⁵ The text had been available in a (Southern) Middle Dutch translation since the middle of the fourteenth century, though Grote still asked Johannes Cele for a copy of his Latin version in 1380.¹²⁶ The large number of manuscripts with the works of Suso in the vernacular is a testament to his popularity: Hoffmann counted some 54 manuscripts containing the *Horologium*, of which 21 contained the whole text.¹²⁷ The *Horologium* was widely available in Modern Devout communities, while at least six manuscripts can be traced back to a lay ownership as well.¹²⁸ Other texts written by Suso, like his *Centum meditationes* (or in the vernacular Hundred articles), were much enjoyed in Modern Devout circles as well.

¹²² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 21r: “Vanden ordel Godes uut den boeke genoemt *Horologium*. Daer seit die discipel der ewigher wijsheit aldus”.

¹²³ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 151–52.

¹²⁴ Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 152.

¹²⁵ For an overview, see W.J. Hoffmann, ‘Die volkssprachliche Rezeption des >Horologium sapientiae< in der Devotio moderna’, in *Heinrich Seuses Philosophia spiritualis: Quellen, Konzept, Formen und Rezeption. Tagung Eichstätt 2.-4. Oktober 1991*, ed. R. Blumrich and P. Kaiser, *Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter: Schriften des Sonderforschungsbereichs 226 Würzburg/Eichstätt 17* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1994), 202–54. See in particular 226–235 on the use of the *Horologium* in the First Book of Collations.

¹²⁶ D. de Man, ‘Heinrich Suso en de Moderne Devoten’, *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 19 (1926): 280. This southern Middle Dutch translation has been published as A.G.M. van de Wijnpersse, *Oerloy der ewigher wijsheit (Horologium sapientiae door Henricus Suso)* (Groningen: Wolters, 1938); A.G.M. van de Wijnpersse, *De dietse vertaling van Suso’s Horologium aeternae sapientiae* (Groningen: Wolters, 1926).

¹²⁷ Hoffmann, ‘Die volkssprachliche Rezeption des >Horologium sapientiae<’, 211–15. Compare S. Axters, ‘De zalige Heinrich Seuse in Nederlandse handschriften’, in *Heinrich Seuse: Studien zum 600. Todestag, 1366-1966*, ed. E.M. Filthaut (Cologne: Albertus Magnus Verlag, 1966), 363–70. Axters presented a total number of 507 manuscripts containing works of Suso in Middle Dutch; a number disputed by H. Beckers who estimates the number to be around 300: H. Beckers, ‘Neue Funde zur handschriftlichen Verbreitung von Seuses Werken am Niederrhein und in Westfalen’, *Leuvense Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Germaanse Filologie* 60–1 (1971): 243–44.

¹²⁸ Hoffmann, ‘Die volkssprachliche Rezeption des >Horologium sapientiae<’, 217–18.

The Hundred articles in particular was considered an ideal text for the personal meditation and contemplation, using the structure to easily find a beneficial passage on which to ruminate.¹²⁹

The excerpt from the *Horologium* in the collation on the Last Judgement is immediately followed by another: “Saint Gregory writes in the homily on the word of our Lord in saint Matthew’s Gospel”.¹³⁰ This is the second part of the tenth homily by Gregory the Great on Matthew 25:1–13, the parable on the wise and the foolish virgins.¹³¹ Van Herxen did not add any commentary to the text, but kept to the translation. Quite likely he had translated it himself, like he did with the *Dialogues* of Gregory – even though he had access to several translations of that work already.¹³² Gregory’s *Homilies on the Gospels* are among the most widespread sermon collections in Middle Dutch, with at least 17 manuscripts containing the full collection of 40 sermons.¹³³ Ownership of the *Homilies* was not exclusive to clerics or religious communities either: the earliest manuscript, dating from before 1416, was owned by the layman Willem van Wille of Diest.¹³⁴ This collation on the Last Judgement, and the *collatio* in which it was read, was thus not the only option to gain access to the words of Gregory, just as it was not the only place to be exposed to Suso’s *Horologium*. Rather, it fits in a general pattern of circulation of religious knowledge between laypeople and religious professionals.

The collation sticks close to its source material as it repeats an instance of the Disciple of Wisdom having a vision. He finds himself in a small boat, drifting out of control in the middle of a lake at night and in grave danger of going under.¹³⁵ Deadly afraid, he has a vision within his vision: he beholds the Lord, dressed in purest white and with hair as pure wool; a double-edged sword is protruding from His mouth. He is seated on a throne which is ablaze like a fire;

¹²⁹ Of the 67 manuscripts containing the Middle Dutch ‘Weekoefening’ – a translation of the *Centum meditationes* as edited by Willem Jordaens – the majority can be connected to Modern Devout communities or their sphere of influence. See J. van Aelst, *Passie voor het lijden. De ‘Hundert Betrachtungen und Begehrungen’ van Henricus Suso en de oudste drie bewerkingen uit de Nederlanden*, *Miscellanea Neerlandica*, XXXIII (Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 232–42, here 241. On the high esteem in which the Modern Devout held Suso, see also J. van Aelst, *Vruchten van de Passie. De laatmiddeleeuwse passieliteratuur verkend aan de hand van Suso’s Honderd artikelen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 122–23; J. van Aelst, ‘Het gebruik van beelden bij Suso’s lijdensmeditatie’, in *Geen povere schoonheid: Laat-middeleeuwse kunst in verband met de Moderne Devotie*, ed. K. Veelenturf (Nijmegen: Valkhof Pers, 2000), 86–110, in particular 99–105.

¹³⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22r: “Sunte Gregorius scrijft inder omelien op die woerde onses Heren in sunts Matheus ewangeli”.

¹³¹ See Gregory the Great, *Gospel Homilies*, 72–76.

¹³² Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 155–60, 242–47.

¹³³ Sherwood-Smith, ‘The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons’, 86.

¹³⁴ Sherwood-Smith, ‘The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons’, 95.

¹³⁵ The connection between a boat on a rough sea – and particularly a shipwreck – and the Judgement is also vividly illustrated in a French translation of the *Horologium*: Brussels, KB MS IV 111. See S. Rozenski Jr., ‘Henry Suso’s *Horologium Sapientiae* in Fifteenth Century France: Images of Reading and Writing in Brussels Royal Library MS IV 111’, *Word & Image* 26 (2010): 374–75.

a fiery glow radiates from His face. The disciple recoils in terror as all his faults and missteps are out in the open, but the heralds lead him forward to the quietly seething Judge. The disciple cowers before Him; he falls to the ground and hides his head in his arms.

When the disciple finally comes to his senses again, he starts lamenting those “who follow only the desires of their heart” and “those who do evil”.¹³⁶ If only they knew what was waiting for them and how harshly they will be judged, they would rather suffer any and all earthly pains than face the Lord. The disciple prays to God that He may let him suffer now so that he does not have to be punished for eternity; that he may refrain from evil deeds out of fear for the upcoming judgement. The warning at the end is hardly subtle:

So I advise all people and most of all the sinners that they do not ask for Your silence all the time; because You keep silent and suffer as if You do not see the sins, but when Your hand takes up the Judgement then You will take Your revenge on Your enemies and You will pay back those who hated You.¹³⁷

With these final words to the audience the excerpt closes: there is no final conclusion on the part of Dirc van Herxen, nor any added commentary or explanation. Likely the text was considered self-explanatory: it is not subtle about the horrible nature of the Last Judgement and already offers a word of advice, aimed directly at the readers and listeners.

Both the narrative and the lamentations of the Disciple allow for a vivid rendition of the text, inviting the Brother to turn the reading into a dramatic performance. The closing statement quoted above, for instance, is presented as an appeal from the character of the Discipline of Wisdom directed to God. Such would encourage the Brother reading the collation to use his voice in a different way, making the *collatio* into a performance and making it more memorable – and thus more effective in communicating its message. The collation here shares elements of the written sermon, which also called for a performance when it was preached.¹³⁸ The use of voice and gestures during the reading of the collation would draw in the audience and make them feel part of the narrative. The use of dialogue and direct speech allowed the audience to identify themselves with the poor Disciple of Wisdom cowering in fear: they could envision

¹³⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 21v: “We we den genen die wandren na begeerlicheit hoers herten. We allen den genen die boesheit doen.”

¹³⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22r: “Hier om so raed ic alle menschen ende alre meest den sonderen dat si hem selven te male uwen swigen niet en bevelen, want du swiges ende lides oft u die sonden niet en sages mer als uwe hant dat ordel sel an gripen so soe suldi wrake gheven uwen vianden ende die u ghehaet hebben suldi wederlonen.”

¹³⁸ Compare Berardini, ‘Discovering Performance Indicators’.

themselves in his situation, and take lessons from it accordingly.¹³⁹ Not all collations are as direct as this one on the Last Judgement, but the majority contain *exempla* and elements of dialogue to illustrate the topic at hand. Neither the books of collations nor the *consuetudines* contains any instructions on how to read the collations aloud, so it is not possible to determine how dynamic the performance of reading was to be. However, as the *collatio* aimed to touch the hearts of the participating audience more than their minds, the Brothers likely would have taken care to not turn the reading of the collation into a monotonous bore.

Following the story of the Disciple of Wisdom in the collation on the Last Judgement, the Brother presiding over the *collatio* would take on a different role, leaving off the words of Suso and taking on the voice of Gregory. The excerpt used for the collation, taken from Gregory's homily on Matthew 25:1–13 (the parable on the wise and the foolish virgins) does not add much to the source material. Though the parable is a likely basis for sermons on the Last Judgement, as it calls for being prepared at all times, any Middle Dutch sermons on the passage seem to focus on the virgins themselves and the virtue of chastity. Maria Sherwood-Smith notes how only one anonymous sermon acknowledges the Judgement implicitly by interpreting the parable in mystical terms.¹⁴⁰ Gregory, however, did preach on the parable as a metaphor for the Last Judgement: those who are prepared are allowed to enter, and those who are not have to remain outside and will be turned away for all eternity. The collation follows Gregory's interpretation of the parable, rather than the interpretation common in Middle Dutch sermons.

The parable itself is not included in the collation; presumably it was considered common knowledge, or it could be briefly retold in the course of the *collatio*. Starting the collation with the words "The bridegroom has come and those who were ready went with him to the wedding, and the door is closed" would immediately remind the listeners of the parable as it is written in Matthew.¹⁴¹ The emphasis of the collation is on those who were not prepared and who will not enjoy the loving embrace of God. Now is the time for repentance: "whosoever has lost the time for proper penitence, their prayers for the door of the Kingdom will be in vain."¹⁴² The Lord calls everyone to Him, but those who do not listen should not expect Him to hear their calls for

¹³⁹ See Warnar, 'The Discovery of the Dialogue'.

¹⁴⁰ This is the sermon kept in The Hague 73 H 31, f. 7r–48v: Sherwood-Smith, 'The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons', 80–81.

¹⁴¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22r: "Die brudegom is gecomen ende die bereit waren sijn inghegaen mit hem totten bruloften, ende die duere is gesloten".

¹⁴² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22v: "Die die tijt behoerliker penitencien heeft verloren, die coemt te vergheves mit ghebede voer die dore des rikes."

help once it is too late – yet still, “not only do we not lament our misdeeds, we even increase the lamentable things.”¹⁴³

The collation closes with an *exemplum* which is already present in the homily, explicitly included to bring some devotion to the listeners: “Brothers, I wish to tell you a story. I hope you wish to hear it and note some points from which you can learn.”¹⁴⁴ The goal of the homily, and thus the goal of the collation and the *collatio*, is to educate the lay audience and teach them some good points. The *exemplum* tells the story of one Chryserius, “a very rich man but also full of sin”.¹⁴⁵ The source of the *exemplum* supposedly is an eyewitness: “I heard it from a religious person that is still alive, a relative of his.”¹⁴⁶ This is a remark from Gregory, but Van Herxen copied it without qualms; perhaps he did not wish to muddle the words of Gregory, or bringing the story into the present day made the message more likely to stick with the audience. The story tells how Chryserius was suddenly struck with a fatal sickness, and on his deathbed he beholds an ugly black ghost preparing to drag him to hell. The family, gathered around the sickbed, cannot see the ghost but its presence is notable through its influence on Chryserius. Calling out for a reprieve of just a single day Chryserius breathes his last, “by which we know he did not see these things for himself but for our benefit.”¹⁴⁷ The benefit of the example is made clear in the closing remarks: we should think of these things so that we do not waste any time for forgiveness – repent before it is too late. This closing remark is part of the homily, and not an addition by Van Herxen. The text is considered sufficiently clear; if any questions remained, they could be answered by any of the Brothers present during the *collatio*.

In the first collation on the Last Judgement, Dirc van Herxen simply presented two excerpts from relevant *auctoritates*. The second collation on the topic, however, is more of an adaptation of a source text, in this case Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea* – though Van Herxen here refers to it as the ‘Book of Fear’.¹⁴⁸ The *Legenda aurea* had been available in a Middle Dutch

¹⁴³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22v: “Niet allene bescreyen wi niet dat wi qualike bedreven hebben, mer oec vermeerren wi dat te bescreyen is”.

¹⁴⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22v: “Brueders ic wil een dinc vertellen. Welc is dat u minne aendachtelike horen wil uut aen merken van dien ghi seer gesticht sult werden.” Compare Gregory the Great, *Gospel Homilies*, 74.

¹⁴⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22v: “Een edel man was inder provincien Valerien, Crisorius genoemt: een zeer rijk man, mer also vol sonden”. Compare Gregory the Great, 74–75.

¹⁴⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 22v: “Als ic van enen religiosen die noch levet sinen naesten ghehoert hebbe.”

¹⁴⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23r: “Van welken wi voerwaer weten mogen dat hi dese dinge niet voer hem selven, mer voer ons ghesien heeft op dat sijn visioen ons moge dienen.”

¹⁴⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, f. 23r: “Als men vijnt inden Boeke vanden Anxte”. What is meant by the ‘Book of Fear’ is unknown, though the First Book of Collations takes a second *exemplum* from it in the collation on turning to God in one’s youth: Leiden, UB BPL 2231 f.111v. The attribution for this second *exemplum* is missing from the Utrecht version.

translation since 1358, translated by the Bible translator of 1360, and enjoyed a wide circulation in the Low Countries: more than 150 (partial) copies of the text have survived in manuscript.¹⁴⁹ A second, independent translation came about around 1400 in the circles of the Modern Devotion, and on the basis of this ‘Northern Dutch translation’ (Noordnederlandse vertaling) the *Legenda aurea* was printed in 1478 by Gheraert Leeu in Gouda.¹⁵⁰ It seems Dirc van Herxen translated the text on his own, like he did with the *Horologium* and Gregory’s *Homilies* in the other collation: neither the ‘Northern Dutch translation’ nor the translation of the Bible translator of 1360 lines up with the collation on the level of the individual sentences.¹⁵¹

In a very short introduction to the text, Dirc van Herxen sets out his aim: the collatio will be about the actual Judgement Day, when – as both the Gospel and the prophet Joel attest – all people are gathered in the valley of Josaphat.¹⁵² What follows is a collation on the Last Judgement as it is to be; that is, while the signs leading up to Doomsday are mentioned, it is mostly the proceedings of that day that are under consideration here.¹⁵³ This is a subversion of Middle Dutch sermons on the Last Judgement, which are generally more concerned with the end of times than the Judgement itself. Van Herxen seemingly felt it was more important to know what to prepare for than to recognise the signs heralding the time for preparations was over. The collation is structured around 10 points on the Last Judgement, each of which is expanded upon with quotations from one or more authorities. Some of the points are divided into subdivisions, but the collation takes care to present a clear schematic order – the main points are clearly labelled in the text with a paragraph mark. This would make it easy for the participants to follow the *collatio*, and perhaps write down (parts of) the collation for personal use.¹⁵⁴ In broad terms the collation reads as a selection of excerpts from the *Legenda aurea*, though there are multiple parts where Dirc van Herxen enters a passage of his own or omits one

¹⁴⁹ Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:xxxvii–xliii.

¹⁵⁰ Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:xliii–xlvi.

¹⁵¹ The ‘Northern Dutch translation’ has never been published in a modern edition, but a preliminary digital edition can be found at http://bouwstoffen.kantl.be/bml/Legenda_aurea/Legenda_aurea.html [consulted 05-03-2019]. Compare Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 3v–7r and Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:14–22. Although it is a distinct translation, the language of the collation leans more towards the ‘Northern Dutch translation’.

¹⁵² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23r: “Seit onse Heer inden ewangelio dat sunte Matheus beschrijft (...) Dit sel gheschien inden dale Josaphat, als Joel die prophete daer van voerghesproken heeft in ons Heren persoon, daer hi seit (...)”. The reference is to Matthew 25:31–33 and Joel 3:2, respectively.

¹⁵³ The main part of the collation runs from f. 23r to f. 25r, with three *exempla* on f. 25r–26r.

¹⁵⁴ Collections of notes taken during the *collatio* or the sermon, for instance, are known from female religious communities; the collations of Johannes Brinckerinck are a prime example: see Mertens, ‘Ghostwriting Sisters’; Mertens, ‘Postuum auteurschap. De collaties van Johannes Brinckerinck’. From laypeople such collections are unknown, yet as the Brothers of the Common Life advocated the keeping of *rapiaria* – personal notebooks – it is quite likely they once existed.

from his source text. He also attributes biblical references which in the *Legenda aurea* are ingrained in the text, adding authority to the text and anchoring it in a wider network of connected texts.

Building on the *Legenda aurea*, Van Herxen omits quite a lengthy passage of Jacobus de Voragine's examination of the signs announcing Doomsday. He does, however, add a reference to Chrysostom, and he adds some more exposition on the reference to Basil¹⁵⁵ on the all-consuming fire that will ravage the earth, citing Augustine¹⁵⁶ and the apostle Peter.¹⁵⁷ He also decided to elaborate on two other signs heralding the Second Coming: the overwhelming sound of the angelic trumpets, and the rising of the dead. His views on the angels blowing trumpets are substantiated by both the Gospel¹⁵⁸ and Jerome¹⁵⁹; on the rising of the dead no other sources are provided. For the fifth sign – the insignia of the Lord's passion which the Gospel of Matthew mentions¹⁶⁰ – the collation returns to the *Legenda aurea*, though not as a direct translation: instead, two separate references to Chrysostom are combined and transferred to the same passage in the First Book of Collations.¹⁶¹

The signs heralding Doomsday are the first five points in this collation on the Last Judgement, which continues with another five points discussing the proceedings of the Judgement itself. Here too the collation leans on the *Legenda aurea*, and its depiction of what is to happen is an increasingly grim picture. The dependence on Jacobus de Voragine is not absolute: Van Herxen

¹⁵⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23v: "Van desen vuer seit die prophete (...) want als Basilius seit (...)". The reference is to Psalm 50:3 (Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition); I have not been able to trace the reference to Basil further. Compare Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 5r, Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:17.

¹⁵⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23v: "Van desen vuer dat God senden sel voer sijn toecoemst ten oerdel seit Augustinus (...)". The reference is possibly to Augustine's commentary on Psalm 97:3; see for instance https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/otesources/19-psalms/text/books/augustine-psalms/augustine-psalms.pdf; see page 817.

¹⁵⁷ The reference is to 2 Peter 3: 9–13.

¹⁵⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23v: "Daer onser Heer van seit in sunte Matheus ewangeli (...)". The reference is to Matthew 24:31.

¹⁵⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23v: "Voer deser basunen gheluyt vreesde sancte Jheronimus alte zeer, die seide(...)". Though unattributed, the reference is probably to the *Vitaspatrum*; I found the same quotation in A. Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Other Principal Saints: Compiled from Original Monuments, and Other Authentic Records: Illustrated with the Remarks of Judicious Modern Critics and Historians*, vol. 9 (Dublin: James Duffy, 1845), 373. Dirc van Herxen certainly would have had access to the *Vitaspatrum*, both in Latin and in the vernacular: see P. Bertrand, 'Vaderboecen. De Vitas Patrum-traditie in de Nederlanden', *Madoc*, 2006, 37–44.

¹⁶⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 23v: "Want vanden cruce Christi scrift Matheus in sinen ewangeli. (...)". The reference is to Matthew 24:30.

¹⁶¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24r: "Ende daer om als Crisostimus seit (...) Ende dan als die selve Crisostimus seit (...)". Compare Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 5r–5v, 6r and Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:18–19. I have not been able to trace these references further. Curiously, the 'Northern Dutch translation' attributes the second quotation to Jerome instead of Chrysostom.

adds a passage with quotations by Augustine,¹⁶² Isaiah,¹⁶³ and the Book of Revelation¹⁶⁴ as substitute for a reference to Pope Leo,¹⁶⁵ and resumes his translation with a quotation of Bernard.¹⁶⁶ Both the references to Pope Leo and Bernard are not present in the ‘Northern Dutch translation’, suggesting Van Herxen also made use of the older translation of the Bible translator of 1360 which does include these references, or translated directly from a Latin copy.

The collation continues: not only is the sinner to be closely and completely examined by the most severe Judge, he encounters active opposition. The devil will plead rightful ownership of the soul, as from several angles one’s deeds and misdeeds are presented as proof of one’s wickedness. This section, with quotations by Augustine, Bernard, Gregory, and Chrysostom is directly lifted from the *Legenda aurea*, though neither Middle Dutch translation seems to include the reference to the Wisdom of Solomon.¹⁶⁷ The eighth point to consider on the Last Judgement – the infallible witness account at the Judgement, composed of three witnesses – can be traced completely to that text as well.¹⁶⁸

For the ninth point, Dirc van Herxen uses a small piece of the *Legenda aurea* and added his own selection of biblical references – Zephaniah,¹⁶⁹ Ecclesiastes,¹⁷⁰ Isaiah,¹⁷¹ the Wisdom of Solomon (twice),¹⁷² and the Gospel¹⁷³ – to stress the exceedingly close examination each poor

¹⁶² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24r: “Als Augustinus seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

¹⁶³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24r: “Daer Ysayas die porphete [sic] van seit (...)”. The reference is to Isaiah 30:27.

¹⁶⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24r-24v: “Hier van wert sancte Johan vertoent in Apocalipsi, daer hi (...)”. This is a combination of Revelation 1:14, 1:16, and 20:12–15.

¹⁶⁵ Compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24r–24v and Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:20. This section is wholly absent from the ‘Northern Dutch translation’.

¹⁶⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24r: “Hier van seit Bernaerdus (...)”. In some versions of the *Legenda aurea*, this reference is attributed to Augustine: compare Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. W.G. Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 11.

¹⁶⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24v: “Augustinus (...) Als inden Boeke der Wijsheit staet (...) Ende als sancte Berent seit (...) Gregorius (...) Crisostimus (...)”. The biblical reference is to the Wisdom of Solomon 4:20. I have not been able to trace these references further. Compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24v, Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 6v, Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:20–21; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ References are made to Jeremias 29:23, Augustine, and Job 20:27. The reference to Jeremias is present in the translation of the Bible translator of 1360, but not in the ‘Northern Dutch translation’: compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24v, Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 6v, Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:20–21; Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24v: “Daer onse Heer van spreek doer den prophete Sophonias (...)”. The reference is to Zephaniah 1:12.

¹⁷⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24v: “Hier van seit die wise man (...)”. The reference is to Ecclesiastes 12:14.

¹⁷¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 24v-25r: “Als onse Heer seit doer den prophete Ysayas (...)”. The reference is to Isaiah 66:18.

¹⁷² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r: “Ende inden Boeke der Wijsheit staet (...)”, and “want als inden Boeke der Wijsheit staet. (...)”. The reference is to Wisdom 6:4 and 5:2-9, respectively.

¹⁷³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r: “Vanden woerden seit onse Heer inden ewangelio. (...)”. The reference is to Matthew 12:36.

soul will have to undergo. A spatial description of the Last Judgement provided by Gregory¹⁷⁴ is translated, with an added reference to Anselm.¹⁷⁵ This same description appears in the collation on the Last Judgement in Brussels, KB 19549, though there it is attributed to Anselm.¹⁷⁶ The closing paragraph (which explains the 10th point) is especially frightening: the sentence is irrevocable and absolute; the sinners are cast into the eternal fire to suffer for their crimes. Curiously, this passage has no similarities to the *Legenda aurea* despite both texts having the irrevocable sentence as their final point. Instead, Van Herxen relies on Job¹⁷⁷ and Bernard¹⁷⁸ to make his final point, before moving on to the *exempla*. Strikingly, this is the only outcome considered in the collation: though ostensibly dealing with ‘the Last Judgement’ in its entirety, the possibility of a positive result (that is, a favourable judgement and eternal bliss in Heaven) is not discussed at all. The potential reward for a humble life of virtue and devotion is present in the First Book of Collations as a whole,¹⁷⁹ but it is not mentioned in the two collations on the Last Judgement. Why this is the case is unclear; perhaps Van Herxen focussed solely on the Last Judgement as a moment to be feared so as to not allow anyone to think themselves safe.

In this regard, the collations on the Last Judgement make for an interesting comparison with sermons on this theme, of which several have survived – even though the topic was rather unpopular material for preaching, despite its eschatological importance.¹⁸⁰ Maria Sherwood-Smith’s inventory of sermons on the Last Judgement yielded some 16 sermons mainly on the Last Judgement (as opposed to referring to it in passing) from the entire body of approximately 3700 Middle Dutch sermons in more than 550 manuscripts.¹⁸¹ The judgements after death (the Particular Judgement of the individual person and the General or Last Judgement over all of creation) are referred to in many sermons but are rarely the core of the sermon. They are perhaps the slumbering motivation behind any other sermon: all devotional acts should be in preparation

¹⁷⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r: “Gregorius (...)”. Compare Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 6v–9r, Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:21–22.

¹⁷⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r: “Anselmus (...)”. The reference is to Anselm’s second meditation, on the Last Judgement: see Anselm, *St. Anselm’s Book of Meditations and Prayers*, trans. M.R. (London: Burns and Gates, 1872), 39.

¹⁷⁶ Compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r and Brussels, KB 19549 f. 19r.

¹⁷⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r: “Die in Jobs boec een donre genoemt wort (...)”. The reference is to Job 26:14.

¹⁷⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r: “Waer van sancte Bernaerdus seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

¹⁷⁹ The topic of Heaven has two dedicated collations as well, on f. 42v–54r and f. 45r–50r.

¹⁸⁰ See the individual contributions in Th. Mertens et al., eds., *The Last Judgement in Medieval Preaching*, Sermo 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

¹⁸¹ Sherwood-Smith, ‘The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons’, 79–83. For her inventory Sherwood-Smith made use of the Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons: Sherwood-Smith et al., *Repertorium van Middelnederlandse handschriften*.

of the Last Judgement, that the soul may be judged worthy of Heaven and not be condemned to Hell.

When the sermon was on the end of times and the Last Judgement the tone seems to have been quite subdued and sober; apparently the possibility of eternal damnation did not merit an animated preacher conjuring up fire and brimstone. Generally, the sermons on the second Sunday in Advent (for which the pericope is Luke 21:25–33) take up the idea of the ‘signs in the sun and the moon and the stars’, making use of the Fifteen Points commonly attributed to Jerome but likely compiled by Bede the Venerable.¹⁸² Middle Dutch sermons on the Last Judgement are thus more concerned with the end of times leading up to it; the actual Judgement is the backdrop against which the sermon plays out. It is an event in the future for which one needs to prepare in the present, and cultivating an overwhelming fear of damnation is not deemed conducive to personal change as it might paralyse instead of spurn to action. The collations however take a different approach, and make fear itself into a tool for the use of cultivating a meek and humble devotion. Participating laypeople were thus, at the least for the duration of the *collatio*, enraptured in the Brothers’ approach to their own mortality: contemplating the same texts in full (as shown in the First Book of Collations) or in new interpretations through the combination of multiple *auctoritates* (as found in the books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287; see below).

Returning to how the Last Judgement is treated in the First Book of Collations, the collation closes with three short *exempla*, two of which are attributed to the *Vitaspatrum* with the third being drawn from Thomas of Cantimpré’s *Bonum universale de apibus*. The first tells of the abbot Agathon and is attributed to the *Vitaspatrum*, though the same story is included in the *Legenda aurea* – including the attribution to the *Vitaspatrum*.¹⁸³ Likely the *exemplum* was taken from the *Legenda aurea* with the inclusion of its original source. Even if this was not the case, Dirc van Herxen would not have to look far for a collection of texts from the Lives of the Fathers: both Latin and vernacular versions would have been available to him.¹⁸⁴ The story told here is an excerpt of the longer account of Agathon on his deathbed; the same *exemplum* is also

¹⁸² Th. Mertens, ‘The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons on the Sunday Gospel’, in *The Last Judgement in Medieval Preaching*, ed. Th. Mertens et al., Sermo 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 53–57.

¹⁸³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25v: “Inder vaderboec staet van enen heilighen Abt, Agaton ghenomt”. Compare the *Legenda aurea*, where the attribution comes at the end: “Dits in *Der vadere vite*”: A. Berteloot, G. Claassens, and W. Kuiper, *Gulden legende. De Middelnederlandse vertaling van de Legenda aurea door Petrus Naghel, uitgegeven naar handschrift Brussel, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 15140*, vol. 2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 604. The *vita* of Agathon does not seem to be included in the ‘Northern Dutch translation’.

¹⁸⁴ See Bertrand, ‘Vaderboecen’.

present in the books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287.¹⁸⁵ The second story is attributed to the *Vitaspatrum* as well but deals with a man who defies his mother in becoming a monk, but leads his life in carelessness.¹⁸⁶ Taken horribly ill, a vision of her at the Last Judgement sets him straight: “If I cannot face the rebuke of my mother, how can I ever face the accusations of Christ and His angels on Judgement Day?”¹⁸⁷

For the third and last *exemplum*, Dirc van Herxen turned to the *Bonum universale de apibus*.¹⁸⁸ As he did with several other *exempla* from the work, Van Herxen translated the text himself to include it in the First Book of Collations.¹⁸⁹ This would have been a necessity for using the *exempla* in the vernacular collations: a complete vernacular translation of the *Bonum universale de apibus* was available only from around 1451, with a second translation being circulated after 1491.¹⁹⁰ The *exemplum* in the collation on the Last Judgement tells of a German nobleman who was made bishop without any merits and who did not heed any of God’s warnings, and as such comes to an early death. The judgement of his soul is witnessed by one Conrad, bishop of Hildesheim, who sees it in a vision.

These two collations on the Last Judgement in the First Book of Collations show two approaches to the communication of religious knowledge in the *collatio*: taking a relevant text, or modifying one to better present a topic. A third option is found in the other books of collations, Brussels KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287, which both contain a collation on the Last Judgement as well. The text of the collation is largely the same in both manuscripts, and consists of a ‘main’ text with six *exempla* which are all labelled as such. The London manuscript however does not contain the last two of these *exempla*, but marks the last part of the main text as an ‘exempel’.¹⁹¹ The collation is quite a bit shorter than the ones in the First Book of Collations: not counting the *exempla*, the text in the Brussels manuscript runs for some 1100 words while the two collations in the First Book of Collations are roughly 1600 and 2600

¹⁸⁵ Compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 25r–25v, Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15v and London, BL Add. 10287 f. 19r–19v.

¹⁸⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25v: “Uut den selven”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

¹⁸⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25v: “Mocht ic niet liden dat verwit mijnre moeder, soe soude ic dan tegens mi mogen liden inden dage des ordels bescaemt te werden van Cristo ende al sinen engelen”.

¹⁸⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 26r: “Ex libro apum”. Also see C.M. Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck. De Middelnederlandse vertalingen van Bonum universale de apibus van Thomas van Cantimpré en hun achtergrond* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1990), 11–12; W.A. van der Vet, *Het Biënboec van Thomas van Cantimpré en zijn exempelen* (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1902), 283–84.

¹⁸⁹ Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 136.

¹⁹⁰ See Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 57–95.

¹⁹¹ In Brussels, KB 19549 the collation on the Last Judgement runs from f. 12v to f. 22r; London, BL Add. 10287 has the same collation from f. 16v to f. 24r.

words. Still, the collations hit roughly the same notes, even sharing some of the *auctoritates* and *exempla* as well as the overarching message: to be ever prepared to face the Last Judgement.

Whereas the collations on the Last Judgement in the First Book of Collations are largely based on three distinct sources, the collation in the other two books of collations is more of a composition, building on a wider range of *auctoritates*. The heading of the collation reads “on the horrible and severe day of the Last Judgement of our Lord Jesus Christ from Saint Bernard’s meditations”.¹⁹² This would have been the *Meditationes piissimae de cognitione humanae conditionis*, a text commonly yet incorrectly attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux. Circulating mainly in a monastic environment, the text had been translated to Middle Dutch by the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁹³ The collation laments how on that miserable day everything will be out in the open and every single work will have to be accounted for; everything one has ever done will cry out: “We are your deeds and you have committed us, we will not abandon you but we will always be with you and accompany you to your judgement.”¹⁹⁴ Gregory, in one of his homilies, urges a proper preparation for the Judgement, curiously calling for such preparations that when the Judge comes, He can be approached with confidence instead of fear.¹⁹⁵ Being fearful in advance would prevent wrongdoings, and if no misdeeds have been committed then there is nothing to worry about in the Judgement itself.¹⁹⁶ This message is remarkable as it seems to go against the other expectations of the Last Judgement, which mostly stress the terror of having to face divine scrutiny and the nigh impossibility of feeling secure in one’s faith. Indeed, Gregory’s advice rings somewhat hollow when later on in the same collation the *exemplum* of the Abbot Agathon is included; the most holy man who nonetheless was deadly afraid of being examined by God. With most of the collation stressing the severity of the Last Judgement and the righteous fear one should feel for it, the advice of Gregory seems

¹⁹² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 12v: “Vanden vervaerliker ende strenghen daghe des lesten oerdels ons heren Jhesum Christi, uut sinte bernaerts ghedachten”.

¹⁹³ Reynaert, ‘<<Contemptus>> in het Middelnederlands’, 195–98. Dirc van Herxen also used this text for two of his collations: see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–23.

¹⁹⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 13v: “Dan sullen te gader al hoer werken recht als sprekende segghen: Du heefste ons ghewrocht, wij sijn dijn werken. Wij en sullen di niet begheven, mar wij sullen altoes mitti wesen ende varen mittie voer dat oerdel.” These lines also appear in the *Legenda aurea*, where they are also attributed to Bernard: compare Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 6v, Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:21.

¹⁹⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 14r “Hier of seit sinte Gre-gregorius [sic] in eenre ommelien aldus (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

¹⁹⁶ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 14r–14v: “Hier om settet voer u oghen den rechter van dus groten anxte, ende ontsiet sijn toecoemst, dat ghi hem als hy comen sel niet mit vresen mer mit sekerheit sien moghet. Hier om salmen hem nu aensien op datmen hem dan niet ontsien en sel. Sijn anxt oefenen ons ter ghewoente der goeder werkinghe, ende sijn vrese bedwinghen onse leven van quade werken. Gheloeftes mi broeders dat wij dan sullen alsoe veel te sekerre wesen van sijne teghenwoerdicheit als wij ons nu pinen bevreet te wesen van sunden”.

almost out of place; though it brings balance to the argument and would have helped to not push the participants of the *collatio* into despair.

The main text of the collation continues in Brussels, KB 19549, though this part of the text is already labelled an ‘exempel’ in London, BL Add. 10287.¹⁹⁷ The text is attributed to the ‘vier wtersten’, which is the Middle Dutch term for the *quatuor novissimis* or the Four Last Things – Death, Judgement, Heaven, and Hell. Two texts of this name are known from the fifteenth century: Gerardus van Vliedervoven’s *Cordiale de quatuor novissimis* and Dionysius Carthusianus’ *De quatuor hominis novissimis*. The former is the most likely, as the *Cordiale* was quite popular in Modern Devout communities: in Windesheim, the text was even used for the table reading.¹⁹⁸ Texts on the Four Last Things were common in Modern Devout communities: the library of the Heer Florenshuis contained an anonymous *Quatuor novissimis*,¹⁹⁹ and the Collatiehuis in Gouda had both a Latin *Quatuor novissimis* as well as a Dutch ‘Die vier utersten’ even before the Brothers took over.²⁰⁰ In the collation, the passage taken from the ‘Vier wtersten’ immediately refers back to the *Vitaspatrum*: the collation reads “From the Four Last Things. One reads in the books of the fathers...”²⁰¹. The given *exemplum* is rather short: an old man berated a young man for his laughter, for if he knew what was waiting for him he would not be laughing now. This opens the way for four more quotations on what is to come: Gregory²⁰² asserts that the bitterness of the Judgement would quell any laughter; Joel²⁰³ prophesied all the people would rise and gather in the valley of Josaphat to be judged;

¹⁹⁷ Compare Brussels, KB 19549 f. 14v and London, BL Add. 10287 f. 18v.

¹⁹⁸ M. Dusch, *De veer utersten. Das Cordiale de quatuor novissimis von Gerhard von Vliedervoven in mittelniederdeutscher Überlieferung*, Niederdeutsche Studien 20 (Cologne, Vienna: Böhlau, 1975), 34–39.

¹⁹⁹ Obbema, *Een Deventer bibliotheekscatalogus II*, 148–49, 164. Obbema believes this to be Dionysius’ *De quatuor hominis novissimis* over the text of Gerardus van Vliedervoven; the reason for this is not quite clear.

²⁰⁰ Three inventories of the Collatiehuis are kept as Gouda, Streekarchief Midden-Holland 0091.16: Lijsten van huisraad en boeken, met het Collatiehuis van de Heilige-Geestmeesters ontvangen, en een opsomming van huisrenten, toebehorende aan het Collatiehuis, ca. 1438–1447 / 1456. The inventories are not numbered individually. Mentioned are a *Quatuor exercitia cum novissimis*; a “Die vier uterste ende die vier oefeninghe” and a *Speculum misse cum quatuor novissimis*; a *Quatuor novissiam et eorum exercitia in eodem*, and a “Die vier uterste in Duytsch mit veel andere guede sermoenen”. These last two are on an inventory under the heading “Item dit sijn die boeken die si hier vonden”; that is, a list of books already present in the Collatiehuis when the Brothers moved in. On the book list, also see J.W. Klein, ‘De Goudse boekcultuur tot 1600: Het begin en de Collatiebroeders’, *Tidings van die Goude* 38 (2020): 92–93.

²⁰¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 14v: “Uuten Vier Utersten: Men leest inder Vaderboeken...”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

²⁰² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 14v: “Hier of sprecht sinte Gregorius (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

²⁰³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15r: “Johel die propheet seit (...)”. The reference is to Joel 3:12.

Hosea²⁰⁴ calls on the children of Israel to hear the word of the Lord; and Augustine²⁰⁵ said everyone will have to appear before the seat of Christ, where devils will try to convince Him to condemn the soul of the accused. The quotations are taken as self-explanatory and are not discussed any further: the communication of knowledge is presented in such a way that it seems the Brothers of the Common Life are not expressing their own individual interpretation on the theme of the Last Judgement, but are merely collecting and communicating what the *auctoritates* said on the topic.

The same approach is taken with the six *exempla* at the end of the collation, the last two of which are absent in London, BL Add. 10287. To each short *exemplum* is appended a number of applicable quotations from authoritative sources, showing a pragmatic approach to these *auctoritates*: only a short, relevant snippet is copied to be included in the collation, disregarding the rest. These quotations are also essential to the message, as most of the *exempla* are not fully self-contained narratives with an edifying message. For instance, the first *exemplum* is the story of Abbot Agathon; presumably from the *Legenda aurea* with the inclusion of the phrase “one reads in the Father book”.²⁰⁶ Though shorter than the version in the First Book of Collations, the text gets the main point across. Added to the story are citations from Gregory²⁰⁷ and Solomon.²⁰⁸ The second *exemplum* in particular depends largely on the quotations added to a story taken from the *Vitaspatrum* about an old man who feared for the moment his soul would depart from his body, and when he had to wait for the sentence to be passed during the Judgement.²⁰⁹ This already concludes the *exemplum*, and the exposition starts: “now see how many holy people were afraid of the Judgement because of the uncertainty of the sentence, and verily it is frightful”.²¹⁰ These holy people are indeed many. The apostles Matthew²¹¹ and

²⁰⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15r: “Aldus seit oec die propheet Ose (...)”. The reference is to Hosea 4:1.

²⁰⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15r: “Sinte Augustinu seit (...)”. The same quotation appears in the *Legenda aurea*: compare Amsterdam, UBA UvA VI B 14 f. 6r-6v and Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 1*, I:20–21. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

²⁰⁶ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15v: “Eenen exempel. Men leest inder *Vader boeck* dat een heilich abt die Agathon hiet (...)”. Compare the *Legenda aurea*, where the attribution comes at the end: “Dits in *Der vadere vite*”: Berteloot, Claassens, and Kuiper, *Gulden legende 2*, 2:604. The *vita* of Agathon does not seem to be included in the ‘Northern Dutch translation’.

²⁰⁷ Brussel, KB 19549 f. 15v: “Hier of spreect Gregorius (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

²⁰⁸ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15v: “Hier of spreec die wise man (...)”. This is possibly a reference to Wisdom 9:5.

²⁰⁹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 15v–16r: “Men leest inden *Vader boeck* dat een out vader seide (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

²¹⁰ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16r: “Nu siet hoe veel der heiligher menschen hebben gheweest, die dat oerdel ontsaghen om der onsekerheit der sentencien ende voerwaer so ist seer te ontsien”.

²¹¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16r: “Als Matheus die ewangelist scrijft: Ende sijn die woerden ons heren Jhesum Christi (...)”. The reference is to Matthew 7:22–23.

Paul²¹² open the line-up, but the section also cites Gregory,²¹³ Jerome,²¹⁴ Gregory again,²¹⁵ Zephaniah,²¹⁶ Joel,²¹⁷ Bernard (twice),²¹⁸ the Gospel,²¹⁹ and Solomon,²²⁰ who all either express their own fear for the Lord's Judgement or urge others to always be fearful. When the collation was read out during the *collatio*, visitors would be made well aware that the only logical approach to the Last Judgement was one of dread, tinged with the hope to be prepared well enough.

Even the third and fourth *exempla*, which are longer and more self-contained than the other ones, are accompanied by a number of *auctoritates* adding their own opinions. To the *Vitaspatrum* is attributed a story about a holy man who is tempted with immorality or unchaste behavior (*oncuusheid*) but manages to overcome his urges easily by reflecting on the Last Judgement.²²¹ He then asks the devil why he even bothers to tempt him, for "you well know it is folly to bring someone to sin, as you only increase your own sins and amplify your pain."²²² The fiend replies that is correct, but he fears the Last Judgement above all else, and the more people have to be judged before him the longer he can avoid it. References to Solomon,²²³ Paul (who himself refers to Hosea),²²⁴ and the Revelation of John²²⁵ confirm that everyone will reap what they sow, and everyone will be judged according to their deeds. To Anselm is ascribed a

²¹² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16r: "Hier om seit Pauwelus, die gode een uutvercoren vat (...) Nochtan seit hi op een ander stat (...)". The reference is a combination of Acts 23:1 and another verse, which I have not been able to find.

²¹³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16r: "Oec seit Gragorius (...)". I have not been able to trace this reference, though a similar passage seems to appear in the *Ridderboek*: see Henricus Pomerius, *Ridderboek*, ed. G. Warnar (Amsterdam: Querido, 1991), 71.

²¹⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16v: "Sinte Jheronymus seit (...)". The same quotation is also used in the collation on the Last Judgement in the First Book of Collations. Though unattributed, the reference is probably to the *Vitaspatrum*; I found the same quotation in Butler, *The Lives of the Fathers*, 9:373.

²¹⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16v: "Als sinte Gregorius scrijft (...)". I have not been able to trace this reference, though a similar passage seems to appear in the *Ridderboek*: see Henricus Pomerius, *Ridderboek*, 71.

²¹⁶ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16v: "Als scrijft Sophonias (...)". The reference is to Zephaniah 1:14–16.

²¹⁷ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 16v–17r: "Seit Joechel: die propheet die set (...)". The reference is to Joel 2:31.

²¹⁸ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 17r: "Die heilige sinte Barnaerdus, want hi hier aldus of spreket (...) Voert seit Barnaerdus (...)". I have not been able to trace this reference.

²¹⁹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 17r: "Wat is dat onse heer Jhesus Christus leert, hi seit doet penitencie". The reference is to Matthew 4:17.

²²⁰ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 17v–18r: "Voerwaer als die wise man seit (...)". The reference is to Wisdom 5:2–10.

²²¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 18r: "Exempel. Men leest men inder Vader boec". I have not been able to trace this reference.

²²² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 18r: "Doe seide die heilige man, wat helpt di dattu mi aldus beroerste. Want het is die alre meeste soetheit, dat weetstu doch, alstu yement tot sunden brenkste dattu meerste dijn sunde en de swaerste dijn pijn".

²²³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 18v: "Als die wise man seit. (...)". The reference is to Psalm 125:6–7 in the Douay-Rheims 1899 edition.

²²⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 19r: "Seit Pauwelus: Ose die propheet spreek (...)". The reference is to Romans 9:25; however, I have been unable to trace Paul's reference to Hosea further.

²²⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 19r: "Als Johannes in Apocalipci seit (...)". The reference possibly is to Revelation 22:12.

physical description of the Last Judgement, the same description which is attributed to Gregory in the First Book of Collations as well as the *Legenda aurea*.²²⁶ The self-contained narrative of a foolish brother who does not heed the advice from his wiser brother and instead leads them both into danger is reinforced with several *auctoritates* as well. The story is not attributed to a specific source – instead, it is introduced as “On this topic one reads an example...”²²⁷ – but both John Chrysostom²²⁸ and the apostle Matthew²²⁹ directly confirm the message that if the foolish body refuses to listen to the wise spirit, and the spirit follows the body, then both will be damned. Moreover, Paul,²³⁰ Boethius,²³¹ Ezekiel,²³² and Solomon²³³ further stress how nothing can remain hidden from the Judge.

The book of collations Brussels, KB 19549 contains two more *exempla* where London, BL Add. 10287 ends the collation. The story of the German nobleman made bishop without merits, which is part of the First Book of Collations as well, makes a reappearance, albeit shorter.²³⁴ The final *exemplum* of the collation is attributed to the *Dialogus miraculorum* of Caesarius of Heisterbach, though it is referred to as simply “a book of examples called Caesarius”.²³⁵ The *Dialogus miraculorum* was gladly used as a treasure trove of exemplary tales, easily

²²⁶ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 19r: “Ancelmus: Ter rechter siden sullen staen sine sunden hem te beschuldighen, ter lufter siden ontellike viande. Beneden hem vervaerlike diepheit der hellen, boven hem die toernighe rechter. Buten om hem die barnende werlt, binnen hem die berispende consciencie. Dese onsalighe sunder die dan also begrepen is, werwaerts sel hi vlien? Want te sculen sel sijn onmoghelic, te vertoeven onverdrachlic. Oec en sel dese sentencie niet alleen veroerden die siele, mer oec dat lichaem”. Compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 25r and Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 12.

²²⁷ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 19r: “Daermen of lest een by speel”. I have not been able to find a source for this *exemplum*.

²²⁸ Brussels KB 19549 f. 20r: “Ende hier om als sint Jan Guldemont seit (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference.

²²⁹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 20r: “Als Matheus beschijft (...)”. The reference is probably to Matthew 10:28.

²³⁰ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 20v: “Als Pauwelus seit (...)”. The reference is to Hebrews 4:13.

²³¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 20v: “Oec leert ons Boecius ende seit (...)”. This is the closing statement of Boethius’ *Consolatio Philosophiae*: see Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. W.V. Cooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1902), 168. Both the Brothers in Deventer as well as the Collatiehuis in Gouda owned a copy of the work: see Obbema, *Een Deventer bibliotheekscatalogus II*, 154–55, 188–89, and the inventories of the Collatiehuis: SAMH 0091.16: Lijsten van huisraad en boeken. This would have been the Latin text: a Middle Dutch translation only appeared around the late fifteenth century around Bruges and Ghent. See M. Goris, ‘Boethius’ *De consolatione philosophiae*: twee Middelnederlandse vertalingen en hun bronnen’, in *Verraders en bruggenbouwers. Verkenningen naar de relatie tussen Latinitas en de Middelnederlandse letterkunde*, ed. P. Wackers e.a., *Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen*, XV (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1996), 113–32.

²³² Brussels, KB 19549 f. 21r: “Als spreect die propheet Ezechiel (...)”. The reference is to Ezekiel 7:27.

²³³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 21r: “Want die wise man seit (...)”. The reference is probably Wisdom 4:7.

²³⁴ The *exemplum* is correctly attributed to the *Bonum universale de apibus*; Brussels, KB 19549 f.21r: “In libro apum staet gescreven (...)”. Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 11–12; Vet, *Biënboec*, 283–84.

²³⁵ Brussels, KB 19549, f. 21v: “Hoe scarp onse Heer oerdelt oec van kleyne sunde is ghescreven in een boec der exempelen dat Cesarius hiet”. I have not been able to trace this reference further.

incorporated in new compositions such as sermons – or indeed collations.²³⁶ A Middle Dutch translation had been in circulation since the middle of the fourteenth century.²³⁷ However, it is unclear whether the collation employed an existing translation or whether the author independently translated the Latin text. The *exemplum* in this collation is included to stress how harshly even small misdeeds will be punished: a child, some five or six years old, steals a penny from his parents but soon after suddenly dies. For stealing the penny, God decrees the child will be beaten by devils and return to his body for more corrections and beatings, or he would never receive eternal life. After reviving the child calls for his parents and begs them to hit him – after all, the beatings of the devils were the most painful ones possible. The parents hit the child, who dies and enjoys eternal life. “Seeing how our Lord judged this young child so harshly, what will He do with those old people who know His laws and verdicts?”²³⁸

These collations in the First Book of Collations and the manuscripts Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287 thus present a rather bleak picture of the proceedings after death, with the Last Judgement as a major event to be faced with fear and terror. Nothing can remain hidden and everything will be judged. And since no one is without sin it is impossible to anticipate the Judgement with confidence: as everyone is essentially guilty, the only remaining question is whether they have enough redeeming qualities for the Judge to take pity on them. This is all the more worrying because the Last Judgement will occur essentially unexpectedly, despite any signs heralding Doomsday. Once the trial commences it is too late to make amends or promise change for the better, which necessitates being prepared to face judgement at all times. One should be prepared to die at all times, which means making amends right now.

Still, it is important to see the collations in their context, both when used in the *collatio* and their place in a cycle of collations.²³⁹ While there is a distinct number of collations on the horrors of eternal damnation, these are balanced by collations on the heavenly bliss and (more indirectly) by those containing more practically applicable advice. Over the course of the year the frequent visitor would not be scared straight continuously; they would also be set on the right path with sympathetic words and helpful texts. In a one-on-one conversation the Brothers

²³⁶ Dirc van Herxen made use of *exempla* in the *Dialogus miraculorum* for quite a few collations as well: see the overview in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–33.

²³⁷ Caesarius van Heisterbach, *Boek der mirakelen*, trans. G.J.M. Bartelink, vol. 1 ('s-Hertogenbosch: Voltaire, 2003), 17–18.

²³⁸ Brussels, KB 19549, f. 22r: “Siet, oerdelde onse lieve Heer dit jonge kijnt soe scarpelijc, wat sel hi dan die oude menschen doen die reden ende bescheit weten?”.

²³⁹ On this also see Van Beek, ‘Hellepijn of hemelpoort?’

could also shift emphasis, to make sure visitors were not thrown into a bottomless pit of despair but use their fear to improve themselves and live more devoutly afterwards. While the texts read during the *collatio* might have been frightful and horrifying, the personal admonitions accompanying the reading could put the mind at ease. Fear was not to be a constant, overpowering emotion, but was a tool to help inspire change in Brothers of the Common Life as well as the participants at the *collatio*. The terrors of Doomsday should spurn one to action, not reduce the devout to a whimpering state of inaction: it was to be a reforming force, and the hope for salvation should shine through the terror of damnation.²⁴⁰ The collations on the Last Judgement show how during the *collatio*, the Brothers of the Common Life shared this approach to the Four Last Things with their lay visitors, making use of the same methods of interpreting authoritative texts they employed for their own devotion.

5.3 Refraining from vice and advancing in virtues

An essential part of the spirituality the Brothers of the Common Life cultivated among themselves was the struggle to drive out vice and emulate virtue, the *profectus virtutum*. Modern Devout communities indeed put a heavy emphasis on combatting vices and acquiring virtues.²⁴¹ The importance of the virtues lies in them being a remedy for the damage inflicted upon the soul by sin; practising a virtue compensates for earlier missteps and deters future vices. Cultivating virtuous behaviour is thus largely important for its preventive qualities, and it is imperative to stave off further sinning.²⁴² In presenting models to be imitated, the struggle to drive out vice and emulate virtue would also have been a strong element of the communication of religious knowledge in the context of the *collatio*. This section will further examine how the Brothers acted as a mirror to their lay visitors, with their behaviour – specifically their interaction with texts – as an example to be followed. As will be shown, the *collatio* not only communicated the texts the Brothers read but also how they approached them and most importantly how they made use of them in giving shape to their personal devotion.

²⁴⁰ See Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*.

²⁴¹ For an overview of the *profectus virtutum* in Modern Devout writings, see K. Pansters, *De kardinale deugden in de Lage Landen, 1200-1500*, Middelleeuwse Studies en Bronnen, CVIII (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 165–201. Also see K. Pansters, ‘Profectus Virtutum. The Roots of Devout Moral Praxis’, in *Seeing the Seeker. Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality: A Festschrift for Kees Waaijman on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. H. Blommesteijn e.a., Studies in Spirituality 19 (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 231–49; K. Pansters, ‘Didactiek en dynamiek: “voortgaan in deugden” in de geschriften van de Moderne Devoten’, *Trajecta* 16 (2007): 311–34.

²⁴² Gerrits, *Inter Timorem et Spem*, 273.

Apart from reading collations on vices and virtues, the Brothers presiding over the *collatio* or engaged in the personal conversations could present the examples of illustrious Brothers or Sisters who had already passed away but were still remembered. Lives of devout Brothers and Sisters were collected in a brotherbook or sisterbook, akin to the collections of saintly *vitae* and with a similar purpose. Their lives were fitted into a narrative mould which emphasised their virtues, offering an example of virtuous behaviour. The brotherbooks and sisterbooks were edifying texts to record and remember individual lives in a certain light – as a shining beacon of virtue or a cautionary figure unable to overcome vice – in order to form a community of shared devotion.²⁴³ The Brothers in Emmerich read the *dicta et facta* of Geert Grote, Florens Radewijns, and other early Brothers of the Common Life, so that new members could learn of them and they would not be forgotten.²⁴⁴ Their exemplary behaviour was communicated to a lay audience as well: the same community made use of the *Vitae fratrum* from their motherhouse in Deventer during their *collationes*.²⁴⁵ In this manner, the participating laypeople were encouraged to imitate and emulate the lives of the Brothers and Sisters – that is, lives that were dominated by the *profectus virtutum*. Lay visitors at the *collatio* were thus encouraged to follow the examples set by the Brothers of the Common Life, who in turn modelled their lives (as well as the documentation thereof in these so-called *viten*) after the Desert Fathers, constantly striving to improve their virtues and refrain from vice.²⁴⁶ Lay participants of the *collatio* were encouraged to advance in virtues along the same lines as the Brothers who presided over the meetings: considering the same examples and contemplating the same text in the same manner. As aids to the reading during the *collatio*, the books of collations reflect the importance of banning sin and vice and subsequently (or concurrently) advancing in virtues for personal spiritual growth.

For the First Book of Collations, the *profectus virtutum* is indeed fundamental to the work as it breaks down into two parts: one on vices and the other on virtues. That the first part of the book of collations is concerned with the vices is not mentioned explicitly in the manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, but the division is clearly marked at the beginning of the collation *Van penitencien*

²⁴³ On Modern Devout sisterbooks, see most importantly Bollmann, *Frauenleben und Frauenliteratur*. Also see J. Van Engen, 'Memory and Manuscript in Personal Practice and Written Lives. The Case of the Modern-Day Devout', *The Medieval Low Countries* 2 (2015): 215–50; B. Diemel, 'Herinneren en herdenken. Identiteitsvorming bij de Moderne Devotie in de Zuidelijke Nederlanden', *Trajecta* 17 (2008): 353–76; Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries*, 135–70.

²⁴⁴ See Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam*, 101.

²⁴⁵ Van Engen, 'The Virtues, the Brothers, and the Schools', 191–92.

²⁴⁶ See Van Dijk, 'Disciples of the Deep Desert'.

(‘On penitence’), which carries the heading “Here starts the other part of the book of collations which is on virtues”.²⁴⁷ The preceding collation, the last text in the part on vices, ends with white space left on the page as well, indicating that that part of the First Book of Collations is completed. An anonymous chronicle of the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle, in both a Latin and a vernacular copy, also refers to the vernacular First Book of Collations as a ‘translation and adaptation of much material on vices and virtues’.²⁴⁸ Still, the two parts likely could have functioned independently from each other, as manuscript Leiden, UB BPL 2231 only contains the part on vices.²⁴⁹ In this case, the collection of collations is labelled ‘the book of vices’ in the manuscript itself.²⁵⁰

The first part of the First Book of Collations naturally contains the collations on the seven capital sins – in the order gluttony, lust, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride – as well as texts on avoiding showy clothes, preventing idleness, or not keeping foolish council. It also holds collations that are less obviously concerned with vices, such as on the Four Last Things, the importance of keeping good company, or the benefits of an early conversion.²⁵¹ The collations in the part on virtues are all obviously linked to virtuous behaviour, dealing with such subjects as giving alms, disregarding the world, or keeping chaste. Tellingly, this part also contains the collations on admonishing others, reading vernacular religious literature, and marriage. The last two texts in the First Book of Collations are concerned with the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*, explaining the two prayers and the importance of knowing them.²⁵²

The books of collations Brussels, KB 19549 and London, BL Add. 10287 do not have a division between collations on vices and those on virtues; nor are the collations explicitly concerned with the concept of a particular sin or virtue such as wrath or charity. Rather, the collations explain “how bad it is to live in hostility and discord” or “how good it is to give alms”, or they are concerned with speaking “against daily and minor sins, and how much it pleases God to

²⁴⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 106r: “Hier beghint dat anderde stücke des collacienboekes ende is vanden doecheden”.

²⁴⁸ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 236: (...) [Dirck van Herxen] *multas materias de viciis et virtutibus scripsit et transtulit, item Passiones Sanctorum et multa utilia*; “(...) [Dirck van Herxen] heeft veel materien van den sunden ende doecheden ghescreven ende overgheset”. Also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 78–79.

²⁴⁹ For a comparison of the two manuscripts of the First Book of Collations, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 78–88. Also see 99–102 for a breakdown of the numerous divisions within Dirck van Herxen’s books of collations (two books, each consisting of two parts, comprising a large number of collations).

²⁵⁰ Leiden, UB BPL 2231 f. 1v: “Dat boeck vande sunden”; also see De Vreese, ‘Die materie van den sonden’.

²⁵¹ For a detailed overview of the collations in the First Book of Collations, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–33.

²⁵² Lydeke van Beek did not consider these texts collations, but merely texts added to the manuscript. See Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 80, 200–202. Also see below, paragraph 5.4.

avoid them and diligently and truly do penance”.²⁵³ The theme of ‘exhorting to refrain from vice, encouraging to exhibit virtues’ is thus presented in collations with tangible advice. An example of this can be found in the book of collations Brussels, KB 19549, which presents collations against some very specific vices which would have been familiar to a lay audience: dancing, jousting, playing dice, and other idle pastimes. The exhibited message – to refrain from them, or to only engage in them with moderation – was easily applicable; the knowledge communicated through the collations and the *collatio* was supposed to be incorporated and made use of afterwards. The same process is, for instance, visible in the collations on marriage, as examined above (paragraph 4.2): the collations discourage sexual intercourse but do not prohibit it, in order to present applicable advice.

The collations “On how bad is dancing” and “How bad it is to joust, to play dice, and engage in other idleness”²⁵⁴ do not extensively delve into the problematic nature of dancing or gambling; they are a reminder that these things are bad and idle pastimes need to be navigated with care. The first collation asserts that dancing gives rise to many sins; when dancing takes place on a feast day it even violates God’s commandment on honouring the Sabbath. This point of the collation is supported by an appeal to an external authority, in this case Augustine: “It were better – that is, it were less bad – if the men would sow their field and the wives would spin wool than to jump and dance indecently.”²⁵⁵ Furthermore, dancing leads to pride (because everyone dresses up to impress others), and many indecent things happen during the dance – “for there is hand to hand, side to side, face to face, eye to eye”, not to mention the hate and envy, the murder, fights, and quarrels.²⁵⁶ Thus, dancing in general is best avoided, and the collation provides the cautionary tale of a woman who was wont to dance on all feast days but was killed when an errant ball from a game of kolf hit her in the head. This story is not attributed to a specific source; possibly it is taken from the vernacular *Bonum universale de apibus* or

²⁵³ Brussels, KB 19549, f. 50v–51v: “Hoe quaet dattet is in pertien en in twidracht te leven” and f. 69r–70v: “Hoe goet dattet is dat men aelmissen gheeft”; London, BL Add. 10287 f. 41r–44v “Teghen daghelix ende cleyne sunden, ende hoe seer het god behaghet datmense scuwet ende sorchvoudelic ende ghewaerlic penitencie doe”.

²⁵⁴ Brussels KB 19549 f. 110v: “Hoe quaet dansen is” and f. 111r: “Hoe quaet dattet is te steken, te dobbelen ende ander ydelheit te doen.”

²⁵⁵ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 110v: “Ende hier of seit sinte Augustijn (...)”. The reference is to Augustine’s sermon on Psalm 86:15; compare Augustine, *The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*, ed. J.E. Rotelle, trans. E. Hill, vol. I, Sermons on the Old Testament, I (1-19) (New York: New City Press, 1990), 261. Augustine seems to have been critical of dancing in general: see L. Hellsten, ‘Dance in the Early Church. Sources and Restrictions’, *Approaching Religion* 6 (2016): 60–62.

²⁵⁶ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 110v: “Ten derden mael gheschieden daer menighe oersaken der oncuusheit. Want daer is hant an hant, side bi side, aensicht teghen aensicht, oghe teghen oghe, ende daer also veel oersaken der oncuusheit sijn. Hoe selmen daer onghequest [sic] bliven van sunden! Daer gheschiet oec dicwijl haet ende nijt ende dootslach, vechtinge ende kivynghe”.

Biënboec – a common source of examples for this book of collations.²⁵⁷ The woman's body is laid out in her home, where her friends keep a vigil. At night, a horrible black beast appears: a demon shaped like a bull. It pulls the body from the bier, tears it to pieces, and scatters the intestines throughout the house. Everyone flees from the house; when they return in the morning there is an intense stench and they have to collect the entrails to bury them. Through its narrative, the example constructs a direct link between the woman's dancing and her gruesome death. Yet this is not explicitly stated, leaving the audience to connect the dots and see one as the consequence of the other.

The topics of jousting, playing dice, and hunting are discussed in the next collation, which uses a different format. Unlike most collations, it does not contain any actual discussion of these issues but consists of five short *exempla* which are not attributed to any source, though they can be traced back to the *Biënboec*.²⁵⁸ These *exempla* seem less immediately applicable to an urban lay audience; possibly, they might have instead been read as warnings against idle behaviour in general, with jousting and hunting as particularly striking examples that would capture the participants' attention. In that case, these collations were not meant to completely educate an urban audience on the dangers of specific vices but merely to remind them of it, so that participants in the *collatio* could take action of their own and refrain from further vice. The short exemplary narratives are seemingly considered enough of a warning against vain and idle worldly pursuits in general, and the *exempla* are to illustrate the consequences of persistent engagement in such activities.

To discourage idle entertainment, the collation tells of a powerful German knight who highly enjoyed jousts and tournaments.²⁵⁹ After his miserable death his devout wife received a vision of punishments in hell, each a perversion of idle things he enjoyed during his life.²⁶⁰ After seeing her late husband like this the wife spends the remainder of her life under great pressure, tormented by the vision. The collation broadens to include every aspect of jousting: the full

²⁵⁷ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 110v–111r: “Men leest een vervaerlic exempel van enen wive (...)”. Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 198–99; Vet, *Biënboec*, 143–44. According to the *Biënboec*, the story takes place in a village in Brabant. The *exemplum* is the same, though the translation is different than the manuscripts used by Stutvoet-Joanknecht and Vet.

²⁵⁸ One *exemplum* is preceded by the words “one reads” but no source is mentioned: Brussels, KB 19549 f. 112v. The other *exempla* do not have any introduction. Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 194–99.

²⁵⁹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 111v–112r. Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, 195–96; Vet, *Biënboec*, 290–91. According to the *Biënboec* the story is originally told by Albertus Magnus, who had heard it firsthand from the widow and told it to Thomas of Cantimpré.

²⁶⁰ This *exemplum* also appears in the fifth collation of the Book of Wedlock, where it is used as a warning against adultery.

spectacle is a waste of time, and both participation in and attendance of such an event should be avoided. Such is also the message of the story taking place in the city of Neuss, near Cologne.²⁶¹ A preacher implored the people not to engage in this folly, but the local count would not have it and began the tournament. He and 367 other attendees died during the event. At the same time an innumerable horde of devils was seen flying like rooks, and in one village a priest also saw many delighted devils. Without any clear indication the collation then switches topic, as the next *exemplum* deals with gambling.²⁶² The *exemplum* itself is marked – the text starts with a new initial and is accompanied by the word “Exempel” in red – but the change of subject is unheralded. The story simply tells of a man who lost a lot of gold with his gambling and after cursing both God and His mother for it, he instantly dies. His gambling fellow also goes mad and dies bitterly. The moral of the short story is spelled out: one should beware of gambling or playing in anger, as it will go badly and lead to all sorts of trouble. The *exemplum* even seems to describe gambling addiction: “they shake and shiver as if they have a fever when they want to play, and they can eat nor sleep. So the devil advances and they kill their own body.”²⁶³ This seems an original addition to the *exemplum*: the remark does not appear in the *Biënboec*. The collation then turns to two short *exempla* about hunting.²⁶⁴ A nobleman from somewhere along the Rhine preferred to game and hunt, and he neglected to visit Mass or other religious services; to make him understand the gravity of the situation the Lord gave him and his wife a child with a head like a greyhound, after which the nobleman gave up his diversions and reformed.²⁶⁵ Another man, a great hunting enthusiast, was riding in the forest with his family when he saw an animal he wished to hunt: he never returned from his pursuit, and no one knew where he had went.²⁶⁶ None of these *exempla* is interpreted from a authoritative text, so that the overall message simply seems to be that idle pastime are bad, and bad things will come to those taking

²⁶¹ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 112r: “Op een tijt was een steecspul beroepen inder stat van Nyus bi Colen.” Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 194–95; Vet, *Biënboec*, 149–50. According to the *Biënboec*, this event took place around 1243. A disastrous tournament did supposedly take place in Neuss around this time, though perhaps in May 1241, during which a hundred participants – noblemen as well as knights – died because of the heat and dust. See W. Wattenbach, ed., *Die Kölner Königschronik*, trans. K. Platner, 2nd ed., *Geschichtschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit*: 2. Gesamtausgabe 69 (Leipzig: Dyk, 1896), 342.

²⁶² Brussels, KB 19549, f. 112r–112v. Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 197; Vet, *Biënboec*, 117. According to the *Biënboec*, the man was a Jew who was playing dice the night before Good Friday, and the fellow with whom he played took his own life.

²⁶³ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 112v: “Si rien ende beven of si die coerts hadden als si spelen willen, si en connen slapen noch eten, alsoe rutse die duvel ende vermoerden hoer eighen lijf.”

²⁶⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 112v–113r.

²⁶⁵ Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 199; Vet, *Biënboec*, 147–48.

²⁶⁶ Compare Stutvoet-Joanknecht, *Der byen boeck*, 199–200; Vet, *Biënboec*, 148.

pleasure from them. Instead, devout people should strive to refrain from such vices and practise their virtues.

In presenting the participants in the *collatio* with a model to imitate, the Brothers also communicated the texts they utilised themselves for their own efforts in advancing in virtue. This is clearly visible in the collations, as they are often constructed from authoritative texts the Brothers held in high regard. For instance, for his collations on specific virtues and vices Dirc van Herxen made use of the *Profectus religiosorum* of David of Augsburg, which provided him with a framework on which to map out his own narrative using a selection of other *auctoritates*.²⁶⁷ David of Augsburg's *Profectus religiosorum* can be considered one of the core texts of the Modern Devotion to aid their advancement in virtues as it was read and appreciated throughout the movement, both in Latin and in vernacular translation. Gerard Zerbolt started re-reading the text to reignite his enthusiasm for religious life, and Amilius van Buren – the second rector of the Heer Florenshuis – supposedly read it two to three times per year.²⁶⁸ It enjoyed great popularity, with the Latin text still in existence in some 400 manuscripts; of the Middle Dutch translation 27 manuscripts are known, the oldest dating to 1401, as well as numerous excerpts.²⁶⁹ One of the *Profectus*' core messages, that constant personal improvement allowed for an ascension towards perfection, stood firmly at the centre of Modern Devout spirituality. The *Profectus* has had a profound influence on the spirituality of the Modern Devotion, as it was read both directly as well as indirectly, that is, through the lens of other texts, such as the spiritual 'battle plan' against vices in Zerbolt's *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* or indeed collations.²⁷⁰ The *Profectus* is even explicitly mentioned in the customs of the Gregoriushuis – which were drawn up by Dirc van Herxen as well – as one of the main texts to guide the advance in spiritual life.²⁷¹ Even so, the collations are original compositions of Dirc van Herxen, using the *Profectus* as a starting point yet drawn up from multiple sources.

²⁶⁷ See the identification of sources in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–33.

²⁶⁸ Quoted from K. Stoker and T. Verbeij, "Uut Profectus". Over de verspreiding van Middelnederlandse kloosterliteratuur aan de hand van de "Profectus religiosorum" van David van Augsburg, in *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*, ed. Th. Mertens e.a., Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen, VIII (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1993), 326–27.

²⁶⁹ Pansters, "Voortgang in deugden" bij de Moderne Devoten, 312; Pansters, *De kardinale deugden in de Lage Landen*, 166–67.

²⁷⁰ A schematic of this battle plan is presented in Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *Geestelijke opklimmingen*, 129–30. Also see Pansters, *De kardinale deugden in de Lage Landen*, 174–80.

²⁷¹ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 241: *Ista est verior et tucior via et modus proficiendi in vita spirituali, prout sancti patres determinaverunt, et habetur inde notabiliter in Collationibus patrum in prima collatione abbatis Moysi et in Profectibus religiosorum.*

A complete analysis of the *Profectus religiosorum* in relation to the First Book of Collations goes beyond the scope of this thesis, but the collations on the vice of gluttony and the virtue of obedience may suffice to illustrate how it provided a framework that Dirc van Herxen could expand on with his own selection of additional material. For instance, in its treatment of gluttony, the *Profectus religiosorum* lists the four aspects of that vice in short order: eating more often than necessary, hastily devouring food, eating more than necessary, and seeking out the most enticing food.²⁷² In comparison, the collation takes up a lot more space. The premise of the collation is that the wish to eat is natural, as food sustains the body. Gluttony, however, presents a danger for the body and the soul – food needs to be enjoyed in moderation. Van Herxen adapts and elaborates on the aspects of gluttony listed in the *Profectus*, introducing a new aspect of gluttony (a desire to eat) and considering the third and fourth point as a single element of gluttony (excessive eating) which is further discussed in three subdivisions. Eating more food than necessary and seeking out the tastiest food are both examples of excess. Eating at all times, rather than at set moments of the day, is the third example.²⁷³ It is quite harmful to always be prepared to eat and serve the stomach at all times, “as if that is all-important, and not practising the divine truth or works of virtue.”²⁷⁴

The entire collation on gluttony in the First Book of Collations is attributed to the *Profectus*, yet Dirc van Herxen mainly used it as a point of departure, composing the collation with references to other *auctoritates* or swapping in quotations which he deemed more applicable.²⁷⁵ For instance, in David van Augsburg’s *Profectus* the chapter on gluttony only once references Cassianus; the collation instead cites him three times (once referring specifically to his *Institutiones*), with none of these quotations corresponding to the one in the original text.²⁷⁶ The

²⁷² The Latin *Profectus religiosorum* has not been published more recently than 1899: David von Augsburg, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione secundum triplicem statum incipientium, proficientium et perfectorum libri tres*, ed. PP. Collegii S. Bonaventurae (Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Typ. eiusdem Collegii, 1899). For the chapter on gluttony, see pp. 140–142. A Middle Dutch edition has never been published, though a transcription of Utrecht, UB 5 F 18 (Hs. 1020) (containing the first book, known as the *Spiegel der monniken*) has been made available online in open access: see <https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/289959> [consulted 08-05-2019].

²⁷³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 84r: “Die derde manier der gulsicheit is onmaetlic spise te ontfangen, welken in drien gedeilt wort: als onmate der tijt, onmate der veelheit ende onmate der costelheit of leckerheit der spise”.

²⁷⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 84r: “Als of een daer allene hier om waer, ende niet meer om oefeninge der godliker waerheit, ende werke der doechede”.

²⁷⁵ The rubricated heading reads “[taken] from the *Profectus*”: Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 83v: “Uut *Profectus*”. Curiously, the collation lacks a rubricated heading, though it is listed as “Van quade der gulsicheit” in the table of contents.

²⁷⁶ Compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 83v, 85r (“Van desen seit Cassianus”; “Als die selve Cassianus oec wel bewijst”; “Daer Cassianus van scrijft in *Institutis*”), the Middle Dutch in Utrecht, UB Hs 5 e 22 f. 47r (“Na leerre der heiligher vaders”), and the Latin in David von Augsburg, *De exterioris et interioris hominis*, 141 (*Secundum*

collations on other vices follow a similar model: the *Profectus religiosorum* provides an introduction to the vice under consideration, to which other texts to discuss it are added. The collations thus reflect the Brothers' methods to advance in virtue: taking relevant passages from authoritative texts to combat a particular vice. Using the collation during the *collatio* in turn communicated this process to the lay participants.

For the collations on virtues, Dirc van Herxen made use of the *Profectus* as well, though his choice of source material is more varied – not every collation to encourage virtuous behaviour builds directly on the work of David of Augsburg. The first collation on obedience, for instance, follows a familiar model: to the excerpt of the *Profectus* are added several *exempla* from the *Vitaspatrum*.²⁷⁷ Taken from the *Profectus* are first three reasons why obedience – foremost obedience to God, or to the creatures (such as angels or people) serving in his stead – is necessary.²⁷⁸ Obedience is owed because God ordained it so, because those who are unknowledgeable need a guide to learn of God, and because mankind has sinned against God and thus needs to once more earn His grace. There are three types of obedience: out of need (being forced to serve against one's will), greed (serving for pay or comfort), or love (the ideal type of obedience).²⁷⁹ After the collation briefly discusses the range between common obedience (creatures obey their nature) and exceptional obedience (such as obeying a monastic Rule or performing every good work that is ordered) there follows an explanation of the three degrees of obedience. These three degrees of obedience correspond to the three elements of obedience out of love: obeying for fear of torment is the most lukewarm form of obedience, and it is better to obey in the hope of reward; but only by obeying freely and willingly out of love of God does one find the same obedience as Christ exhibited. To this explanation of the virtue of obedience are added three *exempla* attributed to the *Vitaspatrum* to illustrate the value of obeying one's betters.²⁸⁰ The three short narratives tell of others who found obedience to be the highest virtue: a holy father saw in a vision of Heaven how the obedient people were honoured above all others; and of four brothers who all exhibited a different virtue, the one

traditionem seniorum). The Latin edition has identified these 'holy fathers' or 'seniors' as chapters 13 and 14 of book V of Cassianus' *Institutiones*.

²⁷⁷ The collation runs from f. 143r to f. 145r.

²⁷⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 143r: "Vander ghehoersamheit, uut *Profectus* (...). Tot welker ghehoersamheit drierhande redene sijn".

²⁷⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 143r: "Hier na merke dat drierhande is die ghehoersamheit: Alse der noet, der ghiericheit ende der mynnen". Curiously, despite the start of a new division, this sentence is not clearly marked with a paragraph mark as the other divisions are.

²⁸⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 144v: "Een exempel. Inden vierden *Boec vander heiliger vader* leven staet ghescreven (...); "Een ander. Inden selven boeke staet (...); "Inden selven boeke".

devoting his life to obedience was judged the most virtuous. The later abbot John the Dwarf obediently watered a dry piece of wood for three years before it turned green and bore fruit: the literal ‘fruit of obedience’.

The other collation on obedience, however, is structured differently, showing once again that the collations are not dependent on any one source but composed of multiple texts from which the relevant passages are selected. Opening with an excerpt from Gregory’s *Moralia*²⁸¹ but also making use of other authoritative texts, the collation shows obedience to be a divine command and an imitation of Christ, who did not follow His own will but obeyed His Father. From a variety of sources, including both biblical passages as well as such *auctoritates* as Gregory, Augustine, or Hugh of St Victor, “twelve benefits and rewards of the heavenly obedience” are presented.²⁸² In order, these are reconciliation with God; acquiring true understanding; victory over one’s enemies; becoming a friend of God; having one’s prayers answered²⁸³; having the obedience of one’s lesser; improved rewards; a joyous heart; peace; spiritual fertility; God’s blessing; and the reward of eternal life.

To further illustrate the importance of obedience, the collation presents an *exemplum* of St Bernard soothing a deadly ill, yet obedient convert, which is attributed to a book identified as *De illustribus viris*, in this case Konrad of Eberbach’s *Exordium magnum ordinis Cisterciensis*.²⁸⁴ Whereas most collations have the *exempla* at the end, this *exemplum* is contained in the middle of the collation as it resumes with a homily of St Bernard on the seven degrees of obedience.²⁸⁵ To truly exhibit the virtue of obedience, one has to be glad to obey; obey simply or easily; obey happily; obey rapidly; obey in a manly way, that is powerfully; obey humbly; and obey ceaselessly. For the last part of the collation, two more *exempla* are added: one attributed to the *Vitaspatrum*, the other to Johannes Climacus’ *Scala paradisi*. They present examples of the utmost obedience: from the *Vitaspatrum* is a tale of a scribe in a monastery, Marcus, who did not even take the time to finish the letter O he was writing when his abbot called him; nor did he pause to wash his dirty face when the abbot bade him go outside

²⁸¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 145r: “Vander ghehoersamheit scrift sunte Gregorius in Morialibus”. The reference is to Gregory’s *Moralia in Job* book 35.28.

²⁸² Utrecht, UB 3 L6, f. 145v: “Hier toe so merke noch twalef nutticheiden ende loene der heiliger ghehoersamheit”.

²⁸³ For this point, Dirc van Herxen does make use of the *Profectus*, and indeed quotes a passage he also included in the first collation: compare Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 143v–144r and f. 146r.

²⁸⁴ Utrecht. UB 3 L 6 f. 147r: “Van ghehoersamheit lesen wi een exempel in de boeke *De illustribus viris*”; the identification of this source comes from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 232.

²⁸⁵ Utrecht. UB 3 L 6 f. 147v: “Sunte Bernaert in enen sermoen set seven graden der gehoersamheit daer men uut merken mach hoedanich die gehoersamheit wesen sal”; the identification of the *Sermones de diversis* as the source comes from Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 232.

and greet his mother. The other *exemplum* regales how obedience defeats death: after a lifetime of humbly accepting needless punishments, an obedient servant answers the question “Are you dead?” from beyond the grave.²⁸⁶

It is clear from the collations in the First Book of Collations, as well as from the mention of the *Profectus religiosorum* in the *consuetudines* of the Gregoriushuis, that Dirc van Herxen considered the work of David of Augsburg an important aid for personal advancement in virtues. However, he was not the only one who considered the *collatio* an opportunity to communicate the *Profectus* to a lay audience: in the book of collations London, BL Add. Ms. 10287 the *Profectus* is incorporated in several collations as well, for instance in the collation “On three temptations – of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil – and how one can withstand temptations in general”.²⁸⁷ In this collation, the *Profectus* provides advice on how to withstand temptation in four ways: by not thinking about temptations, by avoiding them, by humbly enduring God’s punishment, and by calling on God’s aid.²⁸⁸

However, the collation does not open with the *Profectus* but instead starts by discussing how three enemies lay siege to the soul: the body, the world, and the devil. This discussion is attributed to pseudo-Bernard’s *Meditationes piissimae*.²⁸⁹ The presence of the *Meditationes piissimae* in the collation “On three temptations” is not a singular occurrence: the work is also used in other collations, such as that on the Last Judgement and on the glory of heavenly bliss, both in the manuscript London, BL Add. 10287 and Brussels, KB 19549.²⁹⁰ Moreover, Dirc

²⁸⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 149v: “[Hi] seide hem toe: brueder Innocanci, bistu doot? Ende hi als wel vroet gehoersam oec nae der doot ghehoersamheit tonende antwoerde desen goeden vader uutten grave, seggende: Vader hoe waert mogelic enen ghehoersamen menschen te sterven”.

²⁸⁷ London, BL Add. Ms. 10287 f. 79r: “Van drien becoringhen: des vleysches, des werelt ende des duvels, ende hoemen int ghemeen becoringhe sal wederstaen”. The collation runs from f. 79r to f. 81v. The *Profectus religiosorum* is also used as a source for the collations *Van onrechte goede* (‘On illegitimate goods’, on f. 46r–49r), *Waer toe den mensche ghegheven is dat bewegen die droefheit ende den bliscap, der hope, des anxtes ende der scaemte* (‘Why man has been made to feel sadness, joy, hope, fear, and shame’, on f. 54v–56v), and *Vanden goede wille ende hoemen die bekennen mach* (‘On goodwill and how one can express it’), on f. 70r–71v).

²⁸⁸ The collation attributes this advice to the to the second book of the *Profectus*, though it is actually from the third book going by the Latin edition: Compare London, BL Add. Ms. 10287 f. 79v–81r and David von Augsburg, *De exterioris et interioris hominis*, 189–91. Presumably, the author of the book of collations used a copy of the *Profectus* in which the second and third book were switched, commonly found in manuscripts containing the so-called First Dutch Translation: see Pansters, *De kardinale deugden in de Lage Landen*, 166–67; Stoker and Verbeij, “‘Uut Profectus’”, 328. Still, the translation used in the collation is clearly the Second Dutch Translation as it is near identical to that found in for instance Utrecht, UB 5 E 22 (Hs 1019), f.79v–81r or UB 5 F 18 (Hs 1020), f. 80v–81v, with only some variation in spelling. Both of these have been identified as the Second Dutch Translation: Stoker and Verbeij, “‘Uut Profectus’”, 339.

²⁸⁹ London, BL Add. Ms. 10287 f. 79r: “Sunte Bernart seit inden boeke van sinen *Ghedachten* van drien vianden aldus (...)”.

²⁹⁰ London, BL Add. 10287 f.16v: “Vanden vervaerliken ende strenghen daghe des lesten oerdels ons heren Jhesu Christi, uut sinte Bernarts *Ghedachten*” and f. 30v: “Vander glorien der hemelscher salicheit uut sinte Bernarts

van Herxen relied on the work in his collations on selfknowledge and one of his six collations on Death.²⁹¹ It is not surprising that the *Meditationes piissimae* make an appearance in the books of collations, as the Modern Devotion used the text for their own *profectus virtutum*: for instance Rudolf Dier of Muiden (1384–1459), father-confessor to the Meester Geertshuis in Deventer and chronicler of the Brothers in the Heer Florenshuis, encouraged his Brothers to read it in order to aid their own advancement in virtues – as well as the complete *Profectus religiosorum*, the *Horologium sapientiae*, and “other ardent books”.²⁹² Yet it also shows once more that participants in the *collatio* were exposed to the library the Brothers kept for themselves. Going by the manuscript evidence, the *Meditationes piissimae* (available in a Middle Dutch translation by the end of the fourteenth century) mainly circulated in a (female) monastic environment, where it was also read aloud during meals: of the 15 manuscripts, 12 are connected to a monastery with the remaining 3 unlikely to have been owned by laypeople.²⁹³ Though the remaining manuscripts of the *Meditationes piissimae* suggest a primary circulation in a monastic or at least an institutional environment, its incorporation in the collations and subsequent use in the *collatio* ensured a reception beyond the walls: a reception which included a lay audience.

To communicate the *profectus virtutum* in the *collatio* the Brothers could turn not only to their collations but to the other texts they used as well, as is visible in the manuscript Brussels, KB 19549. Apart from a book of collations, the manuscript also contains an adaptation of the Middle Dutch *Des Coninx Summe* from f. 115v onwards, in which (among other subjects) the seven cardinal sins – pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, lust and gluttony – are discussed.²⁹⁴ As there is no clear division between it and the other collations, such as a change of hand or a separate introduction to the text, this adaptation is still fully part of the book of collations. Thus, parts of *Des Coninx Summe* could easily be read as a collation, so that its thoughts on vices and

Ghedachten”; Brussels, KB 19549 f. 12v: “Vanden vervaerlike ende strenghen daghe des lesten oerdels ons heren Jhesu Christi, uut sinte Bernaerts *Ghedachten*” and f. 30r: “Vander glorien der hemelscher salicheit, uut sinte Bernaerts *Ghedachten*”.

²⁹¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 4r: “Van bekenninge ons selves, uut sunte Bernaerdus *ghedachten*” and f. 16v: “Vander scheidinge lives ende zielen scrijft sancte Bernaerdus inden boeke sijnre *Gedachten*”. Also see the overview in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–23.

²⁹² Brinkerink, ‘Biographicën 2’, 233. :”Hij [Rudolf Dier of Muiden] plach oec te seggen: ‘O lieve bruders, wat meendy onsen huyse anstaende te wesen, wanneer wi daertoe comen, wanneer wi *Profectus*, *Horologium*, *Sunte Bernarts Ghedachten*, dat *Spiegel der monike* ende desergelike vuerige boecke achterlaten ende bestaen te leesen Jordanus *Sermone* ende ander subtile boeke?”

²⁹³ Lingier, ‘Reading to the Community’, 141; Reynaert, ‘<<Contemptus>> in het Middelnederlands’, 195–98.

²⁹⁴ Brussels, KB 19549 f. 115v–132v. Also see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 181; Tinbergen, *Des Coninx Summe*, 203.

virtues could be communicated during the *collatio* – since the *collatio* communicated the texts the Brothers of the Common Life read for themselves and included the participating audience in their textual community, any suitable text could potentially function as a collation. Moreover, this part of the book of collations also deals with the Ten Commandments, which offers its own opportunities to decry sin and exhort virtue. Knowledge of the Decalogue was essential to the devout Christian, and by following the will of God vice and sin could be kept at bay. It therefore also featured prominently in moralising and didactic texts from the late medieval Low Countries, as Petty Bange notes that “together with the seven cardinal sins, the sins against the Decalogue span the entirety of all obstacles preventing a well functioning Christian society, of people who are mindful of each other and take care of their own salvation”.²⁹⁵ In combination with knowledge of the seven cardinal sins, following the Ten Commandments would be a certain path to virtue.²⁹⁶ With the *collationes*, the Brothers invited students and devout laypeople to walk this path alongside them.

5.4 *Collatio* as religious education

The *consuetudines* of Zwolle maintain that for the *collatio*, “students and other good people come to our house for spiritual instructions”.²⁹⁷ The practice was explicitly framed as an educational event, which as the preceding paragraphs have shown took place on two levels: the *collatio* provided access to the words of authoritative figures such as Augustine or Chrysostom, and at the same time established the manner in which their words and teachings were to be considered. Participants in the *collatio* were included in the textual community of the Brothers of the Common Life, as they were introduced to the same texts read for private devotion in Modern Devout communities, and the Brothers invited the participants to emulate their own spirituality, using the same texts in the same manner to shape their personal devotion. The Brothers were teaching by example, providing a model as well as the tools needed to follow it.

²⁹⁵ Bange, *Moraliteyt saelt wesen*, 119: “Naast en met de zeven hoofdzonden vormen zo de zonden tegen de decaloog het geheel van kwade handelingen die een goed functionerende christelijke samenleving, van mensen die rekening houden met elkaar en bedacht zijn op hun eigen zieleheil, in de weg staan.” See pp. 111–19 for the position of the Decalogue in the moralising-didactic discourse.

²⁹⁶ The Decalogue does not feature explicitly in the First Book of Collations or the Book of Wedlock – that is, there is no collation devoted exclusively to the Ten Commandments in these books of collations. Neither does the manuscript London, BL Add. 10287; however, the manuscript does contain a short list of the Ten Commandments, as well as the seven works of charity. Presumably, when the manuscript was used during the *collatio* the presiding Brother could add some explanation on these topics of his own, or quickly go over them as a reminder. On this section of the manuscript London, BL Add. 10287 also see below, paragraph 5.4.

²⁹⁷ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: (...) *ad domum nostram venire scolares et alii boni viri, causa spiritualis instructionis* (...).

This paragraph will further emphasise the educational dimension of the *collatio*, to be illustrated by two texts in Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations on the most important Christian prayers: the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*.

In general, the books of collations do not explicitly reflect on the *collatio* or even note how they are composed of the same source material the Brothers of the Common Life scoured for their own devotion, presenting the participants with a model to imitate. The author of the Book of Wedlock however does remark on his goal in writing his collations, pointing to the educational or instructional nature of the *collatio*. He writes his collations following the encouragement of Jerome, "so that the unlearned people who do not completely understand the Bible may learn something of it, and with them I, too".²⁹⁸ He also pleads for laypeople to have the Bible in the vernacular so they better understand it, and in particular so they can "ask wise and understanding people how to understand it, or wise people may ask them whether they properly understood what they have read".²⁹⁹ The intention to educate a lay audience during the *collatio* also comes to the fore in the third collation of the Book of Wedlock, as the author states how he took the theme for his collation from a school book. The school book in question, Alexander de Villa Dei's *Doctrinale* (a Latin grammar completed circa 1199), likely would have been familiar to the visitors to the *collatio* – by reputation if nothing else.³⁰⁰

Despite taking his inspiration to write on religious texts in the vernacular from "a book for children", the author of the Book of Wedlock proclaims he wishes to add "manly [i.e. mature] texts and words" to the main argument.³⁰¹ The author thus felt the need to justify his source of inspiration; presumably his intended audience might have been wondering why a collation

²⁹⁸ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 3r: "So wil ic na sunte Jheronimus worden een luttel collacien scriven, (...) op dat die leken ende die ongeleerde lude die die scriften mit allen niet en verstaen, iets wat hier in geleert mochten wesen ende gestichtet, ende ic mit hem."

²⁹⁹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 29r: "Ende het is te hopen dat die predikers wouden dat die leken die scrifft wael verstonden, ende den wil Goets wisten ende daer nae leefden. Ende want die text hier aff een fundament is, so ist nutte dat sij dien in Duutschen off in leker tael hebben, want sij dan voel te ledeliker comen aent geestlike verstant dat daer in gelegen is. Want si dan occasie hebben te vragen wisen verstandelen luden om dat verstant, off dat hem wijse lude vrageden off sijt verstonden dat sij lesen". This passage also points to the interactive nature of the *collatio* in which the visitors were actively participating, and where knowledge was circulated rather than dispersed.

³⁰⁰ On the *Doctrinale*, see T. Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England. Volume I: Texts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), 84–94. A printed edition of the *Doctrinale* was undertaken by Johannes Synthen and Alexander Hegius around 1477, in close relations with the Brothers in Deventer and the Latin School: see Santing, 'Learning and the Modern Devotion', 216–18.

³⁰¹ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 17v: "Ende dit is die sinne vander themen der tegenwerdiger collacien, welke thema genomen is uut den *Doctrinael* Magister Allexandri, die die kinder inder scole plegen te leren. Ende al sijnt kijntsche woerde, ic wilse bijder genaden Goets also proeven, ende vestigen mit manlike scriften ende woerden dat hem Goet te geloeven sall wesen".

started with a quotation taken from a school book. Apart from the *Doctrinale*, the author also refers to (and indeed starts the very first collation of the Book of Wedlock with) the *Disticha Catonis*, which he apparently supposes to have been translated by Jerome: “the wise man Cato speaks these words at the start of his book, and according to some glosses the holy teacher Jerome translated his book into Latin and so one can say they are his words as well.”³⁰² The *Disticha Catonis* was one of the most popular school books during the Middle Ages and would have been familiar to the students attending the *collatio* as well as any participants who had attended the Latin school.³⁰³ The text also circulated among a lay audience and was enjoyed for its moralising value; the Brothers in Deventer owned a commentary of the text.³⁰⁴ By drawing on the authority of these two school books, as well as the supposed authority of Jerome as translator, the author of the Book of Wedlock shows that the collations are meant to be educational and that they are aimed at teaching the laypeople who came to participate in the *collatio*. The author is none too subtle about this goal – indeed, on multiple occasions he mentions how the collations are written to explain a few things about marriage – but the references to Cato and Alexander de Villa Dei further emphasise his intention and justify it as well.

However, the *collatio* was not about becoming learned or educated for its own sake: the acquired knowledge was to be put into practice by enabling a more devout lifestyle. The author of the Book of Wedlock states: “First you must live well, and then learn well; for with a good life one can undoubtedly come to understanding and knowledge, but whether knowledge brings

³⁰² Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 1r: “*Quum animadverterem quamplurimos homines errare graviter in via morum, succurrendum et consulendum opinion eorum fore existimavi, scribitur Cathonis prohemio*. Die wijse man Catho spreket inden beginsel van sinen boec dese woerde, ende oic na somiger glosen die heilige leerre Jheronimus heefft geweest een oversetter sijns boecs tot Latijnscher tale, so mach men oic seggen dattet mede sine woerde sijn”; f. 17r: “Als die wise man Catho of Jheronimus tugen inden beginsel van desen boec. (...)”. I have not been able to trace these references further.

³⁰³ See T. Ehlen, ‘Didaxe, kulturelles Prestige und funktionale Zweisprachigkeit. Lateinisch-deutsche >Cato<-Handschriften als Beispiel für lateinschsprachige Hermeneutik und volkssprachliche Aneignung antiker Bildung im späteren Mittelalter’, in *Mehrsprachigkeit im Mittelalter. Kulturelle, literarische, sprachliche und didaktische Konstellationen in europäischer Perspektive. Mit Fallstudien zu den ‚Disticha Catonis‘*, ed. M. Baldzuhn and C. Putzo (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 211–20; H. Kienhorst, ‘Van hetzelfde laken een pak? Eenkolomsboekjes met Middelnederlandse rijmteksten in handschrift en druk’, in *Geschreven en gedrukt. Boekproductie van handschrift naar druk in de overgang van Middeleeuwen naar Moderne Tijd*, ed. H. Pleij and J. Reynaert e.a. (Gent: Academia Press, 2004), 103–18.

³⁰⁴ A.M.J. van Buuren, “Der clerken boec moeten si lesen”. De “Disticha Catonis” en het “Boec van Catone”, in *Wat is wijsheid? Lekenethiek in de Middelnederlandse letterkunde*, ed. J. Reynaert e.a., Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de Middeleeuwen, IX (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 1994), 79–80; Obbema, *Een Deventer bibliotheekscatalogus II*, 156–57, 194.

one closer to a good life I do not know.”³⁰⁵ This is the essential difference between being learned (pursuing knowledge for vain or selfish reasons, or even for its own sake) and being wise (using acquired knowledge to advance in virtue and better oneself). The knowledge communicated during the *collationes* was geared at enabling a more devout life: the references to *auctoritates* were to sample their wisdom and learn from them directly. It was emphatically not an opportunity for the Brothers to showcase their eloquence or the author of a collation to show his erudition. Indeed, the customs of the Gregoriushuis in Zwolle dictate that “we will not strain ourselves with ornate phrases or grand quotations that only please the ears of our listeners”: instead, the hearts of the participants will be moved by humble and remorseful words.³⁰⁶ While the Brothers themselves could be highly educated and well learned, they were not supposed to take pride in that: knowledge was to be in service of devotion.³⁰⁷ The participants in the *collatio* were engaged in the communication of knowledge, and with it came the Brothers’ stance towards knowledge: it was not to be flaunted but to be exploited for personal devotion. Even with increased learning and newly acquired knowledge, the goal was to remain humble and grow wise.

The communication of knowledge during the *collatio* was thus in service of understanding religious issues and aiding devotion. This is particularly clear in the last two collations contained in Dirc van Herxen’s First Book of Collations, which elaborate on the two most important Christian prayers: the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*. The two collations are explicitly marked as explanations of these prayers, using the phrase *corte glose* (‘a short gloss’) and *corte bedudinghe* (‘a short explanation’) in their headings.³⁰⁸ In the context of the whole First Book of Collations, these two collations are somewhat atypical. They are not included in the reading key of the manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, though they are present in the book of collations’ table of contents.³⁰⁹ The two collations are also rather light on *auctoritates*, instead mainly employing biblical quotations. However, this is not unique: collations which are

³⁰⁵ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 5r: “Ten iersten salmen wael leven, ende dan wael leren. Want men sonder twivel mit gueden leven comet tot verstande ende tot consten, mer off men mit consten iet comet tot gueden leven en weet ic niet.”

³⁰⁶ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: *In quo opere non studebimus ornatis locutionibus vel magistralibus allegationibus, que pascant tantummodo aures audientium* (...). Compare the Dutch translation in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 71.

³⁰⁷ See Santing, ‘Learning and the Modern Devotion’. Also Boonstra, ‘Causa Spiritualis Instructionis’, 45–47.

³⁰⁸ The “Corte glose opt *Pater noster*” is found in Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, f. 188v–192v, with the “Corte bedudinghe der enghelscher grute” on 192v–195r.

³⁰⁹ On account of the texts not being included in the reading key, Lydeke van Beek argues they are not collations but independent texts included in the manuscript: Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 80.

essentially large excerpts of other texts (such as the collation on the Last Judgement taken from Suso's *Horologium*) do not abound with references either. In this case it seems the two collations are original compositions of Dirc van Herxen, likely translated or adapted from the Latin treatises he had written on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*.³¹⁰

Both collations have a short prologue to them, as well as a short concluding message relating to both of the texts on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*: despite having their own heading, place in the table of contents, and even decorated initials, the two texts are considered a (thematic) unity by the author: a concluding message after the collation on the *Ave Maria* states, "As we are wont to say the *Ave Maria* after our daily prayer [the *Pater noster*], let us consider how they connect and competently fit together."³¹¹ The praying of the *Pater noster* opens the mind to God and awakens a desire to be granted divine grace, and the subsequently prayed *Ave Maria* acknowledges the need for assistance and revels in the grace and virtues she possesses.

The prologue to the explanation on the *Pater noster* begins by stating that among all earthly activities, praying is the best possible one; a position supported in several places in the Bible.³¹² Augustine concurs that the *Pater noster* is the most worthy of all prayers, as it has been given to mankind by Jesus Christ Himself.³¹³ In particular, though this prayer is short in words, it is certainly not short on meaning; its length means it can be easily remembered, it can be prayed frequently, and there is no need to rush through it – "all the better for every word to be ruminated [on]".³¹⁴ This idea of 'ruminating' on the prayer is not explored further, but it clearly ties the explanation of the prayer to Modern Devout methods of meditation: to take some good words – often from a devotional text – and keep 'chewing' on them. The Brothers of the Common

³¹⁰ See Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 28–29. Among Dirc van Herxen's other works, chronicler Jacobus de Voecht lists an *Explanaciones oracionis Dominice*, an *Exposicio oracionis Dominice* and *Eadem sub compendio*, and an *Explanacio Salutacionis Angelice*; Johannes Trithemius also mentions both a *Super Oratione dominica* and a *Super Ave Maria* as part of Dirc van Herxen's literary output: Schoengen, *Narratio*, 233–36; Knierim, *Dirc van Herxen, Rector van het Zwolse fraterhuis*, 147–48. These Latin treatises are lost, though comparative texts have survived in the *Devota exercitia* ascribed to Van Herxen, printed in 1492 in Deventer by either Jacobus van Breda or Richard Pafraet: see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 202–3.

³¹¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 195r: "Mer want wi gewoenliken nae onsen dagelixschen ghebede toe doen die woerde der engelscherscher [sic] grueete, so laet ons aenmerken hoe dat dit op een sluyt ende bequaemlike voeget."

³¹² The prologue to the explanation on the *Pater noster* runs from f. 188r to f. 188v, though the heading "Prologus opt pater noster" is written on f. 187v. The explanation itself runs from f. 188r to f. 192v.

³¹³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 188r: "Daer sunt Augustinus op seit (...)." I have not been able to trace this reference. It is possibly a reference to chapters 114–116 of Augustine's *Enchiridion*, in which he comments on the *Pater noster*: compare Augustine, *Enchiridion: handleiding voor Laurentius over de deugden van geloof, hoop en liefde*, ed. C. Bloemen (Roermond: Romen, 1930), 162–64. D.A. Stracke did not identify the quotation either, but found a partial comparison in the *Summa* of Laurent d'Orleans, where it is attributed to St Bernard: D.A. Stracke, 'Ene corte glose opt Pater Noster', *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 9 (1935): 283n13.

³¹⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 188r: "elc woert te bet gheedercauwet [sic] werde".

Life themselves cultivated their spirituality by a constant process of reading, re-reading, and ruminating on the text: in the explanation of the *Pater noster*, the same method is communicated to the participants of the *collatio*.³¹⁵ The prologue also draws attention to the notion that the *Pater noster* is an example of how to pray properly, that is, how personal prayers should begin. It opens with ‘Our Father who art in heaven’, and only after the acknowledgement of God the highest and most noble can one continue praying. It should be the same for personal prayer: as Ambrose agrees, every individual prayer should begin with giving praise to the Judge, that he might look favourably on the one praying.³¹⁶

After the prologue, the collation itself provides material to ruminate on the *Pater noster*, as it reflects on the meaning of the prayer – the collation does not try to teach the words of prayer itself, but the intention and meaning behind the words, “taken from the sense and meaning of the holy teaching.”³¹⁷ The text follows the prayer closely: the individual sentences of the *Pater noster* are discussed one after the other. This is not an uncommon set-up for sermons on such texts as the Lord’s Prayer or the Creed, though it should be noted that Van Herxen merely explains the sentences one by one instead of presenting an argument spurred on by each sentence.³¹⁸ The first sentence is also deconstructed further so that the meaning of a single word or word group can be explained: why God is to be called Father (the only part which is supported with a biblical reference³¹⁹), why He is *our* Father, and what it means that He is in heaven. ‘Hallowed be thy name’ means God’s name is the most holy, and it needs to be properly honoured and worshiped. Interestingly, praising God is tied to outwardly devout behaviour as well: “Your name is hallowed if we behave in such a way that anyone who sees us is brought up by us.”³²⁰ This once again ties in with the Brothers’ intention to be a living example to their visitors, and to encourage laypeople to imitate their behaviour by being an example to all: it

³¹⁵ As indeed other collations also enticed the participants to the *collatio* to imitate the Brothers’ methods of shaping their spirituality, as well as providing the same materials: see the other paragraphs of this chapter. On the process of *ruminatio*, see for instance Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 323–25. Gerard Zerbolt advocates the *ruminatio* as an essential part of devout meditation in chapter 45 of his *De spiritualibus ascensionibus*: Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *Geestelijke opklimmingen*, 282–84.

³¹⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 188v: “Ambrosius (...)”. I have not been able to trace this reference. Possibly it refers to St Ambrose’s remarks on prayer in his treatise on Cain and Abel: compare St Ambrose, *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. J.J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation 42 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1977), 393.

³¹⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 188v: “ghetoegen uten synne ende bedudinghe der heiligher leerre”.

³¹⁸ For contrast, compare, for instance, the sermons of Giordano da Pisa on the Creed, where the Creed is not so much explained as it is taken as an inspiration for a sermon cycle. See C. Delcorno, ‘La fede spiegata ai fiorentini. Le prediche sul “Credo” di Giordano da Pisa’, *Lettere Italiane* 65 (2013): 318–52.

³¹⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 188v: “Op dat gheschie des propheten woert (...)”. The reference is to Psalms 102:13.

³²⁰ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 189r: “Oec doer ons werde dijn name gheheiliget, welke gheschiet wanneer wi ons sodanich bewisen in onser wandernige [sic] dat alle die ons sien of horen doer ons ghesticht werden.”

was not only through their texts and their *collationes* that the Brothers communicated their spirituality, but they did so through their own behaviour as upstanding, devout people as well. In this manner, the collation offers an explanation of the *Pater noster* mostly supported with biblical references. Indeed, Dirc van Herxen only refers to a single *auctoritas*, namely Augustine: on the words ‘Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven’, Augustine is quoted with regard to the activities of the saints in heaven.³²¹

After the ‘Amen’ the text quickly summarises the explanation thus far, tying the sentences together so they follow each other logically, and this concludes the first part of the explanation of the *Pater noster*. However, the collation continues with a second explanation which ties the prayer to the seven deadly sins, and how every sentence of the Pater Noster fights against a specific sin. The seven capital sins are compared to the seven-headed beast described in Revelation³²²: at any time, at least one of the heads (and often more than one) will attempt to attack and inject its evil venom. Whenever one head is defeated, it is replaced with another. The text first lists the parts of the *Pater noster* and the sins they work against – in turn, pride, avarice, sloth, gluttony, wrath, lust, and envy – before moving on to explain how they help. Though the collation does not make an explicit connection to other collations or to the *collatio*, this preventative function of the *Pater noster* against sin fits in with the *profectus virtutum* cultivated by the Brothers of the Common Life and communicated in the *collatio* (see paragraph 5.3). The frequent praying of this most important prayer is one more piece of assistance in staving off sin and vice and advancing in virtues.

As with the first explanation of the *Pater noster*, the discussion how the prayer works against sin goes from sentence to sentence. For instance, pride, the start of all sins, can be uprooted by acknowledging that only God’s name is holy (‘Hallowed be thy name’), and because of this our own name has little weight – thus there is no reason to feel pride. Once the head of pride is damaged, the phrase ‘Thy kingdom come’ will ward off avarice which tempts one to put faith in worldly possessions – and so on. The collation also acknowledges that not everyone advances in virtues at the same rate, which might in itself be a reason for envy – here presented as a last

³²¹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 189v: “Daer sunte Augustinus van seit (...)”. The reference is to Augustine’s *City of God*: see Augustine, *The City of God. Books XVII-XXII*, trans. D.J. Honan and G.G. Walsh, *The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation* 14 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 510–11. This passage is absent from the text in Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap 79: compare Stracke, ‘Ene corte glose opt Pater Noster’, 288.

³²² Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 191r: “Waer bi dese sevenvoudige quaetheit wort wel van sunte Johan in Apocalipsi bescreuen onder een figure des haeteliken beestes hebbende seven hoofde”. The reference is to Revelation 13:1.

trick from the devil, enticing the devout to begrudge their fellow man their prosperity and rejoice in their troubles. The last sentence of the *Pater noster* can help: ‘Deliver us from evil’ guards against the envy that can completely damage people. When this line of thinking is followed, praying the *Pater noster* offers a complete protection and remedy against the seven capital sins.

Thus, the collation on the *Pater noster* offers two different ways of praying: either to think about the prayer itself and the meaning of the words, or to see the prayer as a safeguard against the seven capital sins. Which way is chosen is up to the individual, as the collation concludes: “Now anyone can choose the manner in which to pray his daily prayer, the first or the second, as they seems to demand different times; with no disadvantage if our Lord God were to inspire someone to something higher or better. Because this was gathered from the meaning of Scripture for the simple people, to be improved where necessary.”³²³ The collation merely presents options to the people who would hear it in the *collatio*, in the hope that they might take away from it something useful to their own situation, and which they might use in their personal prayers and meditations.

The explanation on the *Ave Maria* is organised in a similar vein, as the text is likewise split into a short prologue and the actual explanation.³²⁴ Though the collation has a few references or attributions, for the most part it seems to be an original composition. The prologue states the prayer is a repeat of the words spoken by the angel to Mary during the Annunciation and makes clear that it is a proper greeting; the glory of Mary is stressed and she is praised repeatedly. An important reason to greet Mary is that one can hope she greets us back and will besiege her Son to grant us mercy and grace. One heartfelt greeting is worth more than a hundred greetings simply read without attention, which will not even reach Mary’s ears. Like the collation on the *Pater noster*, the explanation of the *Ave Maria* follows the individual sentences of the prayer, while the opening words ‘Ave’ and ‘Maria’ are both explained in more detail. For the word ‘ave’ a distinction is made between suffering and actual pain, as ‘ave’ means ‘without pain or woe’ (‘a-wee’). The text acknowledges Mary suffered when she saw her Son on the cross, but this was not woe: woe is the pain from committing sins or bodily pain, of which Mary was

³²³ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 192r–192v: “Nu verkiese een yegelic na wat synne hi wil spreken sijn dagelix ghebet, waer na den eersten of naden anderen, want sie onderscheiden tyde schinen te eyschen, sonder achterdeel of God onse Here yemant wat hogers of beters insprekende waer, want dese bedudinge voer simpel menschen uut der synne der scrifte onder verbeteringe is vergadert.” Compare Stracke, ‘Ene corte glose opt Pater Noster’, 300–301.

³²⁴ The collation runs from f. 193r to f. 195r, with a prologue on f. 192v–193r.

spared.³²⁵ The name ‘Mary’ carries meaning as well, as the “scholars and translators of other languages have left in writing [or: left in Scripture]”.³²⁶ The light of grace shines within her heart, and for this reason she is called the ‘morning light’ in the Song of Songs.³²⁷

The attribution ‘Full of grace’ is the point of departure for a short passage on grace in general, which is a form of divine inspiration, affecting the mind and bringing about the virtues – most significantly “faith, hope, love, chastity, humility, obedience, and perfect patience.”³²⁸ Because Mary is a shining example of all these virtues, she is said to be full of grace, and at no point in her life were these virtues obscured or did she have any flaws. At the end of the collation Mary’s virtue is stressed once more, as is how there was no more perfect woman to carry Jesus Christ into the world. The explanation of the *Ave Maria* closes with a call for imitation: “Thus, anyone who desires to taste this blessed fruit of her womb after this misery, and to see it, should take pains to remember and exhibit the virtue of Mary. Amen.”³²⁹ Like with the collation on the *Pater noster*, no explicit connection is made to other texts, but frequent visitors to the *collatio* would find no shortage of other texts assisting them in their advancement in virtues.

Directly following this explanation on the *Ave Maria* is a short concluding message relating to both it and the explanation on the *Pater noster*. These two texts in the First Book of Collations are not included to teach the words of the prayers per se, but to explain why the words are what they are and why they should be prayed. The texts are an attempt to make one really think on the prayers and understand them, and not simply pray with the mouth while the heart and mind are occupied with other things. They were written “to read the words daily and no longer lack the fruit of our prayers and our devotion by skimming over them without understanding.”³³⁰ As

³²⁵ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 193r.

³²⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 193r: “Als ons bedudet hebben die geleerden ende oversetters vreemder tale die ons in scrifte ghelaten hebben.”

³²⁷ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 193v: “Om des lichtes der gracen dat in dinen herten aldus claelike luchtede ende deser werelt verschenen is overvloedicheit, so wordes du in Canticorum gheheten voert gaen als een margenschijn: schoen als die mane uutvercoren als die sonne”. The reference is to Song of Solomon 6:9.

³²⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 193v–194r: “Doechde sijn werke, vrucht ende volmakinge der gracen ende daer omme ontfangen si dicwijl den name, van welken die voerbaerste sijn ghelove, hope, mynne, kuyscheit, oetmoedicheit, ghehoersamheit, verduldicheit.”

³²⁹ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 195r: “Hier om die doechede des ghemoedes Marien sal pinigen na te volgen die begeert na deser ellende die gebenedide vrucht hoers bukes te smaken ende te siene. Amen.” Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap 79 writes ‘ghedankes’ for ‘ghemoedes’ and omits the part of tasting the fruit. See D.A. Stracke, ‘Corte glose op die Engelsche gructe’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 9 (1935): 400.

³³⁰ Utrecht UB 3 L 6 f. 195r: “Op dat wi die woerde dagelix lesende, ende sonder verstant overlopende niet en bliven derven der vrucht onses ghebedes ende der ynnicheit.”

has been noted with regard to other collations, the communication of knowledge was in service of understanding and ultimately in aid of personal devotion.

Of course, the *collatio* would not have been the first place a participant would learn the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*, as they were deemed the most important prayers and formed part of the foundation of religious knowledge every good Christian should have. Since Carolingian times, knowledge of the *Credo* and the *Pater noster* seems to have been the bare minimum of Christian religious knowledge; in the course of the thirteenth century the *Ave Maria* was added to this list.³³¹ For this reason, additional explanation on the two prayers would nearly always be appropriate to ensure they were not merely learned by rote, but known by heart. For instance, explaining the basic tenets of Christianity might take place alongside the sermon: while the preacher worked from the pulpit, his assistant(s) would take some youngsters to a different place out of earshot and teach them how to pray.³³² Teaching to understand the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* was part of pastoral care, and having a proper understanding of them was part of being a devout Christian.

Though Dirc van Herxen's explanations on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* are mostly original in content, they are not unique in form: as part of sermons, treatises, or incorporated in larger texts, such explanations were not uncommon in the fifteenth century. The online *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta & Impressa* (BNMI) lists four manuscripts which contain a "Glose opt Pater Noster", as well as a "Glose op den pater noster" by Gheraert Appelmans, 7 which contain "Die expositie op dat heyleghe pater noster", and some 12 manuscripts with a form of explanation on the *Ave Maria*.³³³ This list from the BNMI does not include the First Book of Collations, and thus is not complete. Whether these texts are connected, or even copies of the same text, is yet to be examined: the corpus does not seem to have been the subject of

³³¹ N. Tanner and S. Watson, 'Least of the Laity: The Minimum Requirements for a Medieval Christian', *Journal of Medieval History* 32 (2006): 399–403.

³³² On his preaching campaign in Brittany, the Dominican preacher Vincent Ferrer (d. 1419) worked with "a real pastoral task force" that would educate young people on matters of faith such as the Lord's Prayer, the *Ave Maria*, and the Creed: Delcorno, 'Quomodo Discet Sine Docente?', 147–49.

³³³ For the "Glose opt Pater Noster", see <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/lexicontermen/LEXI000000004227> [consulted 08-03-2019]; for the "Glose op den pater noster" by Gheraert Appelmans, see <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/lexicontermen/LEXI000000004219> [consulted 08-07-2020]; for the "Die expositie op dat heyleghe pater noster", see <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/lexicontermen/LEXI000000004055> [consulted 08-07-2020] and <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/teksten/TEXT0000000037925> [consulted 08-07-2020]; for texts on the *Ave Maria*, see <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/lexicontermen/LEXI000000006053> [consulted 08-03-2019]. Note that the explanations on the *Ave Maria* do not have a separate category in the BNM-I.

dedicated study thus far.³³⁴ As part of the First Book of Collations, these two treatises by Dirc van Herxen reflect a desire common in all collations, both in the First Book of Collations and others, to present some useful material, so that participants in the *collatio* could take away from it what they could use.

The ubiquity and importance of proper instructions to understanding the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* might also be the reason why the collations are not included in the reading key of the manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6. As an explanation of the daily prayers would always be relevant, there was no need to tie the collations to a specific day. Rather, the Brothers presiding over the *collatio* could choose these texts when he felt he had a need for them, or perhaps when the participants asked him to. The Book of Wedlock, after all, was composed upon request from participating laypeople, and the reading key in manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 often suggests several different collations per day, pointing to a measure of freedom in choosing the collation to be read. If the Brothers, after reading the room and in communication with the participants, decided to expand on the importance of the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*, the collations were already available in the First Book of Collations. Such might also be the use of the first pages of the book of collations London, BL Add. 10287. Preceding the table of contents of the book of collations, as well as the collations themselves, are listed a number of religious items such as the articles of the faith, the blessings of the Holy Spirit which counteract the seven capital sins, and the four cardinal virtues. The text of the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* is also written out.³³⁵ These texts precede and are presented without commentary. Possibly they were included in the manuscript for their instructional value: when necessary, the Brother utilising the manuscript for his collations could quickly refer to the information in the front of the book. Though they were, of course, expected to know the information by heart, having a list would be useful in structuring a new collation on the spot, when the collations in the book of collations did not provide an adequate text.

The collations on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* in the First Book of Collations showcase the educational aims of the *collatio*. The communication of knowledge in these collations is one of teaching, so as to provide a deeper understanding of the two prayers. In turn, this understanding aided personal devotion, as the words of the prayers could be ruminated on more profoundly. Indeed, the *Pater noster* is praised as being easy to ruminate on because of its short

³³⁴ In 1907, D.C. Tinbergen presented several variant explanations on the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria* in connection to *Des Coninx Summe*: see Tinbergen, *Des Coninx Summe*, 165–82.

³³⁵ London, BL Add. 10287 f. 1v–6v; the text of the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* on f. 1v.

length and spiritual richness. The collation makes an explicit mention of the repeated chewing of the words to come to a better understanding, a technique the Brothers of the Common Life maintained for themselves in shaping their own spirituality. Thus, while these collations are somewhat apart from the other texts in the First Book of Collations – having no designated day to be read, and being a mostly original composition not dependent on *auctoritates* – the same dynamic of the communication of knowledge in the *collatio* is at play. The collations are an attempt to teach, to make clear, and to explain religious issues to the participants of the *collatio*, and involve both the circulation of religious information as well as the methods to utilise it. The Brothers shared what they knew as well as how they made use of their knowledge. Thus, the Brothers' attitude towards learning was communicated alongside religious knowledge: the circulation of knowledge was to aid and increase devotion, and was emphatically not meant to be learning for its own sake.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how by providing *collationes* to students and interested laypeople, the Brothers of the Common Life invited their visitors to join their textual community by making available the works they themselves valued highly. The Brothers' own behaviour and their approach to a process of reading, re-reading, and meditating on these texts set an example to be followed, encouraging participants to imitate the methods by which the Brothers shaped their own spirituality. The *collatio* thus not only communicated the texts the Brothers read but also how they approached them and, most importantly, how they made use of them in giving shape to their individual devotional lives. The books of collations, as an aid to the *collatio*, are a reflection of this process of communicating religious knowledge.

From the collations examined in this chapter – on having religious literature in the vernacular, the Last Judgement, advancing in virtue, and the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* – two main elements are to be emphasised. In the first place, the collations are a reflection of the library the Brothers of the Common Life perused themselves: the authoritative texts cited in the collations to substantiate a position are the same texts the Brothers read and ruminated upon. Listening to the collation being read, participants in the *collatio* were exposed to the words and thought of such authorities as Augustine, Bernard, or Chrysostom. They would also be made well aware of the source of a piece of wisdom, as the *auctoritates* quoted in the collations are neatly identified and properly referred to. The frequent attributions were not mere name-dropping on the part of the author of the collation or of the reader to appear highly educated and intelligent,

but served a purpose: they rooted the information being communicated in orthodox thought, thus proving the *collatio* was not engaged in spreading heretical opinions, and pointed the participants towards the source texts worthy of further investigation. Particularly in the collations on having religious literature in the vernacular, the participants in the *collatio* are encouraged to listen critically and agree with the Brothers on the strength of their sources. The collations ostensibly do not invent new arguments but merely present how something is found in authoritative texts. The clearly marked quotations functioned like footnotes in an academic study: they show the basis from which a position was advanced, as well as suggest where to look for further reading. The Brothers thus pointed the participants to the books they kept in their own library, drawing them into the textual world in which the Brothers navigated their spirituality: effectively, the collations are a list of suggested readings. The author of the Book of Wedlock made explicit suggestions where to look for more information – for instance, Cassianus’ *Instituta* or the *Vitaspatrum*³³⁶ – but the frequent citations in his and other books of collations served the same goal: to communicate the textual world of the Modern Devotion, allowing lay participants to join it for their own devotion. Knowledge was thus communicated with the clear intention of it being exploited: not to become learned, but to become wise. The information circulated during the *collatio* was to allow a more devout lifestyle and an advancement in virtues.

Secondly, alongside communicating what authoritative sources had written on a certain topic, the collations provide a framework from which to interpret these source texts, and even show a model of how to engage with religious texts in general. The manner in which authoritative texts are excerpted and recombined is not unique to the collations: the Brothers of the Common Life used the same methods to shape their own spirituality on the basis of a variety of texts. Not every work was relevant to a given topic in its entirety, necessitating selecting and combining excerpts to provide insight into the theme at hand. The Brothers themselves used reading lists and personal scrapbooks (*rapiaria*) to aid their devotion, and the collations show the same approach to putting texts in service of personal advancement. In some cases, a collation was excerpted from a longer work and presented without many additions; in others, a large number of short passages scoured from a variety of sources were combined to present an argument. The collations on the Last Judgement discussed in this chapter show examples of both approaches. Thus, the *collatio* was in effect a complete introduction to the Modern Devotion: participants

³³⁶ Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I f. 6v, also f. 25r.

were not only exposed to the texts on which the Modern Devout spirituality was founded, but were also shown how to make use of texts in order to further their own devotion. They were instructed to read as the Brothers read: making a careful selection of what was relevant at the moment, combining sources writing on the same topic, guiding their spirituality on the basis of texts. The collations provided the participating laypeople with a model to imitate. The Brothers, too, presented themselves as an example to be followed. The *collatio* communicated how they, personally, interacted with texts, as well as how they incorporated them in their own attempts to spiritually advance. The collations on the *profectus virtutum*, the advancement in virtues, show that this aspect of the Brothers' life was circulated among a lay audience as well: the methods the Brothers utilised to ban vice and exhibit virtue instead were also presented to the participants of the *collatio*. Indeed, especially during the personal conversations taking place after the collective the Brothers could delve into their own experiences to connect with their visitors, sharing their difficulties in overcoming vice and suggesting strategies to climb to virtue. Participants in the *collatio* were presented with a complete model of the Brothers' devotion, and were invited to join themselves to it. How many of them did so, or to what extent, cannot be known – though some participants clearly were drawn to the Brothers after visiting their *collationes*.³³⁷ Still, it is clear the Brothers very much intended their visitors to take something from the *collationes* and incorporate it in their daily lives, taking the Modern Devotion with them when they returned home.

Apart from these two overarching themes, the collations show how, although texts were at the heart of the *collatio*, a collation was not, strictly speaking, a necessity. The differences between the books of collations, even on the same topic, suggest that any relevant text could in theory be read during the meeting. The Brothers had quite a measure of freedom in deciding how to structure their collations: indeed, the author of the Book of Wedlock presents his collations as his own selection of authoritative sources, whereas Dirc van Herxen also included excerpts of relevant texts as stand-alone collations for his First Book of Collations. This ties in with what has been discussed in paragraph 4.2: to make the *collatio* resonate with the lay participants the Brothers would have to know how to read the room and take care to present relevant collations. This could mean disregarding a book of collations entirely and turning to a different book when the situation called for it. The last part of the manuscript Brussels, KB 19549 for instance is visually indistinguishable from the preceding book of collations, but it is in fact an adaptation

³³⁷ See paragraph 3.2.

of the Middle Dutch *Des Coninx Summe*, suggesting that good collations could very well be found outside of books of collations. Ironically, the books of collations show that they were not essential to the *collatio* and that any relevant text could function as a collation when it was deemed suitable.

Chapter 6: Not in a preaching manner: the *collatio* and sermons

Although the *collatio* under the care of the Brothers of the Common Life was a particular practice, it certainly was not the only option for students and laypeople to engage in a devotional activity. Indeed, the *collationes* were part of a vibrant palette of possibilities for laypeople to practise their devotion and were an integrated part of the urban religious landscape.¹ For the interested layperson, the late medieval city was rife with opportunities for practising their devotion, both publicly and privately: they might for instance join a religious guild or fraternity, attend or participate in religious plays, or seek out private conversations with a trusted father-confessor – not to mention the opportunities for personal devotional reading, something the *collatio* encouraged as well (see chapter 5).²

Foremost among this plethora of devotional activities, however, was the accessibility of frequent public preaching. Sermon preaching provides an adequate comparison to the process of communicating religious knowledge in the *collatio*, even though the Brothers of the Common Life themselves maintained that the *collatio* was not to be performed ‘in a preaching manner’, and for this reason previous chapters have made use of the theoretical framework provided by sermon studies to gain new insights into the Modern Devout *collationes*. By explicitly refuting the comparison between the *collatio* and preaching, however, the Brothers implicitly acknowledged the similarities between the two. Although the *collationes* were not preached sermons, they occupy a special position within the preaching landscape of the late medieval cities in the Low Countries. This chapter will re-establish the connection between the *collatio* and the sermon by considering the *collatio* in its context of a vibrant urban preaching culture. Since the *collatio* was to take place in the afternoon and after the services in church were finished, this connection was temporal as well, as will be discussed in paragraph 6.1. After attending the sermon, laypeople eager for more could easily transition to the *collatio*.

Moreover, this chapter will show that the late medieval Dutch cities did indeed have a vibrant preaching culture and that laypeople were truly interested in hearing a sermon, or potentially

¹ See for instance Van Engen, ‘Multiple Options: The World of the Fifteenth-Century Church’.

² On the textual nature of personal devotion, also see for instance Van der Laan, ‘Enacting Devotion’. Joanka van der Laan found that “[religious] literature provided readers with new lenses with which they could view their own lives and their environments and further develop their religious identities. This identity was based on practice, on performance, and on living out the precepts given to them by the books (...)” (quotation on p. 276).

reading a written copy afterwards. Preaching in the Low Countries has not received much attention in prior research, as the field of Dutch sermon studies has been primarily concerned with the sermon as text and thereby largely ignored preaching as a historical event. However, this chapter will show that medieval Dutch cities did indeed see frequent preaching, corresponding to a lay demand for quality sermons, which were considered entertaining as well as edifying. Although the Low Countries lack the wealth of source material of, for instance, the preaching culture in the Italian cities, there is no reason to assume the situation was that much different: throughout Europe, sermons were eagerly attended by laypeople for their own enjoyment. An anonymous Florentine layman visited a large number of sermons between 1467 and 1502 in order to compose his very own, personalised sermon collection, collating the sermons of multiple preachers on a variety of topics he had selected beforehand.³ A citizen of Frankfurt likewise navigated his own spirituality and religious development by also visiting numerous sermons and noting down their contents.⁴ In Prague, laypeople were asked to stop ‘parish hopping’ in search of the best sermons, as this would draw away too many people from the regular services (which also lead to a decline of tithes and donations).⁵ Inhabitants of Deventer, Gouda, Utrecht, and Zwolle would likewise be engaged in the preaching landscape this study has found to exist in those cities. Thus, this chapter will show that the *collatio* took place in an environment of frequent preaching so that it provided an additional opportunity for laypeople to engage in the communication of religious knowledge, and that urban laypeople in the Low Countries, as elsewhere in Europe, were very interested in sermons, whether preached from the pulpit or preserved in written form. The *collatio* was part of the urban devotional landscape and as such, the Brothers found fertile ground for communicating their message to the lay participants.

³ S. Oguro, ‘From Ears to Hand, from Hand to Heart: Writing and Internalizing Preaching in Fifteenth-Century Florence’, in *From Words to Deeds: The Effectiveness of Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. M.G. Muzzarelli, Sermo 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 49–53. The anonymous writer took notes beside the pulpit, which he then used to compose his *reportationes*. The writer frequently intrudes upon the preacher by adding rephrased repetitions or comments on his own poor understanding.

⁴ M. Populer, ‘La culture religieuse des laïcs à la fin du Moyen Âge: le carnet de notes d’un bourgeois de Francfort (ca. 1470-1482)’, *Le Moyen-Âge. Revue d’Histoire et de Philologie* 102 (1996): 479–527.

⁵ R. Zelený, ‘Councils and Synods of Prague and Their Statutes (1343–1361)’, *Apollinaris: Commentarius Instituti Utriusque Juris* 45 (1972): 522, quoted from <https://going-medieval.com/2020/09/04/on-sermons-and-the-vernacular/> (last consulted 25 September 2020).

6.1 From the sermon to the *collatio*

As has been established before, the *collatio* and the collations share several features with preaching and written sermons (see paragraph 1.3). Both practices share the same shared goal and even some of the same methods: the communication of knowledge between religious professionals and the attending and participating laypeople took place through the interplay of oral and textual means. It is reasonable to assume the people most interested in hearing a sermon would also be most likely to seek out other activities to practise their devotion even further, in which case the sermon and the *collatio* also shared an audience. This was recognised by the Brothers as well as the local church authorities: to prevent the *collatio* from drawing away the people visiting the sermon to hear a collation instead, the Brothers were obliged to wait for the services in the parish church to have concluded before deploying their own activities. The agreement dated 20 December 1418, in which the city pastor of Zwolle, Henry of Compostella, allowed the priests of the local Gregoriushuis to hear confessions and administer the final rites to their sick, also stipulated that their '*colloquium de materia spirituali*' was to take place at a time outside of the services in the parish church.⁶ The same provision is found in the *consuetudines* of the communities of Brothers of the Common Life; those of Emmerich in particular state explicitly that the *collatio* is not to interfere with attending services in the parish church.⁷ Provisions like these were not unique to these communities: where devotional activities were at risk of competing with the regular activities taking place in the parish church (such as Mass or the sermon) for lay visitors, agreements were made to ensure there was no overlap in time. Nor were they restricted to male communities: in Leiden, the tertiaries of St Clara Nazareth and St Catharina-Schagen practised their own form of *collationes*, and were ordered to perform these with the doors closed when services were being held in the parochial church.⁸ Devotional meetings like these *collationes* thus directly interfered and competed with the services in the parish church, drawing away the laypeople and luring them to visit another religious community. The *collationes* of the Brothers of the Common Life likely spoke to the same people who were wont to visit the services in their parish church, establishing a further

⁶ Schoengen, *Narratio*, 426–28, also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 61.

⁷ Alberts and Ditsche, *Fontes historiam domus fratrum Embricensis aperientes*, 102: *Instantius tamen in diebus festivis hoc proviso quod non fiat tempore divinorum vel sermonum in ecclesiis fieri solitorum hoc est a secunda hora usque compulsus vesperarum et communiter a quinta vel a media ante quintam usque ad signum cene*. Also in Zwolle: Schoengen, *Narratio*, 247: (...) *postquam divina officia in ecclesia fuerint de vespera expleta* (...), and in Gouda: Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 448: *Diebus eciam festivis finitis vesperis in ecclesia parochiali* (...).

⁸ Van Luijk, 'Bruiden van Christus', 74.

connection between the practices. This section will discuss how despite their differences, the *collatio* was nonetheless connected to the preached sermon on multiple fronts, spatial and temporal among them.

Figure 3 Detail of a map of Deventer made by Johan Blaeu in 1649. Marked on the map are the locations of the Lebuinuskerk (1), Broederenkerk (2), Heer Florenshuis (3), and Bergkerk (4).

Looking at the locations in which the communications of religious knowledge took place, the *collatio* can be found in close proximity to the preached sermon. In Deventer, for instance, the Heer Florenshuis was situated very closely to both the Broederenkerk of the Friars Minor, and the Lebuinuskerk and its neighbouring Church of Our Lady (see Figure 3). After attending a sermon in either of those locations, it would take less than a five-minute walk to arrive at the Brothers' house to participate in the *collatio*: coming from the Broederenkerk visitors could simply walk down the Engestraat, and coming from the Lebuinuskerk they could follow the churchyard, take a left to the Kleine Poot, and cross the Stromarkt. Even the Bergkerk, Deventer's second parish church servicing the higher section of the city, was no more than half

a kilometre away.⁹ This proximity is an important point that is easily missed as a sense of scale is quickly lost in written form, but it should be stressed that travelling from attending a sermon to visiting the Brothers to participate in their *collationes* would take barely any time at all.

The houses in Gouda and Zwolle, too, were located very closely to the parish churches as well as other religious institutions. Though the Collatiebroeders in Gouda inhabited three different houses over the years, these were all located in a relatively small area right behind the parish church of St Jan. The first Collatiehuis, which burned down in 1438, had formerly been a residential building on the Spieringstraat; a second house (renovated intensively between 1460 and 1485) was built between the Jeruzalemstraat and the Groeneweg.¹⁰ The proximity between the two institutions went beyond the physical: in 1448 the Brothers and the pastor of the church, Walter van Boechout, reached an agreement on their mutual relation, confirmed by bishop David van Bourgondië in 1462.¹¹ In 1471 the Brothers also traded their house in the Spieringstraat for the preaching station of the Dominicans, which stood in the Coman Allartsstege – what is now the Patersteeg, connecting the Jeruzalemstraat and the Groeneweg.¹² In Zwolle, the Brothers built their house on what is now the Praubstraat: in view of the St Michael parish church and the church of Our Lady within five minutes' walking distance. The house arose next to the beguines of the Olde Convent, between the preaching station of the Franciscans in Kampen and the house of Claes die Messemaker.¹³ Thus, after attending the services in the local church, eager laypeople could easily move on to the house of the Brothers to participate in the *collatio*.

Even though the *collatio* was not a direct continuation of the services in church – there were no formal obligations to visit the Brothers immediately after hearing the sermon, nor did one need to have heard the sermon to participate in the *collatio* – it is likely that laypeople attending both practices found a connection between them. As visitors moved from one to the other, they might have found temporal and spatial links and recognised shared methods for communicating religious knowledge. It is even possible that the *collatio* engaged with the sermon preached just

⁹ On the Bergkerk, see H. Slechte, *Geschiedenis van Deventer deel I: Oorsprong en Middeleeuwen* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010), 57–60.

¹⁰ Weiler, *Monasticon*, 212. On the building history of the Collatiehuis, also see K. Goudriaan, 'De verdwenen kloosters', in *Gouda*, ed. W. Denslagen, *De Nederlandse monumenten van geschiedenis en kunst* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2001), 189–95.

¹¹ Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege kerk*, 140–41.

¹² On the Dominican preaching station, see <https://proxy.archieven.nl/0/FDCA72A5CF1E4D32B1BC19CFA6743895> [consulted 21-9-2020] and the further reading listed there.

¹³ Weiler, *Monasticon*, 423–24. For the later developments of this house and other buildings, see 424–427.

prior to the meeting or at least a similar topic, as is suggested by a reading key in the First Book of Collations manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, which present options for specific readings for the Sundays and holidays of the year.¹⁴ In an examination of this reading key, Van Buuren has pointed out that these options are often related to the liturgical calendar, instead of providing a random distribution of collations throughout the year.¹⁵ On saint's days the reading key often suggests a collation on the saint in question, or a text that connected to aspects of the saint. For instance, on St Nicholas' Day (6 December) the Brothers could use the collations on the virtue of giving alms or on chastity; on the feast of St John the Merciful (23 January) they might read his *vita*.¹⁶ The (now lost) Second Book of Collations in particular provided material to read on saint's days, though texts from the First Book of Collations were suggested as well.¹⁷ On Sundays the suggested collations to be read could correspond to the liturgical reading of the day as well. On the first Sunday in the Advent, for instance, the reading key suggests collations on the Advent of the Lord; on the heavy weight of sin; on the need to prepare for the Lord's coming; on gluttony; on unchastity; and on anger and envy.¹⁸ The suggestions for collations on the advent of the Lord and the need to prepare for His coming are self-evident; the other suggestions however relate clearly to the liturgical reading of the day in Paul's epistle to the Romans (13:11–14), where he urges abstention from sin, in particular gluttony, unchastity, anger, and envy.¹⁹

The collation could also offer a different perspective than the sermon, taking the same theme but an alternate angle. For instance, the reading key in the manuscript Utrecht, UB 3 L 6

¹⁴ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 2v–3v. Also Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 215–22.

¹⁵ Van Buuren, 'Wat materien gheliken', 256–59. This connection between the liturgy and the recommended reading material for the *collatio* is not uncommon or surprising. For instance, female communities of the Modern Devotion structured their table reading to the liturgy as well: Lingier, 'Reading to the Community', 132–36, 143–44.

¹⁶ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 3r: "Op sunte Nicolaes dach: Vander aelmisse; Vander kuyscheit (...) Johannes Eleemosinarii: Sijn leven".

¹⁷ On the Second Book of Collations, see Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 93–95. Deschamps made the suggestion that (parts of) the Second Book of Collations have survived in manuscript Amsterdam, UB I G 47, though Van Beek does not share his conviction: Deschamps, 'De Dietse kollatieboeken van Dirc van Herxen [1959]', 192; Deschamps, 'De Dietse collatieboeken van Dirc van Herxen [1987]', 410. Mertens has suggested that the manuscript Deventer, Athenaeumbibliotheek, 101 F 9 KL could have been used as a book of collations, as the contemporary table of contents of the manuscript follows the liturgical calendar rather than the order of the saintly *vita* in the book: Mertens, 'Collatio und Codex', 172.

¹⁸ Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 2v: "Opten eersten sonnedach inden advent: Vander advent ons Heren; Van bereidinge tegen ons Heren toecoemst; Van quade der gulscheit; Van quade der onkuyscheit; Van quade des toerns ende des nijs".

¹⁹ Van Buuren, 'Wat materien gheliken', 256–58.

suggests the topic of the Last Judgement for the second Sunday in the Advent.²⁰ The pericope for the second Sunday in the Advent, Luke 21:25, is indeed a common theme for sermons on the Last Judgement as well.²¹ However, as has been examined in paragraph 5.2, the collations on this topic take a different interest than the Middle Dutch sermons. Whereas the latter generally take up the element of signs in the sun and the moon and the stars leading up to the end of times, the collations focus on the Judgement itself, stressing the uncertainty of that event and the terror it will provoke. The collations use the overwhelming fear of damnation as a tool to cultivate a meek and humble devotion: contemplation of the harrowing moment of Final Judgement would prompt pious behaviour in the present to avoid such a terrible fate. The collations show that in the *collatio*, the Brothers presented their own approach to important religious subjects. Thus, lay visitors to both the sermon and the *collatio* could be exposed to subtly different views on the same topic, and in an urban context of frequent preaching the Brothers could add their own accents to the communication of religious knowledge.

6.2 Frequent preaching in the city

While ostensibly an independent devotional activity, the *collatio* took place against the background of urban preaching, and its visitors brought with them their experiences from the sermon. In turn, preaching was not isolated from its social and political context but was part of the framework of the city, as has mainly been stressed in international research.²² The impact of preaching in the Netherlands prior to the Reformation has not been the subject of extensive study; as Bert Roest puts it,

²⁰ As well as the Word of God, loving one's fellow man, or the *contemptus mundi*: Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 f. 2v; Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 215. The topic of the Last Judgement is also suggested for the ninth Sunday after the feast of Corpus Christi and the Monday after Whitsun: Utrecht, UB 3 L 6, f. 2v–3v; also Van Beek, 215, 218–19.

²¹ Sherwood-Smith, 'The Last Judgement in Middle Dutch Sermons', 79–85. While Luke 21:25–33 is listed as the *thema* for 18 sermons, the remainder of the article suggests this was likely a typo.

²² See for instance Thompson, 'From Texts to Preaching'; Howard, 'Doctrine, When Preached, Is Entirely Civic'.

historians working on the religious world of the Low Countries between c. 1500 and 1560 rely on complaints by a few highly opinionated contemporaries, such as Anna Bijns, Marcus van Vaernewijck, and especially Erasmus of Rotterdam, who suggested more than once that the Low Countries were more or less a pastoral wasteland and therefore highly in need of the reforms proposed in his own work.²³

This makes for a teleological narrative in which the supposed sad state of medieval Christianity was adjusted by the righteous supremacy of Protestantism after the Reformation. While increasingly contested, this so-called Protestant Paradigm is still influential.²⁴ Yet even prior to the Reformation, the Low Countries had already seen a multitude of sermons being preached in what Roest calls “an authentic preaching renaissance, which started as early as the third decade of the fifteenth century and lasted well into the 1550s and beyond”.²⁵ However, source material on preaching in the Low Countries is far more scarce than it is for, for instance, the Italian cities: far fewer direct accounts of public preaching have survived, though such *reportationes* are not entirely unknown. Even of Johannes Brugman, the most famous preacher for the late medieval Low Countries, what remains is not the public preaching which made him famous but the sermons he preached for religious communities.²⁶ The exact cause of this discrepancy has yet to be identified; it is a possibility that only the libraries of religious communities provided the necessary stability for these Catholic sermons to be preserved under Protestant dominance following the Reformation and the Dutch Revolt. As the remainder of this chapter will show, however, it was not for a lack of interest from the lay population: the

²³ B. Roest, ‘Franciscan Preaching in Germany and the Low Countries c. 1450-1550’, in *From Words to Deeds: The Effectiveness of Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. M.G. Muzzarelli, Sermo 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 186n4.

²⁴ See, for instance, S. Corbellini and S. Steckel, ‘The Religious Field during the Long Fifteenth Century. Framing Religious Change beyond Traditional Paradigms’, *Church History and Religious Culture* 99 (2019): 304–21; S. Corbellini et al., ‘Challenging the Paradigm: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe’, *Church History and Religious Culture* 93 (2013): 178–86.

²⁵ Roest, ‘Franciscan Preaching in Germany and the Low Countries’, 186–87; also R.R. Post, *Kerkelijke verhoudingen in Nederland vóór de Reformatie, van ± 1500 tot ± 1580* (Utrecht; Antwerpen: Het Spectrum, 1954), 411–16.

²⁶ See Th. Mertens, ‘The Sermons of Johannes Brugman, OFM (d. 1473): Preservation and Form’, in *Constructing the Medieval Sermon*, ed. R. Andersson, Sermo 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 266–69. On Brugman’s reputation in particular, also see N. Lettinck, *Praten als Brugman. De wereld van een Nederlandse volksprediker aan het einde van de Middeleeuwen*, Verloren Verleden. Gedenkwaardige momenten en figuren uit de vaderlandse geschiedenis 5 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1999), esp. 67–72.

urban laypeople of the Low Countries had ample opportunity to attend a preacher's performance and showed great interest in both the spoken and the written sermon.

Research on preaching to the laity in Utrecht undertaken by Harry Pegel already showed that that city certainly saw its fair share of public preaching in the late medieval and the early modern period.²⁷ To arrive at this conclusion, Pegel primarily turned to the financial accounts of the churches and the city, an approach which this thesis has mimicked for the cities of Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle. Moreover, a number of examples can be added to further support Pegel's findings. Apart from the public preaching as part of the spiritual care provided by the pastors of the four parish churches, the collegiate churches also opened their doors to the general population on feast days of major importance.²⁸ The Mariakerk also saw preaching activity on the eve of important feasts, though this particular moment of preaching was halted in 1515 because of a lack of visitors; still, sermons continued to be delivered on the feast days themselves before the vespers.²⁹ The parish clergy would take care of a large amount of the preaching done in Utrecht, though they were not the only group providing sermons: the Dominican, Franciscan, and Carmelite orders all were active in Utrecht, preaching in their own churches as well as the parish and collegiate churches and further afield, outside the city.³⁰ The Dominican and Franciscan convents had been established in 1232 and 1240, respectively; the Carmelites entered their monastery on the current Lange Nieuwstraat more than two centuries later, in 1468. However, their preaching had already been going on before any formal presence in the city, to make the Carmelites known to the Utrecht population: in the years leading up to the foundation of the new convent, sermons were provided by some of the best preachers the Carmelite order in Haarlem had to offer.³¹ After their foundation as well, the mendicant convents maintained relations with the lay population, for instance through fraternities

²⁷ Pegel, 'Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes'; R.H. Pegel, 'Prediking voor leken in de stad Utrecht, 1500-1580', in *Utrechters entre-deux. Stad en Sticht in de eeuw van de Reformatie, 1520-1620*, ed. H. ten Boom et al., Verzameling bijdragen van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis 4 (Delft: Eburon, 1992), 112-46.

²⁸ The Buurkerk, Jacobikerk, and Nicolaïkerk all employed two pastors each, with one pastor servicing the Geertekerk: Pegel, "Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes," 81.

²⁹ L. Bogaers, Aards, *betrokken en zelfbewust. De verwevenheid van cultuur en religie in katholiek Utrecht, 1300-1600*, vol. 2 (Utrecht: Levend Verleden Utrecht, 2008), 983n36.

³⁰ For a clear overview of all religious institutions in the city of Utrecht, see L. Bogaers, Aards, *betrokken en zelfbewust. De verwevenheid van cultuur en religie in katholiek Utrecht, 1300-1600*, vol. 1 (Utrecht: Levend Verleden Utrecht, 2008), 40-45, esp. 42-43. It is not impossible the Benedictines or the Augustinian Regulars (originally a convent of Brothers of the Sack) were involved in lay preaching as well, yet no evidence of any preaching on their part survived.

³¹ B. van den Hoven van Genderen, 'Een gat in de markt? De komst van de karmelieten naar Utrecht en hun rekeningen (1468-1492)', *Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis* 15 (2012): 106-18.

connected to their churches.³² The churches likely were open to laypeople to visit to hear the sermons preached there, though if they wished to sit visitors had to bring their own seating or hope the friars would set up benches: since 1416 the church was not allowed to sell (any more?) fixed benches or stalls, as the transept was to remain “wide open and free of all construction”.³³

The mendicant preachers actively moved around the city to assist in preaching and provide sermons elsewhere as well, though they still had to contend with the regular clergy: around 1395 the Utrecht municipal government had had to mediate between the pastors of the Jacobikerk and Buurkerk on the one hand, and the Franciscan and Dominican orders on the other. After the intercession of Vicar General Willem van Renen all parties had to proclaim the arrangement from the pulpit as well.³⁴ Still, the Dominicans were actively sponsored by the Utrecht city council: the friars were paid a yearly stipend of 8 pounds for their frequent preaching.³⁵ This stipend would have been used to fund sermons in churches outside the Dominican convent. They were also hired to preach in the Benedictine Paulusabdij on occasion of the feast of St Benedict or to assist the Jacobikerk and its chapels in its preaching and other church services,³⁶ and the collegiate church of the Oudmunster often invited them to preach on important feast days like Good Friday and Easter.³⁷ The Franciscans were paid by the Domkerk for 12 days of preaching during Lent in the year 1475, as well as sermons on 4 heydays, all feast days devoted to St Mary, and on both St Nicholas Eve and the feastday itself.³⁸ In 1467/1468 they made an arrangement with the Nicolaïkerk to preach there multiple times every year; an arrangement taken over by the Carmelites in 1485/1486.³⁹ Preaching was a decent source of income to the Carmelite monastery. While it was not their main financial base, it was certainly more than a triviality, and the income from preaching was related to the quality of the sermon: exceptional preachers brought in more money than lesser ones.⁴⁰ With the mendicant

³² Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 101–2.

³³ D. van Heel, “Het Minderbroederklooster te Utrecht,” *Franciscaansch Leven. Tweemaandelijksch Tijdschrift voor Franciscaansche Ascetiek, Geschiedenis en Kunst*, 1942, 40–41: “datselve cruuswerc sal ruum bliven, onbecommert van enighe tymeringhe”.

³⁴ Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 100–101.

³⁵ A.H. Evertse, ‘De stad Utrecht en de franciscanen en dominicanen in de vijftiende eeuw’, *Jaarboek Oud-Utrecht*, 1986, 18.

³⁶ Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 97–100, 102.

³⁷ B. van den Hoven van Genderen, *De Heren van de Kerk. De kanunniken van Oudmunster te Utrecht in de late middeleeuwen* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1997), 559.

³⁸ Van Heel, ‘Het Minderbroederklooster te Utrecht’, 136.

³⁹ Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 99.

⁴⁰ Hoven van Genderen, ‘Een gat in de markt’, 145–46, 153–54. In 1476 and 1485, 3% of the yearly income came from donations collected after the sermon; an additional 2% came from Carmelites being hired out to provide sermons in churches other than their own. In 1472 Petrus in Cardinali preached to the episcopal residence in The

orders operating in addition to regular preaching from the parish clergy, the people of Utrecht would have no shortage of sermons to be heard and could visit multiple locations to attend quality preaching.

A number of preachers is known by name, though they are but a few among the many who must have been operating the pulpit. Names were recorded incidentally and mostly when the sermon was organised for a special occasion. The auxiliary bishop Joost Borre, formerly of the Dominican order, for instance preached on the Passion in the Buurkerk in 1455.⁴¹ The Oudmunster invited the Carmelite Jan van Mechelen (alias Jan Verstraeten), *doctor in theologia*, to preach a series of Lenten sermons both in 1467 and 1468.⁴² The same year, 1468, also saw the preaching of his fellow Carmelite Johannes van Riet, who preached in the Domkerk during Lent as well.⁴³ This Johannes van Riet later became auxiliary bishop, and in that position likely continued to provide quality sermons to the people of Utrecht. Every seven years the Domkerk also showed its relics on the day of its dedication – 22 July, the feast of Mary Magdalene – and on this occasion in 1473 the Dominican Johannes van Houdaen was invited to preach after the Completes. For his sermon, he was paid two gold guilders and two quarts of wine.⁴⁴ In the same year, 1473, the Franciscan friar Henricus Vretart (alias Henricus de Traiecto inferior) was congratulated by Bishop David van Bourgondië on the excellent sermon he had delivered in 1469, advocating a crusade against Bohemia.⁴⁵

Deserving of special mention is the erstwhile Carmelite and later auxiliary bishop Goswinus Hex (c. 1425–1475). Around the middle of the century he must have already been an active preacher: the city of Middelburg paid out 12 *kronen* to ‘Goossen Haecx’, a Carmelite from Vlissingen who had frequently preached in Middelburg, on account of his doctorate in theology from the university of Paris.⁴⁶ Specific instances of his preaching have been recorded in

Hague for 13½ gulden; the next year, the sermons on the Passion in Wijk bij Duurstede brought in 12 gulden (plus another 6½ gulden for hearing confession).

⁴¹ J.F.A.N. Weijling, *Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van de wijbisschoppen van Utrecht tot 1580* (Utrecht: Wed. J.R. van Rossum, 1951), 251.

⁴² Hoven van Genderen, ‘Een gat in de markt’, 108.

⁴³ Weijling, *Geschiedenis van de wijbisschoppen van Utrecht*, 251.

⁴⁴ S.P. Wolfs, *Studies over Noordnederlandse dominicanen in de middeleeuwen*, Van Gorcum’s Historische Bibliotheek 91 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), 112.

⁴⁵ Van Heel, ‘Het Minderbroederklooster te Utrecht’, 137.

⁴⁶ Weijling, *Geschiedenis van de wijbisschoppen van Utrecht*, 240. In his capacity as auxiliary bishop, Hex also had some dealings with Modern Devout communities, though it is uncertain whether these went anywhere beyond professional contacts: he consecrated the church of the monastery Albergen (23 June 1471), the cemetery of the house of the Brothers of the Common Life in Doesburg (14 July 1472), and the choir and altar of those in Gouda (17 and 18 June 1473). See Weijling, *Geschiedenis van de wijbisschoppen van Utrecht*, 243–44.

1464/1465 in the Pieterskerk, and he also preached on 22 July 1466 in the Domkerk, on the day of its dedication.⁴⁷ In 1465 as well, he was asked to preach the Lenten sermons in the Oudmunster. People were called to listen to him by the ringing of the church bells and were likely happy to do so: the church canon noting down the expenses remarked how Hex was “an excellent preacher”.⁴⁸ Hex’s preaching was received exceedingly well: at one point after a sermon in 1467 on the grace of God he was asked by one or more laypeople to put it down in writing, so that they might keep it. The sermon appears in five different manuscripts as identified by the online *Bibliotheca Neerlandica Manuscripta & Impressa*.⁴⁹ In three lessons, Hex attempted to teach the readers (or attempted to teach the listener) how to acquire God’s grace; how to keep God’s Grace; and how to advance in God’s grace.⁵⁰ At the end of the text, the lessons are summarised in seven concise points to help with memorisation and carrying out the given advice. One of the manuscripts containing Hex’s sermon is a sermon collection written in 1469 for the wealthy Utrecht layman Dirck Borre van Amerongen (c. 1438–1527) who commissioned the work including the sermon.⁵¹ The sermon as it is written in this manuscript was copied directly from the text Hex provided, as the colophon reads:

This last sermon on God’s grace was preached by master Gosen, Doctor of Theology, brother of the Carmelites in Utrecht [added in the margin: and later bishop etcetera]. And he wrote it down for a few people on request in the year sixty-seven, from which this is copied.⁵²

The sermon of Goswinus Hex is thus one of the rare examples of a Middle Dutch sermon written down shortly after the preaching event by the preacher himself, and then further distributed, in this case among a lay audience. It also clearly shows that the preaching events by the Carmelites

⁴⁷ Hoven van Genderen, ‘Een gat in de markt’, 108.

⁴⁸ Het Utrechts Archief, Kapittel van Oudmunster te Utrecht, inv. nr. 499-2, 1465/1466: *predicatori eximio*. Quoted from Hoven van Genderen, ‘Een gat in de markt’, 108.

⁴⁹ Database BNM-I: <https://bnm-i.huygens.knaw.nl/>; s.v. “goswinus hex”.

⁵⁰ The text of the sermon/treatise has been edited and published by L. Reypens, ‘Nog een merkwaardig Diets tractaatje uit de scholastische en ridderlijke periode: Eene oufeninghe vander graciën Gods’, *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 34 (1960): 241–70. Reypers however did not know of manuscript The Hague, KB 128 D 9, and attributed the text to ‘a scholastically educated writer from the 13th or early 14th century’. Compare R. Lievens, ‘In margine. Een sermoen van de latere Utrechtse wijbisschop Goswinus Hex’, *Spiegel der Letteren* 7 (1964/1963): 48–49.

⁵¹ On Dirck Borre van Amerongen and this manuscript, see C. Zwart, ‘Religie, ridderschap en rijkdom. De levensvragen van Dirck Borre van Amerongen (ca. 1438-1527): marginale notities in een prekenverzamelhandschrift als bron’, *Madoc* 29 (2015): 107–17. The manuscript is currently kept as The Hague, KB 128 D 9.

⁵² See R. Lievens, ‘In margine’, 47: “Dit leste sermoen van Gods gracie heeft ghepredict meyster Gosen. doctor in theologi. broder vander kermeliten tUtrecht [dóórlopend in margine: ende na bisscop etc]. Ende heeftet om beden wil enighe personen ghescreven anno [tussengevoegd: m cccc en lager anno domini mº ccccº lxvijº] seven ende tsestich, dair dit uut is ghescreven etc.” Modern Dutch translation in Zwart, ‘Religie, ridderschap en rijkdom’, 114.

in Utrecht were open to laypeople, who were in turn captivated by the sermon and interested in reading it at a later point as well.

Frequent preaching was the norm in other Dutch cities as well, with attention being paid both to the quantity and quality of the provided sermons: the *collationes* in Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle took place amidst a vibrant preaching culture. Each city had at least one parish church as well as other religious buildings providing a designated space for public preaching. As early as 1206, Deventer had been divided in the two parishes of the Mariakerk and the Sint-Nicolaas or Bergkerk; the city also had a collegiate church (the Lebuinuskkerk), a preaching post maintained by the Dominicans in Zutphen, and a Franciscan monastery which included the Broederenkerk.⁵³ Gouda had as its parish church the monumental St Janskerk, and the city saw a sudden increase in the number of religious institutions around 1400 – among them the Franciscans, who settled near the city castle around 1418/1419, having been invited by the town magistrates.⁵⁴ Zwolle boasted three main churches around 1400, with its population of 3.000 to 4.000 souls: the parish church of St Michael as well as the Bethlehemkerk of the monastery of Augustinian Regulars and the Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk.⁵⁵ A suitable location for preaching was at the very least accounted for in these cities.

In Deventer, the Lebuinuskkerk surely saw its share of preaching activity, though like the collegiate churches in Utrecht it is unknown how often these sermons were meant for the lay public. The church certainly had a designated pulpit with an ornately carved sounding board, so that the words of the preacher might reach those listeners sitting or standing further away.⁵⁶ The Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk in Zwolle supposedly even had two pulpits, both fitted with sound boards: one on either side of the chancel screen, constructed in 1482 by Johan Kistemaker and

⁵³ S.P. Wolfs, *Middeleeuwse dominicanenkloosters in Nederland: bijdrage tot een monasticon* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 316; Slechte, *Oorsprong en Middeleeuwen*, 57–60.

⁵⁴ M. Schaap, 'Over "quaclappers" en ander schadelijk volk. De laat-middeleeuwse Noord-Nederlandse minderbroederkloosters gezien vanuit de interne machtsstrijd binnen de orde', in *Monastiek observantisme en Moderne Devotie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, ed. H. van Engen and G. Verhoeven, *Middeleeuwse Studies en Bronnen* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008), 17–41; K. Goudriaan, 'Gouda en de Moderne Devotie', *Holland, regionaal-historisch tijdschrift* 27 (1995): 119–41; Taal, *De Goudse kloosters in de middeleeuwen*.

⁵⁵ J. ten Hove, *Geschiedenis van Zwolle* (Zwolle: Historisch Centrum Overijssel, 2005), 134. Anton Hendrikman posits the number of 5.000 souls, though without reasoning for his conclusion. A.J. Hendrikman, H.J. Bach, and G.A.M. Keilholtz, *De Onze Lieve Vrouwebasiliek in Zwolle (sinds 1399). Geschiedenis in vogelvlucht*, 2nd ed. (Zwolle: Waanders, 2002), 4–5.

⁵⁶ This pulpit would have been of significant beauty when in 1538 the church wardens of Zutphen sought a model for a new pulpit, they decided upon the one in the Lebuinuskkerk as prime candidate: B. Dubbe, 'Interieur en inventaris tot 1800', in *De Grote of Lebuinuskkerk te Deventer*, ed. A.J.J. Mekking, *Clavis: Kunsthistorische Monografieën*, XI (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1992), 265–66.

Willem van Wellen.⁵⁷ And when the Dominicans in Zwolle remodelled their church around 1490, they made sure their pulpit was located in the middle of the nave on the north side, at the end of a hallway leading to the cloister – highly visible for everyone gathered in the church.⁵⁸ The other churches would have had one or more pulpits as well, though specific mentions are scarce. Of the pre-Reformation furniture of the St Janskerk in Gouda for instance, most was lost during the church fire of 1552; only at the turn of the seventeenth century is there mention of an ‘old pulpit’, presumably with decorations dating around 1535–1540.⁵⁹ The age of the pulpit itself remains unknown. In the present day Netherlands, only a small number of pre-Reformation pulpits survive, mostly dating from the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁶⁰ Five of these late medieval pulpits have been preserved in village churches, suggesting frequent preaching was facilitated not only in the larger cities, but also in the smaller villages in the Dutch countryside.⁶¹ Of course, the pulpit could be used for non-preaching matters as well, such as public announcements – even secular matters of importance like the price of grain, could be proclaimed from it.⁶² In 1395, for instance, the outcome of a conflict between the pastors of the Jacobikerk and Buurkerk in Utrecht on the one hand, and the local Franciscan and Dominican orders on the other, was made public from the pulpit.⁶³ Still, it was a piece of church furniture well suited to aiding preaching to a larger audience, and the appearance of pulpits in churches is evidence that sermons were indeed delivered regularly or even frequently: the infrastructure was in place to provide sermons to the lay population. As Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby puts it, “[t]he

⁵⁷ D.J. de Vries, ‘De middeleeuwse bouwgeschiedenis van de Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk te Zwolle’, *Jaarboek Monumentenzorg*, 1996, 199–200. The pulpits are included in the artist’s impression of the interior in Hendrikman, Bach, and Keilholtz, *De OLV-basiliek in Zwolle*, 9–10.

⁵⁸ I. Wormgoor, *Uit vrije wil en voor zijn zielenheil. Kerkelijke instellingen in Zwolle en hun functioneren binnen de stedelijke samenleving tot 1580* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), 203–9; D.J. de Vries, ‘Kerk en klooster tot 1580’, in *De Broerenkerk te Zwolle*, ed. A.J. Gevers and A.J. Mensema (Zwolle: Waanders, 1989), 25.

⁵⁹ H. van Dolder - de Wit, *De Sint-Janskerk in Gouda. Mensen en monumenten in een oude stadskerk*, 2nd ed. (Delft: Eburon, 2013), 121–23.

⁶⁰ K. van der Ploeg, ‘Een kleine geschiedenis van de preekstoel (met Groningse voorbeelden)’, *Groninger Kerken* 32 (2015): 123–27. In Italy, surviving late medieval and early modern pulpits are far more prevalent: see N.B.-A. Debby, *The Renaissance Pulpit. Art and Preaching in Tuscany, 1400-1550*, Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). Pulpits like these could be built out of plain wood, brick or stone, but it was not uncommon for them to be decorated with elaborate carvings or paintings depicting biblical scenes. For instance, the only surviving medieval wooden pulpit in the Netherlands (the pulpit of the village church of Woltersum, in the northern province of Groningen) was originally decorated with scenes from the Passion: R. Steensma, ‘De kerk van Woltersum. Verrassende ontdekkingen over de middeleeuwse inrichting’, *Groninger Kerken* 26 (2009): 1–8.

⁶¹ R. Steensma, ‘Drie middeleeuwse preekstoelen in Groningen’, *Groninger Kerken* 18 (2001): 70–76, especially 76.

⁶² Bogaers, *Aards, betrokken en zelfbewust I*, 1:1:58.

⁶³ Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 100–101.

pulpit is where the direct influence of the preacher and his vocation is most evident”, as the pulpit itself functions within a “preaching mentality”.⁶⁴

In addition, a pulpit need not be a fixed piece of church furniture: it could also be erected for special occasions. For instance, when the famed preacher Johannes Brugman was invited to Deventer in 1455, the city council spent money to erect a wooden pulpit in the churchyard. The financial accounts of that year record expenses made for 50 ‘middelnegele’ and 50 ‘spiker’ (both types of nails) “for the pulpit in the churchyard”.⁶⁵ Erecting a pulpit in the open air would facilitate preaching to a larger audience, as Brugman’s fame was well established at this point: indeed, the Deventer city council had personally invited him to come and preach.⁶⁶ Prior to coming to Deventer, Brugman had preached in Kampen on the day of the 11,000 Virgins (21 October) in 1455; here, too, he preached from a wooden pulpit erected outside in the churchyard.⁶⁷ Such a location outside of the church could accommodate a larger crowd eager to hear the preacher speak; indeed, it was not uncommon for the sermon to take place outside. Examples of such open-air preaching performances mainly stem from the international situation – in particular the Italian piazza’s, which shaped and were shaped by the urban preaching culture – but in the Low Countries as well, preaching was clearly not restricted to the interior of church buildings.⁶⁸

The financial accounts of Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle support the frequent use of the pulpit – or at the least, they show frequent preaching taking place in these cities. By their nature, these accounts do not offer much detail on preaching activity, as they are practical documents meant to record and account for the expenses made by the city councils in the course of the year. Particularly during the second half of the fifteenth century all three cities record expenses

⁶⁴ Debby, *The Renaissance Pulpit*, 11.

⁶⁵ NL-DvHCO, HCO Stadsarchief Deventer, ID 0698, Cameraars, inv. nr. 1.22b (Gotschalck Johansz. over 1455), f. 5r or f. 15r (inserted piece of paper): “Item an den preecstoel op den kerchhof 50 middelnegele 2 br. Item 50 spiker voer 1 ½ bt.”

⁶⁶ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.22b (Gotschalck Johansz. over 1455), f.7r: “Item des woensdages [nae 11.000 Maagdendag (22 October)] Johan Hoedemaker gegaen toe Campen myd enen brieve an brueder Johan Bruggeman hier te komen, om hier wat guedes te leren ende prediken, gegeven 10 kr.”. Brugman did not respond to the invitation immediately, though: first he went to Vollenhoven. He only travelled to Deventer in the middle of November 1455. On Brugman’s preaching tours, see F.A.H. van den Hombergh, *Leven en werk van Jan Brugman O.F.M. (± 1400 - 1473). Met een uitgave van twee van zijn tractaten* (Groningen: Wolters, 1967), 15–21, 22–34.

⁶⁷ F.A.H. van den Hombergh, ‘Brugman en de brandende ijver. Het bericht over zijn preken te Groningen in 1452’, in *Het Noorden in het midden. Opstellen over de geschiedenis van de Noord-Nederlandse gewesten in Middeleeuwen en Nieuwe Tijd*, ed. D.E.H. de Boer, R.I.A. Nip, and R.W.M. van Schaik, Groninger Historische Reeks 17 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1998), 248.

⁶⁸ See, for instance, P. Howard, ‘Aural Space of the Sacred in Renaissance Florence’, in *Renaissance Florence. A Social History*, ed. R.J. Crum and Paoletti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 376–93.

related to the preaching orders, or even payment for sermons directly. On some incidental occasions, the financial accounts do mention a few more details on preaching activity sponsored by the city council. For instance, for a sermon on Our Lady's Rosary, preached on the eve of Easter 1476 by a certain 'Father Johan', the Deventer city council paid out 1 'take' (a unit of measurement) of wine to the rectory.⁶⁹ That same year – indeed, the expense is recorded in the same passage – the council had paid out 1 unit of wine to “the doctor who preached here [on the Wednesday after Judica Sunday, the fifth Sunday of Lent]”, and another unit to the same preacher when he visited the Brothers of the Common Life at the Heer Florenshuis the following day.⁷⁰ In 1487, the city council of Gouda recorded an expense paid out in wine for the preacher who held a sermon on the Holy Name of Jesus – a theme often associated with such famed Italian preachers as Bernardino da Siena, emphasising the pan-European phenomenon of preaching as well as the existing connections between the Low Countries and Italy.⁷¹ The locations where preaching took place are generally not recorded, though somewhat of an exception can be found in the financial accounts of Zwolle over the year 1470: an Observant friar “in the St Nicholas” was paid out 2 units of wine – a confusing post, however, since Zwolle did not have a St Nicholas.⁷²

Cities also attracted preachers from further afield to come visit and showcase their prowess – the preaching of Johannes Brugman in Zwolle and Deventer in 1455 is a famous example of this. In Zwolle, he and his fellow friars were warmly welcomed and supported by the city council: the financial accounts list expenses for beer, bread, apples, nuts, and wine. The council not only provided for them but also joined them for at least one of their meals, as the accounts state: “when friar Brugman preached here, the Council lingered in the house with his brethren”, and expenses are recorded for the consumption of beer, bread, and the like.⁷³ The Deventer city

⁶⁹ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr.1.26c (Evert van Leyden over 1476), f.3v: “Item op paeschavent gesant in die wedeme 1 take, want heer Johan geprediket hadde van Onser Liever Vrouwen krensen”.

⁷⁰ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.26c (Evert van Leyden over 1476), f.3v: “Item [des wondesdages nae des sonnendages (psalm?) judica] den doctoir die hijr prekede, 1 take. Des donresdages dair nae den selven prediker tot heren Florens huis, 1 take”.

⁷¹ K. Goudriaan, ‘Gilden en broederschappen in de Middeleeuwen’, in *De Gilden in Gouda*, by K. Goudriaan et al. (Gouda: Stedelijke Musea Gouda, 1996), 26.

⁷² NL-ZIHCO, Historisch Centrum Overijssel Zwolle, 0700 Stadsbestuur Zwolle, archieven van de opeenvolgende stadsbesturen, inv. nr. 6019 (jaarrekening 1470), p. 108: “Item In die Nycolai den Observant, facit 2 q.” This payment was made out in the 12th month, between 30 November and 27 December.

⁷³ NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 6006 (jaarrekening 1455), p. 32: “Item doe broeder Bruggheeman hijr predicte, doe bleff die Raet mit hem bij sine bruederen opt huys eten. Verteert an bier, brot etc, facit 3 ar. gulden 2 k. 2 br.”; p. 77: “Item doe broeder Bruggeman hijr predict hadde, in 2 dagen om appele, noten, 6 weggen, 2 kanne biers facit 4 k. 1 ort. 1 br.”; p. 93: “Item broeder Bruggeman gheschenkt mit sinen bruederen tot 6 tijden doe hie hijr predicte, facit 15 q.”.

council also entertained Brugman after inviting him: they paid for and accompanied him to his meal with the Brothers of the Common Life in the Heer Florenshuis.⁷⁴ Moreover, when Brugman resumed his travels, the city paid for his transport to Arnhem, and Egbert ter Beke (then rector of the Heer Florenshuis) and another, unnamed priest accompanied him for this stretch.⁷⁵ The Dutch cities were well aware of the preaching prowess of travelling preachers, and were willing to support their activities.

This support was not restricted to preachers active in other Dutch cities. The maintained contact with German cities such as Cologne was after all not purely economical, and preachers moved along the same lines. For instance in 1476, the Deventer city council paid out 2 units of wine to “the preacher from Cologne who preached on the Tuesday after the Octave of Pentecost”.⁷⁶ Another post for 2 units of wine to a preacher from Cologne was made in the second financial account over that year, and on the Tuesday after the Nativity of Mary in 1480 a Carthusian from Cologne was paid 1 unit of wine as well.⁷⁷ Perhaps Father Johan, who, as mentioned above, preached on Our Lady’s Rosary in 1476, also had a connection with Cologne: at the time, it was a centre of devotion for Our Lady’s Rosary.⁷⁸ While most preachers were gifted one or more unit(s) of wine of unknown provenance – likely the ‘house wine’ of the council – in 1482 two Franciscan Observant friars from Münster were offered a quart of sweet wine and a quart of Rhine wine.⁷⁹ In any case, it was not unusual for city councils to provide for preachers from elsewhere. The financial accounts of Zwolle for instance also show that in 1460 a ‘Doctor from Osnabrück’ was reimbursed for his preaching on the Passion, and in 1465 an Observant friar

⁷⁴ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.22a (Willem toe Overeng over 1455), f. 5v: “Item des saterdages [nae sunte Elizabetten dach] Splitoff, Wiel, Leyden die brueder Bruggeman geselschap deden tot heren Florens huys, verteert 16 kr.”.

⁷⁵ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.22a (Willem toe Overeng over 1455), f. 5v: “Item des woensdages nae sente Katherinen. Aernt Butenhuys die breuder Johan Bruggeman ende sinen gesellen vuerde tot Arnhem, ende heren Egbert ter Beke ende enen anderen priester weder omme brachte die myd Bruggeman gevare weren, gegeven 3 lb.”.

⁷⁶ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.26c (Evert van Leyden over 1476), f.3v: “Des dinxdages nae belaecken pinxteren den prediker van Collen, 2 taken”.

⁷⁷ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.26d (Bruen Andriesz. over 1476), f. 7v: “Item een predeker van Collen, 2 taken”; NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 27a (Gelmer Gelmers over 1480), f. 5v: “Ende enen karthuyser van Collen, 1 take”.

⁷⁸ A rosary confraternity had been established in Cologne on 8 September 1475 by Jakob Sprenger, and boasted some 8,000 members in its first year. The development of rosary meditations is also connected to the (Dominican) Observant movement, which was clearly active in the Low Countries as well, in particular Zwolle. See A. Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose. The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 24, 73–80. I thank Joanka van der Laan for pointing me in this direction.

⁷⁹ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 2.227 (Gelmer Gelmers over 1482), f. 5v: “Item des dinxdages post Oculi, twee Observanten vander mynrebroeder orden van Monster geschenckt 1 quarte basters ende 1 quarte rijnenwijen, tsamen 10 stivers”.

from Zutphen preached ten times between 23 March and 19 April.⁸⁰ The Dominican Observant preaching in 1457 likely also came from outside the city, as a Dominican monastery in Zwolle was only constructed in 1465. What is unusual in this instance is not the sponsoring of an external preacher, but that he was provided with (only?) bread and beer – visiting preachers were commonly rewarded with gifts of wine.⁸¹

These are incidental payments for individual preachers, but the Dutch cities regularly sponsored preaching activity as well. The financial administration of Gouda, for instance, does not mention any particular sermons or visiting preachers, but it frequently records donations and payments to the local mendicant orders. The oldest surviving record dates from 1437, and shows that the council maintained close relations with (among others) the Franciscans, for instance, by offering them gifts of wine or council members joining the friars for a meal paid for by the city of Gouda on special occasions, such as for the feast of St Francis (4 October).⁸² This close relationship had already been established well before 1437, as the accounts list the gift of two jugs of wine to the Friars Minor on Christmas Eve explicitly as a customary gift. These gifts also go out to, for instance, the school master and the organ player, confirming that the Franciscan monastery was a well-established part of the city and valued for its activities.⁸³ Indeed, in the following years as well, the phrase ‘as is customary’ is appended to gifts of wine to various individuals and institutions on Christmas’ Eve, the Franciscans among them. The city of Gouda clearly supported the religious activities taking place within it, even going so far as to donate part of the surplus the city treasurers had accumulated over 1447 to the Franciscan monastery.⁸⁴ Considering the importance of public preaching for the mendicant orders, support for the religious communities in Gouda is very much a show of support for frequent preaching.

⁸⁰ NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 6011 (jaarrekening 1460), p. 89: “Item den dottoer van Osenbruggen *qui predicavit hic passionem Domini*, hem tot 3 dagen ghescenkt”; NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 6015 (jaarrekening 1465), p. 88: “Item den prediker vander Observanten van Zuytphen tot 10 tijden, facit 20 q.”

⁸¹ NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 6008 (jaarrekening 1457), p. 83: “Item 1 k. voir bier ende broet den Observant”.

⁸² SAMH, 0001.1125 (stadsrekening 1437), f. 5v: “Item gescenkt die minrebroeders doet tgerecht mitten [?] ende mit sommige uter vroescap dair aten”. Meals like this are not recorded for every year, but frequently enough to confirm a maintained relation. For instance, in 1458 the judiciary dined with the friars on St Francis’ Day as well as on St Stephen’s Day, and the council delivered two jugs of wine on Christmas Eve. SAMH, 0001.1136 (stadsrekening 1458), f. 12v: “Gescenct den mynrebroeders op sunte Fransiscus dach een maeltijt, doe tgherecht daer at. Noch een maeltijt doe hoer averste hier was, cost 15 gulden. Op sunte Stevens dach 2 kannen wijns. Noch 2 kannen wijns op Kersavont, dat gherechts maeltijt cost 17 gulden, facit 20 lb. 4 s”.

⁸³ SAMH, 0001.1125 (stadsrekening 1437), f. 5v: “Item gescenght upten heyiligen Kersavont als kustumlic is (...) den minrebroederen 2 kannen wijns, den scoelmeesteren 2 kannen wijns, den organist 1 kanne wijns (...)”.

⁸⁴ SAMH, 0001.1130 (stadsrekening 1447), f. 25r: “Item so hebben die tresoriers noch an golde dat sij hier bewijsen ende opleggen comt 63 lb. Ende dese 63 lb voirseit sijn gegeven bij goedduncken tsgerechts ende der vroetscap (...) ende den mynrebroeders 14 lb (...)”.

The financial accounts of Deventer and Zwolle show the same regular sponsoring of preaching activity, in addition to their incidental payments for a sermon mentioned above. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Deventer council regularly paid out gifts of wine to preaching friars, specifically preachers tied to the Observant movement.⁸⁵ These sermons were, however, not tied to a particular feast day or period of the year. For instance, in the year 1456, gifts of wine were made out to the Observants on the second day after St Bartholomew's Day, the Sunday after St Egidius' Day, and twice on the Nativity of Mary.⁸⁶ In 1468, however, an Observant was recompensed for his preaching on the Sunday after All Saints' Day, and another on the second day after New Year.⁸⁷ The topics on which these Observant friars preached were generally not recorded, though occasionally the records mention that the sermon was on the Passion – for instance in 1470, when an Observant preached on Maundy Thursday, or again the following year. In contrast, the sermons preached on St Martin's Day in both 1470 and 1471 are paid out without further information.⁸⁸

Zwolle as well frequently paid out gifts of wine to the preachers operating in the city in the same period. The financial accounts for the years 1465–1475 in particular list a sizeable number of expenses for sermons preached by Observant friars, with some preachers providing sermons multiple times in the same month. These friars might well have been from the Dominican order, as an Observant Dominican monastery was established just outside the city walls in 1465. Though this might account for a surge in preaching activity, Observant preachers were already active in Zwolle prior having a monastery, and they were actively sponsored by the city council. The 'doctor of Osnabrück' visiting in 1460 and delivering a sermon on the Passion has already been mentioned above, and in the same year expenses were made for three different preachers

⁸⁵ On the late medieval Observant movement, see, for instance, J.D. Mixson, 'Religious Life and Observant Reform in the Fifteenth Century', *History Compass* 11/3 (2013): 201–14. Also see the individual contributions to J.D. Mixson and B. Roest, eds., *A Companion to Observant Reform in the Late Middle Ages and Beyond*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 59 (Boston: Brill, 2015).

⁸⁶ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.22d (Herman Bueving over 1456), f. 7r: "Item des anderen dage [nae sente Bartholomeus dach] den Observanten geschenket 1 take malemazeie by Albert [Buesel]"; "Item [op den sonnendagen nae Egidij] den Observanten geschenket by Albert [Buesel] 1 take malemazeie"; f. 7v: "Item op Onse Vrouwen dach nativitatis den Observanten geschenket des myddages bij Kelrehals 1 take ende des avondes 1 take".

⁸⁷ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 24f (Bruyn Andriesz. over 1468), f. 6r: "Item in Bruyns vijfte maent des sondages nae alle hilgen, den Opservant die hier predikede 1 take"; "Item noch den Observant die hijr predikede [op den anderen dach nae nyeijaers dach?] 1 take".

⁸⁸ NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 25a (Bruyn Andriesz. over 1470), f. 6r: "Item op den witten donredach den Observant die de passy prediken solde 1 take"; "Item In Bruyns vijfte maent op sente Mertens dach den Observanten 1 take"; NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr. 1.25c (Lambert Buesel over 1471), f. 5v: "Den Observant die die passy predikede 1 take"; "Item in Lamberts vijfte maent den Observante die sante Merten hijr predikede 1 take".

in two different months.⁸⁹ Though Observant preachers were asked to provide Lenten or Easter sermons as well, their services were not limited to those moments in particular: expenses for their preaching were recorded throughout the year. For instance, in 1465, the financial accounts record Observant preaching in the first month (two times), as well as in the second (four times), third (two times, with the preacher being mentioned as an Observant Dominican from Zutphen), fifth (ten times, by an Observant from Zutphen as well), eighth (one time), and eleventh (three times, likely by two different preachers) months.⁹⁰ Though the financial accounts of Zwolle are stingy with exact details on the preaching activities taking place within the city, they, like those of Gouda and Deventer, nonetheless provide a clear indication that quality preaching was encouraged and sponsored by the various city councils. From these snippets of information and the frequency with which preaching friars appear in the financial accounts, it is clear not only that the late medieval Dutch cities saw their fair share of preaching, but also that their councils took an active interest in quality preaching.

The examined financial accounts thus show conscious support for the preaching orders active in Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle that is akin to the situation in Utrecht. Moreover, this is only evidence of urban preaching activity collated from the financial records of the city councils, which had not been utilised for this purpose before. Data on the amount of preaching actually delivered in the Low Countries are however scattered across a multitude of both primary (such as agreements between religious communities) and secondary source materials. In Gouda, for instance, the city's support for the Franciscan order is well attested in the financial records, but their preaching is never mentioned directly. Yet the friars also made agreements with the parish church of Sint-Jan on when they were allowed to preach in their own church or deliver sermons in St Jan itself.⁹¹ Dominican friars from Utrecht assisted in providing pastoral care to the population of Gouda and on occasion preached in St Jan, and the Carmelite order and the Augustinians from Dordrecht had similar arrangements.⁹² In Zwolle, the Augustinian Regulars of the Bethlehemklooster had opened their chapel for public preaching as soon as the monastery was established in 1308, and when in 1465 a new Dominican Observant monastery was

⁸⁹ NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 6011 (jaarrekening 1460), p. 91: "Item den Observant tot 2 tijden, facit 4 q."; p. 92: "Item den Observant, facit 2 q. Item noch den Observant, facit 2 q."

⁹⁰ NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 6016 (jaarrekening 1465), p. 85: "Item den Observant tot 2 tijden, facit 4 q."; p. 86: "Item enen Observant tot 4 tijden, facit 8 q."; "Item den Observant van Zuytphen *ordine predicatoris* tot 2 tijden, facit 4 q."; p. 88: "Item den prediker vander Observanten van Zuytphen tot 10 tijden, facit 20 q."; p. 91: "Item den Observant vander prediker orden, facit 2 q. (...) Item den Observant tot 2 tijden, facit 4 q."

⁹¹ D. van Heel, *De Minderbroeders te Gouda. Deel 1: 1418-1572* (Gouda: [s.n.], 1974), 11–12, 34–38.

⁹² Pegel, 'Prediking voor leken in Utrecht', 100; Taal, *De Goudse kloosters in de middeleeuwen*, 9–11.

established just outside the city walls, it received aid and cooperation from the city government.⁹³ Although the Dominicans certainly provided sermon to the lay populace, in their foundational charter the word ‘preaching’ is entirely absent; the charter only promises that the brothers will work to the betterment of the city and the edification of its population.⁹⁴

For the interested layperson, the late medieval Dutch cities thus offered a wide array of religious activities, with multiple options available to engage in the communication of religious knowledge. The absence of *reportationes* or direct accounts of public preaching for the Low Countries is not indicative of the number of sermons available to the lay population. As this paragraph has shown, the evidence for this preaching activity lies concealed in a wide range of different sources which are not primarily concerned with documenting such events: the financial accounts of the cities, for instance, show clear support for both incidental sermon preaching as well as cultivating an urban preaching culture. It is likely that these findings are but the tip of the iceberg: as the net is cast wider to include more and more diverse source materials, ever more instances of public preaching can be found. Similarly to how the Brothers of the Common Life took care to provide their *collationes* after the services in the church had been completed, mendicant preaching was regulated to avoid conflicts and not draw people away from the parish church. For example, in 1469 Bishop David van Bourgondië mediated in a conflict between the Dominicans in Zwolle and the parish church, reaching the agreement that the friars were not allowed to preach in their own chapel on certain feast days when the pastor was preaching, unless the pastor had given them special permission.⁹⁵ Yet such tension between the parish clergy and other organisers of religious activities does not negate the fact that for the interested layperson sermons were readily available. The *collationes* took place within this urban preaching culture, providing yet another opportunity for laypeople to be engaged in the communication of religious knowledge.

⁹³ Wormgoor, *Uit vrije wil en voor zijn zielenheil*, 41–47. For the architectonical history of the Dominican monastery, see D.J. de Vries, 'Kerk en klooster tot 1580,' in *De Broerenkerk te Zwolle*, ed. A.J. Gevers and A.J. Mensema (Zwolle: Waanders, 1989), 9–36.

⁹⁴ NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 4252-CH468.16: “(...) sij professij doende werden op dat Gad in onsen leven geeert, die guede stat van Swolle gebetert ende die gantse gemeynthe gesticht werde”. In 1479 the city of Zwolle was even authorised to act as patrons or protectors of this monastery: see the charter kept as NL-ZIHCO, 0700, inv. nr. 4253-CH479.11.

⁹⁵ Wormgoor, *Uit vrije wil en voor zijn zielenheil*, 216.

6.3 Eager for a good sermon

As has been shown in the previous paragraph, the population of the cities in the medieval Low Countries had ample opportunity to attend a sermon, a situation which was in part facilitated and even encouraged by secular authorities. However, the frequent availability of preaching does not in itself reveal whether there was any demand for it: did the provided sermons even draw an audience, or did the preacher climb the pulpit to show his oratory skills to an empty church? Just as the culture of preaching in the Low Countries has remained largely unexplored, the people listening to and interacting with the preacher in particular have been largely invisible in Dutch research. However, this section will show that in the Low Countries as elsewhere, urban laypeople were generally eager to visit a good sermon or read textual copies of it, as they were considered edifying as well as entertaining. These goals were not mutually exclusive, as will be discussed as well: preachers well knew that engaging their audience meant they had to have something worth saying as well as keep the audience's attention. Laypeople gathering to hear a sermon were, after all, not afraid to make their opinion known if the sermon did not meet their expectations. The city council of Utrecht berated one Jacop Linsen in 1444 for "disrupting the Dominican cursor during his sermon with rude words and gestures", and in 1498 a certain Fye was called to the stand for "shouting at the priest during his sermon: Sir, you are fooling yourself!"⁹⁶ Of course, preachers were not always happy to see their audience comment on their sermons, especially when their reactions were negative. An *exemplum* in the *Speculum exemplorum* (printed in Deventer by Richard Paffraet in 1481) tells of an occurrence in Mainz where a shoemaker harshly curse a preacher who railed against fashionable pointed shoes: "God make this priest drop with the falling sickness; can he not preach on anything else but pointed shoes?"⁹⁷ Of course, the *exemplum* discourages such behaviour: on his way home the shoemaker's hair is torn off, skin and all, by a passing devil. Still, outbursts and interruptions during preaching show that laypeople were genuinely interested in hearing and experiencing a high-quality sermon – and were prepared to make themselves heard when the sermon was not up to par.

⁹⁶ Quoted from Pegel, 'Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes', 85: "In 1444 werd Jacop Linsen voor de stedelijke overhead ter verantwoording geroepen, omdat hij 'der cursor vanden Jacopinen [dominicanen] in sinen sermoen gestoort soude hebben mit onredeliken woerden en geberden'. Iets dergelijks overkwam ook Fye uit het 'Sunte Nicolaessteechken' in 1498, omdat ze 'geseyt heeft tot enen priester onder 't sermoen: Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes'!"

⁹⁷ Quoted from Kruitwagen, 'Speculum Exemplorum', 446: "God geve dussen papen dat vallendovel in syn plat; kan he anders nyet predeken dan van snabbeden schoen?"

Attending the sermons of a trained, well educated preacher was something of an outing, a special event. Preachers also facilitated this themselves, announcing their visit in advance to allow laypeople to gather in time. Before Geert Grote visited a city to preach there, he sent out a disciple or assistant in advance – often the young cleric Johannes Brinckerinck, who would later guide the women’s convent at Diepenveen – to announce his sermon by way of a short note, stating: “On that day and at that time and in that place master Geert Grote will preach a sermon”.⁹⁸ In this way Florens Radewijns, for instance, heard about an upcoming sermon of Grote and wished to hear it; Grote’s words touched him so much that he joined him as a disciple.⁹⁹ Not every listener was convinced, however, and Grote’s assistant would also help with carrying the books with which he proved the soundness of his doctrine. People could directly engage with the preacher and his words: Thomas a Kempis records one instance of Grote’s preaching in Zwolle where a distressed man cried out that Grote should not scare the people with his preaching. Grote, of course, did not comply, prompting the response: “then please let us go to hell in peace!” – Grote instead countered by saying that even though this person did not wish to hear his words, others were certainly eager to have him continue.¹⁰⁰ The poor man in this anecdote seemingly went to the sermon expecting to be at least somewhat entertained, but he got more than he bargained for in the fearsome calls for repentance. Still, he had gone of his own volition, and he was not afraid to make his own opinion on good preaching known.

Geert Grote was not unique in travelling and preaching with one or more aides at his side: Johannes Brugman is often mentioned together with ‘his companions’, and when the Italian Observant Franciscan Giovanni da Capestrano (1386–1456) ventured north of the Alps he had with him several ‘minions’ (*sattelites*) who spread rumours of miracles and healings, both

⁹⁸ Brinkerink, ‘Biographieën’, 417: “Ende als hij precken wolde, soe plach hij ene van sinen discipelen toe senden, die een breekfken screef, daerin stont: „Op dien dach ende op die tijt ende op die steede wil meyster Gerijt die Grote predicken.” “ Brinckerinck and other assistants also wrote down sermons: if Grote was ever accused of heresy or spreading unorthodox thoughts, their notes could prove this was untrue. See Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 84; G. Épiney-Burgard, *Gerard Grote (1340-1384) et les debuts de la Devotion moderne*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische geschichte Mainz 54 (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1970), 183.

⁹⁹ D.A. Brinkerink, ‘Biographieën van beroemde mannen uit den Deventer-kring’, *Archief voor de geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 28 (1902): 1–2: “Doe dat geruchte van meyster Gerijt die Grote tot sinen oren quam, crech hij alte grote begerte sine woerde te hoeren. Ende uytter ordinancien Godes soe quam hij eens sine woerde te hoeren, uyt welken hij noch meer onsteken waert tot noch meerre begerten (...)”.

¹⁰⁰ Pohl, *Opera Omnia*, VII:337–38; Pegel, ‘Heer ghy neemt uselven by der noes’, 84–85: “Laat ons dan tenminste in vrede ter helle varen!”

before and after the sermon.¹⁰¹ The notifications Brinckerinck or another assistant would put up on the church doors were not without effect, as Grote's sermons were generally well visited. In the chronicle of the Agnietenberg, Thomas a Kempis mentions how between two sermons (one in the morning, and one after noon) Grote often stayed in the church to pray or wandered the cemetery to meditate. Some people were so eager to hear him speak again, "they were already looking for a good spot to sit around the pulpit, in the church or in the cemetery."¹⁰² Laypeople looking for a place to sit around the pulpit, of course, strongly suggests they were interested in what the preacher had to say.

Though the account of Thomas a Kempis is in part hagiographic, this particular detail can be corroborated with archival and pictorial sources. Inventories of households in Zwolle and Deventer on occasion mention so-called sermon chairs which allowed the visitor to listen to the preacher with their full attention, without running the risk of getting distracted by physical discomfort. Though such inventories are

Figure 4 Examples of portable sermon chairs ('preekstoeltjes'). Reproduced from Dubbe, 'Huisraad in de late middeleeuwen', p. 29.

relatively rare for the late medieval Low Countries, in a list of 37 inventories drawn up between 1455 and 1505 in Deventer and Zwolle 4 different households contain a total of 8 sermon chairs.¹⁰³ Roloff vander Bussch, a furrier who left his house in Deventer in 1476, owned two

¹⁰¹ J.D. Mixson, 'Bernardino's Rotting Corpse? A Skeptic's Tale of Capestano's Preaching North of the Alps', *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017): 84. Assistants were also instrumental in documenting the lives of the preacher. In some cases, assistants kept diaries of the travels they undertook, which could then be used to write the *vita* of the preacher and help with canonisation. Such was the case, for example, with the Italian preacher Bernardino da Feltre (1439–1494), whose preaching tours were recorded by his assistant Francesco Canali in a diary that is now lost. Bernardino Guslino later drew on this diary to write his *Vita di Bernardino da Feltre* (1573). As famous preachers are more rare in the Netherlands than they are in Italy, it remains unknown how this compares to the Low Countries. See I. Checcoli, 'The Vitae of Leading Italian Preachers of the Franciscan Observance: Fifteenth and Sixteenth-Century Hagiographical Constructions', *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013): 286–87, 292–93.

¹⁰² U. de Kruijf, J. Kummer, and F. Pereboom, eds., *Een klooster ontsloten. De kroniek van Sint-Agnietenberg bij Zwolle door Thomas van Kempen, in vertaling en met commentaar* (Kampen: Stichting IJsselacademie, 2000), 147; M.I. Pohl, ed., *Thomae Hemerken a Kempis: Opera Omnia*, vol. VII (Friburgi Brisigavorum: Herder, 1922), 336–337: *aut in ecclesia vel in coemeterio residentes, loca opportuna circa ambonem occupabant: quatenus verbum Dei hora competentis clarius perciperent ex auditu*. In late medieval France, regulations were in place for listeners to sit on the ground or on chairs and benches, or to remain standing, both when the sermon was preaching inside or in the open air: Taylor, *Soldiers of Christ*, 28–29.

¹⁰³ Dubbe, 'Huisraad in de late middeleeuwen', 37. Also see p. 29 for a description and depiction of a typical sermon chair.

such ‘preckstoelen’.¹⁰⁴ Johan Bitter and his wife Yde were quite well off and owned such worldly items as an old harness and a chessboard, but they were concerned with their eternal soul as well: thanks to their two sermon chairs they could attend the sermon in style.¹⁰⁵ The people of Zwolle were also familiar with this type of chair: an example can be found in a household inventory from 1473.¹⁰⁶ That these chairs were used to provide convenient seating during the sermon or other such services is further confirmed by the inventory of the Boetselaersborg (near ‘s-Heerenberg) from 1556, which mentions “another sermon chair that one can carry to church”.¹⁰⁷ ‘Sermon chair’ is thus not merely an archaic name for the type of seat but a proper descriptive term. Designed to be portable, these sermon chairs could have pulled double duty and be used to comfortably listen to the *collatio* as well, if the Brothers did not provide (enough) seating – though the Collatiehuis in Gouda owned a number of cushions or pillows to sit on (see paragraph 3.1).¹⁰⁸

These portable sermon chairs also appear frequently in paintings, woodcuts, or other images of a sermon being preached – scenes that also show that there was clearly an audience for the sermons provided. For instance, the opening woodcut on the title page to the early printed *Brugmans regel* – not so much a

Figure 5 Attending the sermon, one listener is sitting on a high-backed sermon chair. Woodcut from *Brugmans regel* (after 1500), showing the preacher preaching from the pulpit with several people in attendance. Image reproduced from Mees, ‘Brugmans regel’, p. 228.

¹⁰⁴ NL-DvHCO, ID 0722, Rechterlijk Archief Deventer, inv. nr. 57 (Register van acten van in-en uitleiding in en uit erfhuizen, gepasseerd voor burgemeesters ter Hoge Bank, 1453-1495), p. 114–115.

¹⁰⁵ NL-DvHCO, ID 0722, inv. nr. 57 (Register van acten van in-en uitleiding 1453-1495), p. 141–143; this inventory was drawn up in 1479. The two sermon chairs, noted down as a ‘precxstoel’ and ‘preckstoel’ appear in the account quite some space apart; presumably they were both kept in a separate place.

¹⁰⁶ NL-ZIHC0, 0700, inv. nr. 19 (‘Dat boek mit de starre’ of ‘Registrum diversorum actuum’), p. 146. Another example is supposedly found in a household inventory from 1505, though I have not been able to confirm this: see Dubbe, ‘Huisraad in de late middeleeuwen’, 29, 82n16, n35.

¹⁰⁷ A.P. van Schilfgaarde, “De inboedel van den Boetselaersborg te ‘s-Heerenberg in 1556,” in *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Gelre* 31 (1928), p. 192: “Noch den predickstoelken, dat men ter kercken draegt”. Quoted from Dubbe, ‘Huisraad in de late middeleeuwen’, 29.

¹⁰⁸ Gouda, SAMH, 0091.16 (Lijsten van huisraad en boeken, met het Collatiehuis van de Heilige-Geestmeesters ontvangen, en een opsomming van huisrenten, toebehorende aan het Collatiehuis, ca. 1438–1447/1456. 1438–1456). The suggestion that these were used during the *collatio* is from Dlabáčová, *Literatuur en observantie*, 34–36.

monastic rule as a series of guidelines for devout laypeople to live well, supposedly written by the famed Johannes Brugman – shows the preacher on the pulpit, with several people around him (see Figure 5).¹⁰⁹ One man is standing, four people appear to be sitting on the ground, and right in the centre there is someone seated on a three-legged chair with a high back. A different type of chair appears in the painting *The preaching of St. Géry* or *The pastoral sermon* (c. 1480–1485) by an unknown Flemish master: an older man sits in a small folding chair, while other members of the audience remain standing or kneel down before the preacher.¹¹⁰ The painted scene takes place in Brussels, as the church of St Gudele is visible in the background; however, sermon chairs were most certainly not unique to the Low Countries – which is of course not surprising, as laypeople throughout Europe exhibited a strong interest in quality preaching. For instance, on the panel *St Peter Preaching in the Presence of St Mark*, painted by Fra Angelico around 1433, St Mark is depicted as a member of the audience, sitting on a small chair or stool and writing down the sermon delivered by St Peter – incidentally emphasising the relationship between the spoken words preached from the pulpit, and the written words of the sermon.¹¹¹

The laypeople of the Low Countries were thus as interested in quality preaching as people elsewhere: a proper sermon was something to be experienced, and while educational, it could also be something of a day out. The Deventer city council in 1476 explicitly invited a friar to preach on the Passion to some of the council members to entertain them: good preachers were valued for their performative qualities as much as (or perhaps even more than) their theological learning.¹¹² The usual recompense for preachers invited by the Deventer council was 1 unit of wine, but this entry recorded expenses for 3 units: possibly, the council members attending the sermon enjoyed a glass as well. As cited above (paragraph 6.2), it was not uncommon for city councils to join a (visiting) preacher for dinner: when Brugman came to Deventer the council

¹⁰⁹ Kept as Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg im Breisgau, Ink. K 4449. On this book, as well as the text, see G. Jaspers, ‘Brugmans boeck ende zijn regel. Een trilogie met als appendix een catalogus van laat-middeleeuws bijgeloof’, in *Jaarboek van het Nederlands Genootschap van Bibliofielen* 1995 (Amsterdam: De Buitenkant, 1996), 47–68; L.J. Mees, ‘“Brugmans Regel”: The Rediscovery of an Early Printed Edition’, *Quaerendo* 2 (1972): 227–33.

¹¹⁰ This painting is now kept in the Louvre, Paris:

see https://www.wga.hu/html_m/m/master/zunk_fl/15_paint/2/03gudule.html (last consulted 23 September 2020).

¹¹¹ This painting is the left panel of the predella of the Linaioli altarpiece, now kept in the Museo di San Marco, Florence: see https://www.wga.hu/html_m/a/angelico/02/predell1.html (last consulted 23 September 2020).

¹¹² NL-DvHCO, ID 0698, inv. nr.1.26c (Evert van Leyden over 1476), f. 3v: ‘Item op Paesch dach den brueder die de passie gepredict hadde bij een deel vander raede om hem vrolich te maken 3 taken’. An alternate reading of this post is that the preacher was given 3 units of wine to make him happy. However, I think this is unlikely, as the normal recompense for preachers (even in the same entry in the financial accounts) is 1 unit of wine.

dined with him at the Heer Florenshuis, and the council of Gouda frequently attended and paid for a meal with the local Franciscan convent.

Accounts of the actual preaching events are far more rare for the Dutch situation than they are for, for instance, Italy. As preaching is a pan-European phenomenon, however, it is unlikely they hugely differed. For instance, the preaching of Johannes Brugman shows strong similarities to the methods used by Italian preachers. This does not have to be surprising: his conversion from the Conventual to the Observant Franciscans occurred during his stay in Rome in 1445.¹¹³ Following his stay in Italy, Brugman became a staunch supporter of the Observant movement and worked hard to spread

Figure 6 Drawing of Johannes Brugman with a crucifix in the *Digestum vetus*.

Image reproduced from Lettinck, *Praten als Brugman*, p. 21.

its ideals to the Low Countries. During the octave of the feast of St Francis (between 4 and 10 October), 1462, Brugman preached in Amsterdam to support the foundation of a new Observant convent, against the will of the local clergy as well as the city council. In response, the municipality ordered two priests to attend his sermon and draw up a report which included a description of the troublesome preacher at work.¹¹⁴ Brugman had already been preaching for a while when he set up for an imposing crescendo. He suddenly took a slip of parchment (perhaps from his sleeve?) and began to have a dialogue with himself, ‘accusing himself’ of having a hidden agenda and not practising what he preached, and then denying the accusations. He then presented a crucifix, and made his audience part of the preaching act by asking that all those who had gathered in support raise their hand.¹¹⁵ Brugman seems to have used a crucifix for his preaching performances more often: a contemporary drawing of him, in the *Digestum vetus* or city book of Kampen depicts him preaching on the day of the 11,000 Virgins in 1455, ‘showing the True Cross’ to the gathered people (see Figure).¹¹⁶ This was not a unique quirk of his: for instance Roberto da Lecce (1425–1495), one of the

¹¹³ Jaspers, ‘Brugmans boeck ende zijn regel’, 48.

¹¹⁴ This report is contained in Leiden, UB LTK 821 (Zeventien oorkonden rakende het St.-Margarethaklooster te Amsterdam, 1421 tot 1568). On this report, see Mertens, ‘The Sermons of Johannes Brugman’, 256–58; Hombergh, *Leven en werk van Jan Brugman*, 31–32; W. Moll, *Johannes Brugman en het godsdienstig leven onzer vaderen in de vijftiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: G. Portielje & zoon, 1854), 129–39. Moll cites the names of the two priests as Bartholomaeus Pietersz. and Hilbrand Willemsz.: Moll, *Johannes Brugman en het godsdienstig leven onzer vaderen*, 136.

¹¹⁵ Mertens, ‘The Sermons of Johannes Brugman,’ 256–257.

¹¹⁶ Kept as Stadsarchief Kampen, Toegangsnummer 1, inv. nr. 8 (“Decretum dominorum cum picturis alias Digestum Vetus. Register”. Register bevattende stedelijke keuren, vonnissen, aantekeningen van financiële zaken

most popular Franciscan preachers in fifteenth-century Italy, also used a crucifix and even added a crown of thorns to his performance.¹¹⁷ Likewise, the famed preacher Giovanni da Capestrano (1386–1456) preferred to use a simple wooden cross without crucifix, painted red, which he would show to the audience during and after his sermons to remind them of the ultimate reason for his preaching.¹¹⁸

Visiting a sermon thus entailed more than passively listening to a static figure on the pulpit: a trained preacher was an artist of the word, and the dividing line between preaching and acting was really quite thin.¹¹⁹ The church environment too aided this dynamic communication of religious knowledge taking place in the sermon, as the preacher could engage with frescoes, sculptures, or paintings to deliver a spectacular and memorable sermon.¹²⁰ Such techniques aided memorisation of the sermon's message, and audiences would have been quite familiar with them. Indeed, when the famed Bernardino da Siena (1380–1444) mapped the divisions and subdivisions of his Quaresima preached in Florence in March 1424 on the six wings of the seraphim, this could only be an effective structure because of his audience's familiarity with the image of the seraphim from works of art.¹²¹ Though the specifics might differ, the methods used by Italian preachers were equally effective in the context of the Low Countries, and there

en optekening van dagelijkse gebeurtenissen, 1454–1473). The *Digestum vetus* was set to be digitalised, but the project was never completed. See D.E.H. de Boer and E. Franktot, 'Digestum digitaal. Kamper verleden op de elektronische snelweg', *Kamper Almanak* 78 (2006): 33–50; F.D. Zeiler, 'Het Digestum Vetus: een blik in het stedelijk leven in de late middeleeuwen', *Kamper Almanak* 90 (2018): 173–214.

¹¹⁷ B.M. Kienzle, 'Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record', in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. C. Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 106.

¹¹⁸ M.G. Muzzarelli, *Pescatori di uomini. Predicatori e piazze alla fine del Medioevo* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2005), 121. Whether Johannes Brugman has ever met Giovanni da Capestrano is unclear, as his whereabouts during his stay in Italy are not precisely known. However, he likely knew of him, as a painting in the Marienkirche in Kempen (Germany) depicts Brugman kneeling at Capestrano's feet: see W. Haakma Wagenaar, 'De schilderijen en hun plaats in het gebouw', in *De Grote of Lebuinuskkerk te Deventer*, ed. A.J.J. Mekking, Clavis: Kunsthistorische Monografieën, XI (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1992), 81.

¹¹⁹ In addition to this, religious plays could be set up or directed by preachers, effectively turning the play itself into a sermon. Religious plays in general were meant to instruct both players and audience. See P. Delcorno, "'We Have Made It for Learning': The Fifteenth-Century Florentine Religious Play "Lazero Ricco e Lazero Povero" as a Sermon in the Form of Theatre', in *From Words to Deeds: The Effectiveness of Preaching in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. M.G. Muzzarelli, Sermon 12 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 65–97. The similarities between acting and preaching allowed actors in seventeenth-century Naples to transform into proper preachers without much difficulty, as their skillset was applicable to both professions: T. Megale, 'Animated Pulpits. On Performative Preaching in Seventeenth-Century Naples', *Journal of Early Modern Studies* 7 (2018): 130–34.

¹²⁰ See, for instance, Debby, *The Renaissance Pulpit*, 129–46; P. Delcorno, 'A Fifteenth-Century Painted Sermon at the Door of the Cathedral of Bressanone', *Medieval Sermon Studies* 55 (2011): 55–83.

¹²¹ L. Bolzoni, 'Predicazione in volgari e uso delle immagini, da Giordano da Pisa a San Bernardino da Siena', in *Letteratura in forma di sermone. I rapporti tra predicazione e letteratura nei secoli XIII–XVI: Atti del seminario di studi (Bologna 15–17 novembre 2001)*, ed. G. Auzzas, G. Baffetti, and C. Delcorno (Florence: Olschki, 2003), 44–49. On Bernardino da Siena and the relations between images, text, and speech, also see L. Bolzoni, *The Web of Images. Vernacular Preaching from Its Origins to St Bernardino Da Siena*, Histories of Vision (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

is no reason to suspect sermons delivered by Dutch preachers were of lesser quality – or, for that matter, less enthusiastically attended.

The enthusiasm for quality sermons went beyond the performance from the pulpit, as written sermons enjoyed great popularity among the lay population as well – in the Low Countries as well as elsewhere. In the corpus of manuscripts containing one or more Middle Dutch sermon texts as identified in the *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons*, at least 30 manuscripts can be ascribed to laypeople, with another 11 sermon collections having been copied by a lay scribe.¹²² Though the majority of Middle Dutch sermons can be traced back to religious communities or are of unknown provenance, it was not uncommon for laypeople to own one or more written sermons, such as those collected in miscellanies. This not only shows a shared textual world between laypeople and religious professionals in which texts and books moved between the convent and the world, it also shows the genuine interest laypeople exhibited towards quality preaching, and thus by extension an interest in the communication of religious knowledge. The *collatio* thus responded to or provided for an urban lay demand for devotional activities, and was connected to the larger religious landscape.

The sermon of Goswinus Hex on the Grace of God mentioned earlier (paragraph 6.2) is a clear example of this lay interest. Hex preached the sermon in Utrecht in 1467, and it was very well received by his lay audience, to the extent that he was asked by several laypeople to write it down again and distribute copies. In 1469, the wealthy Utrecht layman Dirck Borre van Amerongen (c. 1438–1527) commissioned a sermon collection in which he wished to have included the sermon of Hex, and one of the original copies was used as an exemplar.¹²³ The sermon collection as well was specifically requested by Dirck; the collection is commonly known as *Een nuttelijc boec den kerstenen menschen* and was quite popular among a lay audience during the entire fifteenth century.¹²⁴ Within the sermons Dirck left traces of his use: he marked passages important to him and his devotion, and added notes in the margin.¹²⁵ This manuscript thus shows a clear lay interest in and active engagement with written as well as

¹²² I thank Johanneke Uphoff for providing me with a list of these manuscripts, which she had collected from the *Repertorium of Middle Dutch Sermons*: Sherwood-Smith et al., *Repertorium van Middelnederlandse handschriften*.

¹²³ On Dirck Borre van Amerongen and this manuscript, see Zwart, ‘Religie, ridderschap en rijkdom’. The manuscript is currently kept as The Hague, KB 128 D 9. Also see Lievens, ‘In margine’.

¹²⁴ See D. Ermens, “‘Een nuttelijc boec den kerstenen menschen’ (ca. 1400). Heilsgeschiedenis voor beginners”, in *De letter levend maken. Opstellen aangeboden aan Guido de Baere bij zijn zeventigste verjaardag*, ed. K. Schepers and F. Hendrickx, *Miscellanea Neerlandica*, XXXIX (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 265–81.

¹²⁵ Zwart, ‘Religie, ridderschap en rijkdom’, 114–15.

preached sermons. This interest was not unique to the sermon of Hex, or to the sermon collection of *Een nuttelijc boec den kerstenen menschen*: for instance Gerrit van der Goude, who preached in the last decades of the fifteenth century, was asked by ‘many devout people, both clerical and secular, and especially the devout brethren at Gouda called the Collaciebroeders’ that he put his sermons on the significance of the Holy Mass to paper.¹²⁶ Van der Goude complied with this request by slightly altering his sermons, turning them into a proper booklet or treatise and putting them to print: the first edition of this *Boecxken vander Misse* was printed in 1506 by the Collatiebroeders in Gouda, who had been operating a printing press since around 1483 and had asked Van der Goude to provide them with the material.¹²⁷

Thus, preachers facilitated laypeople having access not only to their preaching but to sermons as text as well. They might even circulate sermon material that was not of their own design, writing down or copying a different preacher’s message to communicate it to a layperson. A striking example comes from the close friendship between a married laywoman and a Franciscan friar introduced before (paragraph 4.1) that is revealed in the manuscript Leuven, Maurits Sabbebibliotheek, MS 74 Y 5.¹²⁸ The two bonded over their mutual devotion, and in one of his letters the anonymous friar explicitly states: “I know well that love and the teaching of virtues is one of the bonds of our friendship.”¹²⁹ The spiritual guidance offered by the anonymous friar entails both conversations and the exchange of texts – not only in the letters he sent her, but other texts as well. The manuscript contains several sermons, four of which seem to be *reportationes* drawn up by the friar minor after listening to the sermons himself – a rather unique example of publicly preached Middle Dutch sermons being recorded by a member of the audience. Internationally, *reportationes* written down by laypeople or copied for their

¹²⁶ K. Goudriaan, ‘Apostolate and Printing. The Collaciebroeders of Gouda and Their Press’, in *Between Lay Piety and Academic Theology: Studies Presented to Christoph Burger on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. A.A. den Hollander, W. Janse, and U. Hascher-Burger, Brill’s Series in Church History 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 433.

¹²⁷ Compare K. Goudriaan, ‘Een kerkelijk catechese-offensief? Misverklaringen op de drukpers rond 1500’, in *Terug naar Gouda. Religieus leven in de maalstroom van de tijd*, ed. P.H.A.M. Abels, J. Jacobs, and M. van Veen, Bijdragen van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis 17 (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2014), 73–95. Also see Goudriaan, ‘Apostolate and Printing’, on the textual output of the press. The Brothers’ output on the printing press is also explicitly linked to their *collationes* in A. Dlabáčová, ‘Goede gesprekken en gedrukte boeken in Gouda’, in *De Moderne Devotie. Spiritualiteit en cultuur vanaf de late Middeleeuwen*, ed. A. Dlabáčová and R. Hofman (Zwolle: WBooks, 2018), 196–97.

¹²⁸ On the manuscript, see Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’; Sherwood-Smith et al., *Repertorium van Middelnederlandse handschriften*, pt. VI: 55–59.

¹²⁹ Quoted from Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 81.

benefit are quite well known. For the Low Countries, however, it is a rather uncommon source, and surviving *reportationes* are mostly known from the context of a religious community.¹³⁰

The *reportationes* in the manuscript Leuven, MS 74 Y 5 form a cycle of sermons preached around Whitsun 1492.¹³¹ Some of them seem to have been requested by his lay ward: the laywoman addressed in the letters was seemingly explicitly interested in the sermons preached from the pulpit but was unable to attend, so the friar took it upon himself to provide her with a written copy of the sermon he had heard. Though he bemoans his own qualities, he wrote down the important parts as best he could:

Beloved in God, to write something according to your wish of what was preached recently on the angels, which was very beautiful and pleasant to hear, but difficult to understand and even more difficult to remember or to repeat because of the dumbness of the human intellect and especially mine, the confused darkness and bluntness of which I regret most – but nevertheless I will write you a word or two with God’s grace according to my memory of them. And to start it in the same way as that sermon began, so listen and hear that Aristoteles says...¹³²

Thus, while this laywoman likely would have enjoyed a good sermon properly performed, she was also very interested in the contents. Reading a written sermon had its own merits, and laypeople sought them out just as much as they did performances from the pulpit. This example also shows that sermons and sermon collections circulated between laypeople and religious professionals alike, as both were interested in these texts. The anonymous friar had no qualms about recording a sermon for his spiritual ward – and of course, the primary function of public preaching was to reach a lay audience and communicate a message to them.

Sermons and sermon collections could indeed function in the hands of religious professionals as well as laypeople, and circulate amongst a mixed readership. For instance, in 1500 lay woman Elisabeth De Grutere bequeathed her library of 70 books to the convent of Onze Lieve

¹³⁰ See in particular Stoop, *Schrijven in commissie*. The collations of Johan Brinckerinck and Claus van Euskerken also survive in the form of *reportationes* written down by the Sisters under their care: see Mertens, ‘Ghostwriting Sisters’; Th. Mertens, ‘Ein Prediger in zweifacher Ausführung. Die Kollationen des Claus von Euskirchen’, in *Predigt im Kontext*, ed. V. Mertens (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 421–32.

¹³¹ This Whitsun- cycle has been edited and translated into Modern Dutch by D.A. Stracke, *Korte handleiding tot de Theologia mystica of het beschouwende leven naar een handschrift uit het jaar 1492* (Antwerpen: Neerlandia, 1932).

¹³² Quoted from Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 82.

Vrouwe Ter Hooie in Gent. At least 10 books can be identified as sermon collections, with another 4 books likely containing sermons as well.¹³³ Most of the sermons in Elisabeth's collection are undated, with one exception: book 49 on the list is "a small book of sermons which were preached in a period of fasting in the year 1461".¹³⁴ Again this is a testament to the interest laypeople had in sermons as texts, and their desire to hear or read quality preaching. They were able to obtain written sermons – both older, authoritative sermons like those of Bernard as well as more contemporary ones – and used them for their own devotion. Moreover, Elisabeth did not keep her collection to herself, nor was it confined to the Beguines of Onze Lieve Vrouwe Ter Hooie after her death. One of the terms of the donation was that the books be kept and preserved, and "to loan them when someone asked to, especially her or Simon's [her husband] friends".¹³⁵ At some point anyone who asked was allowed to borrow from her collection, though this sentence was later stricken through; in any case, Elisabeth made it clear she had always wished for her books to be loaned by others, and wished for this to continue after her death. The sermon collections she had enjoyed herself could thus be read by other interested laypeople as well, as the sermons circulated between the religious community and the world surrounding it. Though it is unclear how much Elisabeth's collection was perused after her death, it is very clear that laypeople in the Low Countries were keen to attend preaching activities as well as read quality sermons.

6.5 Conclusion

The *collationes* of the Brothers of the Common Life were not themselves a form of sermon preaching, but the meetings formed part of an urban landscape rife with opportunities for laypeople to engage in the communication of religious knowledge. With the houses of the Brothers located in the city centres, the *collationes* still maintained temporal, spatial, and possibly topical connections: the *collatio* took place after the services in church, at a relatively close distance from the church, and it had the capacity to connect to the sermon in its choice of reading material. It was not an isolated practice but existed amidst a rich devotional urban

¹³³ I thank Cora Zwart for providing me with a transcription of the inventory, which is now kept in the Bisschoppelijk Archief, Gent. On the manuscript, see C. Zwart, 'Religieuze literatuur in lekenhanden. Het "boekentestament" van Elisabeth De Grutere (d.1500 Gent) als voorbeeld van laatmiddeleeuws religieus boekbezit en -gebruik door stedelijke leken', *Jaarboek voor Nederlandse Boekgeschiedenis* 22 (2015): 61–82.

¹³⁴ Gent, Klein Begijnhof, s.o.: "Item een bouckin van sermoenem [sic] die ghepredict waren in eenen vastenen int jaer .M.cccc ende lxi."

¹³⁵ C. Zwart, 'Religieuze literatuur in lekenhanden', 69: "Ende oec te leenene als daer omme ghebeden werden, sonderlinghe van eeneghen van haren ofte Symoens vrienden."

landscape, and its participants had the opportunity to shape their devotion by engaging with multiple devotional activities.

Although the preaching culture of the late medieval Low Countries has to date remained rather unexplored, this chapter has shown that quality sermons were being provided regularly and frequently, supported by the city councils. The source material on preaching in the Low Countries is less direct than that for, for instance, Italy, yet this chapter has shown that it is possible to find traces of preaching after all. The city councils, as is recorded in the financial accounts, took an interest in public preaching and in part maintained the necessary infrastructure to provide it. Moreover, the lay population of cities like Deventer, Gouda, and Zwolle was very interested in attending preaching events and engaging with the sermon: both in its spoken and its written forms, for its entertaining as well as its edifying potential. The lesser availability of sources relating to medieval Dutch sermon preaching should thus be put down to their limited survival up to the current day, as it does not stem from a medieval contemporary lack of interest for quality preaching. Within this urban context of frequent preaching, the *collationes* provided by the Brothers would have found an attentive audience, with laypeople eager to participate in the communication of religious knowledge. Different in form, the *collationes* tapped into the same interest and gave the lay population one more option to construct their own personal devotion.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

The most direct witnesses remaining of the *collatio*, the books of collations, do not mention anything about the functioning of the practice. As this thesis has shown however, it is very possible to use the (books of) collations as a mirror to reflect their use during the meetings and from there to glimpse an image of the dynamic communication of religious knowledge taking place between the Brothers of the Common Life and their lay visitors. With regard to modern research, the collations present new opportunities for interpreting texts: not for their textual contents per se, but as an exponent of and witness to the process of communication. The collations are not very original texts in the sense that they are newly written: they are almost entirely composed of excerpts and quotations. Shifting focus from the collations themselves to how they were used, however, turns them into a lens through which the performance of the *collatio* can be glimpsed: as texts which were supposed to function within a dynamic practice, the collations contain traces of this interactivity. This is a fully new approach to the *collatio*, as prior research – insofar as it considered the practice at all – took the prescriptive passages in the *consuetudines* to be a description of the *collatio*. These sets of customs, however, do not mention any potential input from the lay participants and present an ideal image of the *collatio* as the Brothers envisioned it, a top-down transfer of knowledge, with no further details on how the process of communication was to take place in practice. Reading a religious text in the vernacular was supposedly sufficient. This study has been the first to consider these vernacular religious texts not for their textual merits or their content per se, but as active elements in the process of communicating religious knowledge.

Originally having been constructed to be read during the *collatio*, the collations shaped the transmission of knowledge between the Brothers of the Common Life and the students and interested laypeople participating in the *collatio*: they enabled knowledge to be disseminated and subsequently put to use. This process of communication entailed both oral and textual methods. By design the *collatio* began with a written text, composed of authoritative texts widely read within the Modern Devout movement. This collation was then read aloud by the Brothers to the collected participants. However, this reading was not the end of the *collatio* as the Brothers could take one of the visitors apart to offer them some personal remarks and advice. Seemingly, this would be an instance of purely oral communication; however, as a religious movement firmly rooted in its intensive engagement with texts, even these conversations would be to an extent shaped by text. As a practice, the *collatio* thus made use of both oral and textual

modes of communication, and indeed the communication of religious knowledge took place in this interplay of orality and textuality.

The knowledge communicated in this process was essentially threefold. On the surface, the collations gave access to religious texts in the vernacular. Directly below that they gave information on the authoritative figures behind the texts: who had written the text, and why was it an important text? Yet underlying the entire process is the communication of an attitude towards texts, an interpretive framework showing how to make use of texts and knowledge in general. Though not explicitly voiced, the collations composed of multiple authoritative sources communicated this approach to the lay audience: they taught by example how texts are to be used to shape one's personal devotion. The *collatio* was thus not only a communication of religious knowledge, it also communicated the base on which that knowledge was constructed, and how texts should be read in order to be usefully applied. As students and laypeople visited the *collatio* to engage with the religious thought held by the Brothers of the Common Life, the Brothers simultaneously took an interest in providing their lay audience with the means to make the Modern Devout spirituality their own. Regular participation in the *collatio* allowed for the effective communication of the Modern Devout ideals, and the constant references to source materials in the collations taught visitors of the textual basis on which those ideals were founded. In the *collatio*, the Brothers invited the participants to adopt the same approaches to text and knowledge they held themselves, to become part of a shared reading culture, and to – perhaps only momentarily – join their textual community. They presented themselves and their attitudes towards (authoritative) texts as a model to be followed and imitated, granting students and interested laypeople the opportunity to engage with the same texts and properly participate in the communication of religious knowledge.

To get at this conclusion, this thesis has taken inspiration from two approaches from international sermon studies: one, that preaching is a process of communication that involves the lay audience as well as the preacher; and two, that repeated preaching is ultimately more influential than extraordinary performances. The recognition that an audience can influence the performance of the preacher or the contents of his sermon has led to considering the *collatio* not as a top-down transfer of knowledge but as an event in which knowledge was shaped and circulated – a more dynamic practice, one on which participating laypeople could leave their mark as well. Such an interaction between the Brothers and their visitors has been found in the situation around the *collatio*: the semi-domestic space of the Brothers' houses and the option for personal conversation allowed for relatively informal contacts between them. From the start,

the *collatio* was an invitation to momentarily join the community physically, for instance in the chapel, dining room (*refectory*), main hall, or even a room dedicated to hosting the *collatio*. The change in space when the *collatio* entered its second aspect, when a visitor could accompany one of the Brothers to his bedroom to engage in a personal conversation, accompanied a change in tone: moving away from the communal reading to a private room, the closer physical distance paved the way for an emotional connection between the Brother and his visitor which benefitted the communication of religious knowledge.

The Brothers recognised the value in these close personal contacts to more easily communicate their message: familiarity between them and their visitors allowed for relevant advice or heartfelt admonishments. The books of collations reflect the influence of the lay participants on the offered readings: the collations are applicable to regular daily life – sometimes exclusively so. The collations on marriage for instance barely consider the theological dimensions of marriage as a metaphor for the union between the devout believer and God, but consider at length the ramifications of worldly marriage. Neither marriage nor sexual intercourse is condemned outright: under the proper circumstances they can very well be respectable, even though the alternative of remaining unwed is deemed preferable. The books of collations were considerate of the realities of lay urban life. The Brothers stayed in touch with the world outside the walls of their home and invited familiar interactions with lay visitors: a personal relationship proved quite a boon to the translation and communication of religious knowledge between laypeople and religious professionals enabling a ‘deprofessionalisation’ and laicisation of authoritative texts.¹ Nor was the process top-down: in having the Brothers accommodate their needs or interests, the urban laypeople made their mark on the *collatio*. In the case of the Book of Wedlock this involvement of laypeople in the collations and the *collatio* is clearly noticeable, as the collection of collations on marriage was composed at the request of an interested lay audience. In the *collatio* and through the collations, the Brothers were able to map their own spiritual attitudes and convictions onto lay life in an effort to effectively communicate their ideals to the world outside their homes.

Indeed, this study has found that the collations are essentially a continuous and recurring introduction to the Modern Devout spirituality, allowing the *collatio* to function as an invitation to engage in a shared reading culture. Through their participation in the *collatio*, visitors were

¹ These terms are originally used by Thom Mertens in relation to a close friendship between an anonymous friar and his lay female ward enabling the circulation of mystical sermons: Mertens, ‘Mystical Whitsun Sermons’, 87–98, quote on p. 96.

over time imbued with the attitudes of the Brothers towards the usage of authoritative texts, as well as with an understanding of where to find additional texts and how to make use of them in constructing their personal devotion – in short, they were invited to join the textual community of the Brothers, centred around the same texts, and maintained a shared understanding of how they were to be read and utilised. At no point in the collations or in the *consuetudines* is this process explicitly expressed, yet it becomes clear from a closer examination of the collations themselves, along with the recognition that repeated exposure has a stronger impact on the communication of knowledge than any particular quality – a process that David d’Avray has termed the ‘drip-drip method of inculcating beliefs’ with regards to frequent preaching.²

Frequent exposure to the message of the Brothers was made possible by the *collatio* taking place on Sundays and feast days: the interested layperson could engage with the Brothers at least once every week. But most importantly, the technique is visible in the collations, on all three layers of communicating religious knowledge: access to religious texts in the vernacular, identification of authoritative texts, and providing an interpretive framework for utilising texts are all constantly being communicated. The (books of) collations are a reflection of the textual community cultivated by the Brothers as well as the Modern Devout movement in general, and when used during the *collatio*, lay participants were introduced to and made part of this textual community as well. This makes the collations remarkably similar, even though the individual collations are hugely varied, both in comparison with collations on other subjects in the same book of collations and compared to collations on the same subject in other books of collations. Closely examining a number of collations on having religious literature in the vernacular, the Last Judgement as part of the Four Last Things, the *profectus virtutum* or advancement in virtues, and the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* revealed this variation in theme yet similarity in approach.

As a collected corpus, the books of collations show that the Brothers aimed to communicate the Modern Devout approach towards texts and knowledge to a participating lay audience: by exposing participating laypeople to the texts they utilised for shaping their own devotion, as well as clearly identifying the original sources of the viewpoints expressed during the *collatio*, the Brothers drew them into a shared world of texts. Moreover, the clearly marked quotations and constant references to authoritative sources communicated the idea that the Brothers did not advance a completely independent position but placed themselves in a longer tradition.

² d’Avray, ‘Method in the Study of Medieval Sermons’, 9.

From the viewpoint of the Brothers, the references showed how they did not arrogantly proclaim their own truth but merely collected what they found written down by authorities that was worthy of attention; for the other participants, they made it possible to confirm the words of the Brothers by going back to the source. The collations open up avenues for further reading: they present a list of recommendations to the intrigued layperson who wanted to know even more beyond the *collatio*. In the collations participants in the *collatio* thus found a ready-to-use framework from which to interpret the source texts and methods on how to engage with vernacular religious literature. Bringing together multiple references on a certain topic communicated how such a topic was to be approached or considered. Regular mention of which *auctoritates* were presented or where a quotation was sourced made it clear whose words were worth reading. And through it all, the collations were an example of how to use texts to further one's devotion: an exercise on how to combine texts to form a framework from which to spiritually advance. The collations, and through their use the *collatio* as a practice, communicated which texts the Brothers read, how they approached them, and how they combined texts to shape their personal devotion – in short, the *collatio* introduced participants to the textual community of the Brothers of the Common Life, with the invitation to join or emulate it as well.

With their houses located in the city centres, the Brothers organised their *collationes* amidst a bustling network of urban devotional practices. Officially unrelated to the sermons preached in the nearby churches, the practice maintained close connections to it: taking place after the services in the church were completed and with the potential to link the reading material to the sermon, temporal, spatial, and topical connections were put in place. The high availability of preached sermons in the medieval Dutch cities, previously obscured in the variety of contemporary source materials, ensured that laypeople were well acquainted with public communications of knowledge between religious professionals and a lay audience, and the *collatio* would tap into the same currents already available in the urban devotional landscape. To be sure, the current research on preaching in the medieval Low Countries shows there was a genuine interest among the lay population for the communication of religious knowledge, in both spoken and written form: despite their differences, the sermon and the *collationes* catered to a similar eagerness to participate in devotional practices.

For the duration of the *collatio* and potentially long after, visitors were thus fully introduced to the Modern Devotion: physically, in the homes of the Brothers of the Common Life, and intellectually, by joining the textual community in which the Brothers shaped their spirituality.

Whether they followed the examples presented by the Brothers was up to them, but the models were there, as were the texts and the techniques to make use of them. The Brothers did not preach artfully wrought sermons to an enraptured audience in an attempt to show them the right path and influence their lives. But in the *collatio*, with their collation composed from excerpts, quotations, and citations, they showed them how to read by example.

Appendix 1: Overview of the collations per manuscript

Utrecht, UB 3 L 6 (Dirck van Herxen's First Book of Collations)¹

- *Van bekenninge ons selfs* ('On knowing ourselves,' f. 4r–5v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 5v–13r)
- *Vanden dode* ('On death,' f. 13r–13v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 13v–16v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 16v–19r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 19r–20r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 20r–20v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 20v–21r)
- *Vanden oerdel* ('On [the last] Judgement,' f. 21r–23r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 23r–26r)
- *Vander hellen* ('On hell,' f. 26r–28r)
- *Vander selven* ('On the same,' f. 28r–30v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 30v–32r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 32r–33r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 33r–35r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 35r–36r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 36r–42v)
- *Vanden rike des hemels* ('On the kingdom of heaven,' f. 42v–45r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 45r–50r)
- *Van drien tabernakelen* ('On three tabernacles,' f. 50r–41v)
- *Vanden Woerden Godes* ('On the Word of God,' f. 51v–54r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 54r–56r)
- *Van goeden wille* ('On good will,' f. 56r–58v)
- *Van becoringhe* ('On temptation,' f. 58v–60v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 60v–62v)
- *Van quader gheselschap* ('On bad company,' f. 62v–65r)
- *Van goeder gheselschap* ('On good company,' f. 65r–67v)
- *Vanden ouders om God te laten* ('On leaving one's parents for God,' f. 67v–69v)
- *Van costeliken clederen te scuwen* ('On avoiding expensive clothing,' f. 69v–71v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 71v–72v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 72v–76v)
- *Van werken der handen* ('On manual labour,' f. 76v–79r)
- *Hoe salich tis inder jochet hem te Gode te keren* ('How blessed it is to turn to God in one's youth,' f. 79r–81r)
- *Hoe zwaer is sonde* ('How heavy sin is,' f. 81r–83v)
- *Van quade der gulsicheit* ('On the sin of gluttony,' f. 83v–85v)
- *Van quade der onkuyscheit* ('On the sin of lust,' f. 85v–88r)
- *Van quade der ghiericheit* ('On the sin of greed,' f. 88r–90r)
- *Van quade der traechheit* ('On the sin of sloth,' f. 90r–92r)
- *Van quade der toernicheit* ('On the sin of wrath,' f. 92r–94r)
- *Van quade der nydicheit* ('On the sin of envy,' f. 94r–95r)
- *Van quade der hoverdien* ('On the sin of pride,' f. 95r–97v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 97v–99v)
- *Van quade des achterclaps* ('On the sin of gossip,' f. 99v–101v)
- *Van dwasen ordel te scuwen* ('On avoiding foolish counsel,' f. 101v–103v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 103v–105v)

¹ Based on appendix 5 in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–33.

- *Van penitencien* ('On penitence,' f. 106r–107v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 107v–108v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 108v–111r)
- *Van drien deelen der penitencien* ('On three parts of penitence,' f. 111r–112r)
- *Vander biecht* ('On confession,' f. 112r–114r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 114r–116r)
- *Van voldoen* ('On penance,' f. 116r–116v)
- *Van aelmisse te gheven* ('On giving alms,' f. 116v–117v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 117v–119v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 119v–124r)
- *Van discipline goeder seden* ('On teaching good morals,' f. 124r–126r)
- *Van spreken* ('On speaking,' f. 126r–128r)
- *Van ghebede* ('On prayer,' f. 128r–129v)
- *Van dancbaerheit* ('On gratitude,' f. 129v–131v)
- *Van sommigen gemene oefeningen* ('On some general exercises,' f. 131v–134r)
- *Vander mynnen Godes* ('On the love of God,' f. 134r–135v)
- *Van mynnen ons even menschen* ('On the love of our fellow man,' f. 135v–138r)
- *Van versmadenisse der werelt* ('On contempt for the world,' f. 138r–140v)
- *Vander oetmoedicheit* ('On humility,' f. 140v–143r)
- *Van ghehoersamheit* ('On obedience,' f. 143r–145r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 145r–149v)
- *Van verduldicheit* ('On patience,' f. 149v–151v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 151v–153v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 153v–156r)
- *Vander kuyscheit* ('On chastity,' f. 156r–158r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 158r–160r)
- *Van onderling vermaninge* ('On mutual admonishment,' f. 160r–162v)
- *Van vrede* ('On peace,' f. 162v–166v)
- *Van Duytsche boeken te lesen* ('On reading Dutch books,' f. 166v–169v)
- *Vander echtscap* ('On marriage,' f. 169v–172r)
- *Sunte Jheronimus epistel tot Celanciam* ('St Jerome's letter to Celancia,' f. 172r–178r)
- *Van heiligen dagen te vieren* ('On celebrating holy days,' f. 178r–179r)
- *Sunte Augustinus ghedachten* ('St Augustine's meditations,' f. 179r–187v)
- *Glose opt Pater noster* ('Explanation on the *Pater noster*,' f. 188r–192v)
- *Glose opt Ave Maria* ('Explanation on the *Ave Maria*,' f. 192v–195r)

Leiden, UB BPL 2231 (First part of Dirc van Herxen's First Book of Collations, on the vices)²

- *Van bekenninge ons selfs* ('On knowing ourselves,' f. 4r–6v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 6v–17r)
- *Vanden dode* ('On death,' f. 17r–18v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 18v–23r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 23r–26v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 26v–27v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 27v–28v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 28v–29v)
- *Vanden oerdel* ('On [the last] Judgement,' f. 29vr–32r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 32r–36r)
- *Vander hellen* ('On hell,' f. 36r–38v)
- *Vander selven* ('On the same,' f. 38v–42v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 42v–44v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 44v–45v)

² Based on appendix 5 in Van Beek, *Leken trekken tot Gods woord*, 222–33.

- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 45v–49r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 49r–50v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 50v–59r)
- *Vanden rike des hemels* ('On the kingdom of heaven,' f. 59r–62r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 62r–69r)
- *Van drien tabernakelen* ('On three tabernacles,' f. 69r–71v)
- *Vanden Woerden Godes* ('On the Word of God,' f. 71v–74v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 74v–78r)
- *Van goeden wille* ('On good will,' f. 78r–81r)
- *Van becoringhe* ('On temptation,' f. 81r–84rv)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 84v–86v)
- *Van quader gheselschap* ('On bad company,' f. 86v–90r)
- *Van goeder gheselschap* ('On good company,' f. 90r–93v)
- *Vanden ouders om God te laten* ('On leaving one's parents for God,' f. 93v–96r)
- *Van costeliken clederen te scuwen* ('On avoiding expensive clothing,' f. 96r–99r)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 99r–100v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 100v–106r)
- *Van werken der handen* ('On manual labour,' f. 106r–109r)
- *Hoe salich tis inder jogheth hem te Gode te keren* ('How blessed it is to turn to God in one's youth,' f. 109r–112r)
- *Hoe zwaer is sonde* ('How heavy sin is,' f. 112r–115r)
- *Van quade der gulsicheit* ('On the sin of gluttony,' f. 115r–118r)
- *Van quade der onkuyscheit* ('On the sin of lust,' f. 118r–121r)
- *Van quade der ghiericheit* ('On the sin of greed,' f. 121r–124v)
- *Van quade der traechheit* ('On the sin of sloth,' f. 124v–126v)
- *Van quade der toernicheit* ('On the sin of wrath,' f. 126v–129v)
- *Van quade der nydicheit* ('On the sin of envy,' f. 129v–131r)
- *Van quade der hoverdien* ('On the sin of pride,' f. 131r–134v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 134v–137v)
- *Van quade des achterclaps* ('On the sin of gossip,' f. 137v–140r)
- *Van dwasen ordel te scuwen* ('On avoiding foolish counsel,' f. 140r–142v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 142v–145v)

London, BL Add. 10287³

- *Vander bittere ende vervaerliker ure des doets ende hoe nutte het si dicke daer van te denken* ('On the bitter and dangerous hour of death, and how important it is to think of it often,' f. 7r–16v)
- *Vanden anxteliken ende strenghen lesten oerdel Christi* ('On the fearsome and severe Last Judgement of Christ,' f. 16v–24r)
- *Vander gruweliker ende ewegher pinen der hellen* ('On the horrible and eternal pains of hell,' f. 24r–30v)
- *Vander glorien der hemelscher salicheit* ('On the glory of heavenly bliss,' f. 30v–33v)
- *Van dattet noet is overmits penitencien ende veel droefenisse den rike der hemelen te gane* ('On the necessity of entering the kingdom of heaven through penitence and many sorrows,' f. 33v–38r)
- *Hoemen ghewaerlic gheloeft ende Christum beliet* ('How one truly believes and professes Christ,' f. 38v–39r)
- *Hoemen Christum na volghen sal, ende vanden enghen weghe* ('How one shall follow Christ, and on the narrow path,' f. 39r–41r)

³ Based on the table of contents, f. 4v–5v in the same manuscript.

- *Teghen daghelixe ende cleyne sunden, ende hoe seer het God behaghet datmense scuwet ende sorchvoudelic ende ghewaerlic penitencie doe* ('On daily and minor sins, and how much it pleases God to avoid them and diligently and truly do penance,' f. 41r–44v)
- *Teghen sconen ende costelike clederen* ('Against fancy and expensive clothing,' f. 44v–46r)
- *Van onrechte goede* ('On unjust goods,' f. 46r–49r)
- *Teghen rijcheit ende voerspoet der werlt, ende van dat wort Gods te behouden ende den armen goedertieren te sijn* ('Against riches and prosperity of the world, and on keeping the word of God and be kind to the poor,' f. 49r–53r)
- *Van onsalicheit ende plaghen der werlt, ende dat men se niet omsien en sel* ('On unhappiness and plagues of the world, and to not pay attention to them,' f. 53r–54v)
- *Waer toe den mensche ghegheven is dat beweghen die droefheit ende den bliscap, der hope, des anxtes ende der scaemte* ('Why mankind is given the feelings of sadness and happiness, of hope, of fear, and of shame,' f. 54v–56v)
- *Van datmen den ouders noch niemant anders onderdanich en sal wesen teghen Gode* ('On not being submissive to one's parents or anyone else against God,' f. 56v–59r)
- *Hoe die heylighe lerers die joncfrouscap prisen boven die echtscap* ('How the holy teachers praise virginity above marriage,' f. 59r–62r)
- *Hoe anxtelic datset is dat een mensche yement hindert inden dienste Gods of scandalizere* ('How fearful it is that a person hinders someone in the service of God or scandalises,' f. 62r–64r)
- *Hoemen die prelaten of oversten niet oerdelen en sal ende hoer leer ontfanghen, ende teghen afterclap ende oirdelen* ('How one shall not judge the prelates or the superiors and receive their teachings, and against gossip and judging,' f. 64r–67v)
- *Vanden naesten te vermanen of te berispen, ende vander heiligher scifte te gheloven ende te verstaen ende boken te hebben* ('On admonishing or correcting one's fellow man, and on believing and understanding Holy Scripture and having books,' f. 67v–70r)
- *Vanden goede wille ende hoemen die bekennen mach* ('On good will and how one can show it,' f. 70r–71v)
- *Van lydsamheit of liden* ('On patience or suffering,' f. 71v–74r)
- *Hoe goet dat vrede is ende hoe quaet onvrede is* ('How good peace is, and how bad discontent is,' f. 74r–79r)
- *Van drien becoringhen: des vleysches, der werelt ende des duvels, ende hoemen int ghemeen becoringhe sal wederstaen* ('On three temptations: of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil, and how one shall resist temptation in general,' f. 79r–81v)
- *Teghen die gheen die segghen datmen beide die werelt ende Gode dienen mach* ('Against those who say it is possible to serve both the world and God,' f. 81v–85v)
- *Hoe goet datset is wat te liden* ('How good it is to endure,' f. 85r–85v)

The table of contents of London, BL Add. 10287 further lists the following texts:

- *Die hystorie van Barlaam ende Josaphat* ('The story of Barlaam and Josaphat,' f. 86r–99v)
- *Sinte Adriaens legende* ('Legend of St Adrian,' f. 99v–104r)
- *Die legende van den biscop Forseo* ('The legend of bisshop Forseo,' f. 104r–106v)
- *Van die vrouwe Pelagia* ('On the woman Pelagia,' f. 106v–108v)
- *Van Thasis, die een ghemeen wijf was* ('On Thasis, who was a nasty woman,' f. 108v–111r)
- *Een suverlic exempel vander volstandicheit [?] des graven soen van Blankenberch* ('A proper example of perseverance [?] the son of the count of Blankenberg,' f. 111r–113r)
- *Die legende van die heylighe maghet Eusiosina* ('The legend of the holy virgin Eusiosina,' f. 113r–123r)
- *Een exempel van enen convaers die seer becoort war uuten cloester te gaen* ('An example of a convert who was much tempted to leave the monastery,' f. 123r–124r)
- *Datricuis leven ende van sijn veghevier* ('Datricuis' life and his purgatory,' f. 124r–127v)
- *Die legende van sinte Alexius* ('The legend of St Alexius,' f. 127v–132v)
- *Een exempel hoe quaet dattet is dat goet onrechtelic ende mit [?] te winnen* ('An example of how bad it is to acquire goods unjustly and with [?],' f. 132v)

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- *Hoe wij dencken sellen vander vervaerliker ure des doots ende hoe nutte het si der omte dencken* ('How we should think about the fearsome hour of death and how important it is to think of it,' f. 1r–12v)
- *Vanden vervaerliker ende strenghen daghes des lesten oerdels* ('On the fearsome and severe day of the Last Judgement,' f. 12v–22r)
- *Vander gruweliker pinen der hellen* ('On the horrible pains of hell,' f. 22r–22v)
- *Vanden selven* ('On the same,' f. 22v–30r)
- *Vander glorien der hemelscher salicheit* ('On the glory of heavenly bliss,' f. 30r–41r)
- *Hoemen waerlic ghelovet ende Cristum beliet* ('How one truly believes and professes Christ,' 41r–42v)
- *Hoemen Christum na volghen sel ende vanden enghen wege* ('How one shall follow Christ, and on the narrow path,' f. 42v–45r)
- *Hoe behaechlic dattet Gode is inder echscap in reynicheit te leven ende te sterven* ('How it pleases God to live and die in purity while married,' f. 45r–46v)
- *Teghen daghelicxe ende cleine sunde, hoe seer het God behaghet datmense scuwet ende sorchvoudelic ghewaerlic penitentie doen* ('On daily and minor sins, and how much it pleases God to avoid them and diligently and truly do penance,' f. 46v–50v)
- *Hoe quaet dattet is in pertien en in twidracht te leven, nota* ('How bad it is to live in dissension and discord, note,' f. 50v–51v)
- *Teghen sconen of costeliken clederen* ('Against fancy and expensive clothing,' f. 51v–54r)
- *Van onrechte [goede]* ('On unjust goods,' f. 54v–58v)
- *Teghen rikheit ende voerspoet der werk, ende van dat woert Gods te bewaren, den armen goeder tieren te sijn* ('Against riches and prosperity of the world, and on keeping the word of God and be kind to the poor,' f. 58v–64r)
- *Van onsalicheit en plagen der werlt, ende datmen niet ontsien een sel* ('On unhappiness and plagues of the world, and to not pay attention to them,' f. 64r–66v)
- *Waer toe den mensche is ghegeven dat bewegen der droefheit ende der bliscap, der hope, des anxt ende der scaemten* ('Why mankind is given the feelings of sadness and happiness, of hope, of fear, and of shame,' f. 66v–69r)
- *Hoe goet dattet is dat men aelmissen gheeft* ('How good it is to give alms,' f. 69r–70v)
- *Van datmen die ouders noch niemant anders ouders [sic] onder danich sel wesen tegens Gode* ('On not being submissive to one's parents or anyone else's parents against God,' f. 70v–75r)
- *Hoe die heilighe leerres die joncfrouscap prisen boven die echscap* ('How the holy teachers praise virginity above marriage,' f. 75r–79v)
- *Hoe anxtelic dattet is dat een mensche yement hindert inden dienst Gods* ('How fearful it is that a person hinders someone in the service of God or scandalises,' f. 79v–81r)
- *Hoe men die priesteren eren sel ende gheen quaet van hem spreken* ('How one should honour the priests and speak no evil of them,' f. 81r–95r)
- *Vanden naesten te vermanen en van die heilighe scrifte te lesen ende van boecke te hebben* ('On admonishing one's fellow man, and reding Holy Scripture and having books,' f. 95r–99v)
- *Van lijdsamchhiet [sic]* ('On patience,' f. 99v–103v)
- *Hoe men vrede crighen mach* ('How one can achieve peace,' f. 103v–104r)
- *Hoe quaet dattet is pertie, haet ende nijt te dragen* ('How bad it is to carry discord, hate, and envy,' f. 104r–106r)
- *Hoe goet dattet is in reinicheit te leven oec in echtscap reyn te bliven* ('How good it is to live in purity and stay pure in marriage,' f. 106r–107v)
- *Vanden vervaerliker pinen der gheenre die va [sic] horen genoechten leven* ('On the fearsome pains of those who live of their pleasures,' f. 107v–110r)

⁴ Based on the headings of the individual collations in the manuscript.

- *Hoe quaet dattet is overtallic te leven, ende wat pijn si verdienen* ('How bad it is to live in abundance, and what pains they deserve,' f. 110r–110v)
- *Hoe quaet dansen is* ('How bad dancing is,' f. 110v–111r)
- *Hoe quaet dattet is te steken, te dobbelen ende ander ydelheit te doen* ('How bad it is to joust, to play dice, and engage in other idleness,' f. 111r–113r)
- *Hoe quaet dattet is dat die kijnder hoer ouders niet en eren, ende dat die ouders die kijnder so veel gheven dat si na hebben* ('How bad it is that children do not honour their parents, and that the parents give their children so much they have [nothing] later,' f. 113r–114v)
- *Van biechte ende hoemen biechten sel* ('On confession, and how one should confess,' f. 114v–115v)

Leuven, MS 5000 12 B I (Book of Wedlock)⁵

- *Die ierste collacie* ('The first collation,' f. 1r–7r)
- *Die ander collacie* ('The second collation,' f. 7r–15v)
- *Die derde collacie* ('The third collation,' f. 15v–31v)
- *Die vierde collacie* ('The fourth collation,' f. 31v–42r)
- *Die vijffte collacie* ('The fifth collation,' f. 42r–46r)
- *Die seste collacie* ('The sixth collation,' f. 46r–52v)
- *Die sevende collacie* ('The seventh collation,' f. 52v–61v)
- *Die achte collacie* ('The eighth collation,' f. 61v–65r)
- *Die negende collacie* ('The ninth collation,' f. 65r–75v)
- [Unmarked collation] (75v–77r)
- [Unmarked collation] (77r–93v)
- [Unmarked collation] (93v–97v)
- [Unmarked collation] (98r–106r)

⁵ Based on notations in the upper margin of the manuscript.

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Abbreviations

SAMH: Gouda, Streekarchief Midden-Holland

NL-DvHCO, HCO: Historisch Centrum Overijssel, Stadsarchief Deventer

NL-ZIHCO: Historisch Centrum Overijssel, locatie Zwolle

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Nederlandse samenvatting

De meest beknopte samenvatting van dit proefschrift ligt al besloten in de titel *Reading by Example*, in het Nederlands: ‘Voorbeeldige lezers’. Het hier gepresenteerde onderzoek heeft een nieuw perspectief gegeven op de collatiepraktijk van de Broeders van het Gemene Leven. Bekend was dat de Broeders op zon- en feestdagen scholieren en geïnteresseerde leken in hun huis uitnodigden om te luisteren naar een voorgelezen devote tekst in de volkstaal. Deze lezing ging gepaard met enkele corrigerende opmerkingen en mogelijk een persoonlijk gesprek. Bezoekers konden zo kennisnemen van wat gezaghebbende figuren als Augustinus, Bernardus of Chrysostomus te zeggen hadden over een gegeven onderwerp. Dit proefschrift heeft aangetoond dat deze kennisoverdracht tijdens de collatie geen eenrichtingsverkeer vanuit de Broeders was, maar dat bezoekers actief betrokken waren bij het communicatieproces. Bovendien is gebleken dat de collatie verder ging dan het simpelweg luisteren naar een voorgelezen tekst. Deelnemers leerden meer dan welke religieuze autoriteiten van belang waren en wat zij hadden gezegd en geschreven. Gelijktijdig met deze kennisoverdracht kregen de aanwezigen een model aangereikt hoe ze dergelijke kennis konden gebruiken. In de collatie werd gecommuniceerd hoe de Broeders zelf teksten lazen: niet alleen welke teksten de aandacht waard waren maar ook hoe ze van nut konden zijn voor persoonlijke geestelijke voortgang. Daarbij werd getoond hoe losse citaten en passages gecombineerd dienden te worden om verder overdacht te worden. Deelnemers aan de collatie werden niet slechts onderwezen, maar kregen ook de handvatten aangereikt om zelf verder te gaan. De collatie moedigde aan dezelfde houding ten opzichte van devote teksten en religieuze kennis aan te nemen als de Broeders. In de collatie nodigden de Broeders hun bezoekers uit hun goede voorbeeld na te volgen, om dezelfde teksten te lezen en op dezelfde manier. Bezoekers werd de mogelijkheid geboden om deel te nemen aan de tekstgemeenschap van de Broeders – als ze dat wilden voor langere tijd, maar op zijn minst tijdens de collatie.

In hoofdstuk 1 is uitgelegd hoe een nieuwe benadering tot de collatiepraktijk het mogelijk maakte tot dit inzicht te komen. Eerder onderzoek naar de collatie heeft voornamelijk gebruik gemaakt van de passages over de collatie in de *consuetudines* of gewoonten van de broederhuizen, waarin is vastgelegd hoe de Broeders gewoon waren te leven. Deze benadering geeft echter weinig inzicht in de praktijk. De *consuetudines* schrijven immers voor hoe de Broeders collatie zouden moeten houden, en ze beschrijven dus niet hoe de collatie daadwerkelijk plaatsvond. Dit proefschrift heeft daarom gekeken naar collatieboeken:

verzamelingen teksten die geschreven zijn met het doel tijdens de collatie (voor)gelezen te worden. Deze boeken vormen de meest directe overblijfselen van de collatiepraktijk, hoewel ze hun beoogde gebruik niet expliciet behandelen. Om vanuit de teksten een beeld te krijgen van de dynamische praktijk heeft dit proefschrift gebruik gemaakt van een theoretisch en methodologisch kader geënt op het internationale prekenonderzoek. Dit onderzoeksveld heeft eveneens ervaring met het reconstrueren van orale kennisoverdracht op basis van uitsluitend tekstuele bronnen. Hoewel de Broeders zelf steeds benadrukten dat hun collaties geen preken waren, zijn er wel degelijk overeenkomsten te vinden. Beide activiteiten zijn begaan met de communicatie van religieuze kennis naar een lekenpubliek, en gebruiken hiervoor een combinatie van geschreven en gesproken tekst. Zowel de preek als de collatiepraktijk zijn bovendien in belangrijke mate orale en dynamische vormen van kennisoverdracht, terwijl het onderzoek afhankelijk is van geschreven bronnen waarvan niet altijd duidelijk is wat hun relatie tot de praktijk was. Binnen dit theoretisch en methodologisch kader zijn de collatieboeken beschouwd als stille getuigen van het communicatieproces, waarin de dynamische praktijk is weerspiegeld.

In hoofdstuk 2 is allereerst de stand van zaken ten aanzien van de collatiepraktijk opgemaakt. De voorschriften voor de collatie in de *consuetudines* van verschillende Modern Devote gemeenschappen zijn doorgenomen, en eerder onderzoek naar de collatiepraktijk is samengevat. Bovendien zijn in dit hoofdstuk de collatieboeken beschreven als belangrijkste bronnen voor dit proefschrift. Verscheidene Modern Devote gemeenschappen hielden er een soort collatie op na, met onderlinge corrigerende gesprekken op basis van een gezamenlijk gelezen tekst. De gebruikte term voor deze gesprekken kon echter variëren. Een gemeenschappelijk aspect in de verschillende *consuetudines* is dat de collatie stevast werd afgezet tegen de preek. De collatie diende specifiek plaats te vinden op een ‘niet-preekachtige’ wijze. Er mocht immers niet zomaar geprekt worden zonder instemming van de lokale pastoor of andere kerkautoriteiten. Het voeren van devote gesprekken tussen leken en geestelijken onderling was echter niet verboden, en het zou zelfs lovenswaardig zijn elkaar in het geloof te onderwijzen. De Broeders van het Gemene Leven waren voor de collatie gewoon op zon- en feestdagen scholieren en geïnteresseerde leken bij hen thuis uit te nodigen, waarbij een devote tekst in de volkstaal werd gelezen. Deze gezamenlijke lezing werd gevolgd door enkele persoonlijke aanwijzingen, met de verdere mogelijkheid van een een-op-een gesprek. Dit type collatie staat centraal in dit proefschrift. Dergelijke gesprekken tussen de Broeders en de hun bezoekende leken en scholieren zijn lang onderkend in de wetenschappelijke literatuur, maar

door een gebrek aan ander (directer) bronmateriaal zijn ze niet eerder diepgaand onderzocht. Door de collatieboeken te beschouwen als een belangrijk hulpstuk in de overdracht van religieuze kennis heeft dit proefschrift op dit punt nieuwe inzichten kunnen verschaffen.

In hoofdstuk 3 werd aandacht besteed aan de ruimtelijke en fysieke aspecten van de collatiepraktijk. Deze aanpak is geïnspireerd door het concept van *lieux de savoir*: de idee dat de ruimte waarin een activiteit zich afspeelt een merkelijke invloed heeft op de vorming en overdracht van kennis. In dit geval vond de collatie plaats in de huizen van de Broeders: religieuze gemeenschappen die desalniettemin ontstaan waren uit stedelijke woonhuizen. De collatie werd dus gehouden in een quasi-huiselijke setting. Met een kleinere fysieke afstand tussen de Broeders en deelnemende leken naderden ze elkaar ook emotioneel: onderlinge bekendheid bracht ook vertrouwelijkheid. Dit maakte het mogelijk religieuze kennis over te dragen op een intiemere en meer informele manier. De mogelijkheid tot een privégesprek met een van de Broeders versterkte deze dynamiek. In de geborgenheid van een een-op-een gesprek in bijvoorbeeld een slaapcel van de Broeders konden aan een individuele bezoeker persoonlijkere adviezen worden gegeven. Zo was de collatie voor bezoekers zowel als de Broeders een devote oefening. Het nut van de collatie is merkbaar in verscheidene *viten* (levensbeschrijvingen) van Broeders van het Gemene Leven waar de activiteit als effectieve en geestelijk heilzame bezigheid wordt genoemd. Sommige Broeders waren bij uitstek bedreven in het houden van een collatie: welsprekend maar bescheiden, met het inzicht om door persoonlijke boodschappen de juiste toon en scherpheid te kiezen om deelnemers aan te sporen in hun geloof. In enkele gevallen wordt de collatie dan ook genoemd als de geboorte van een nieuwe Broeder: aangegrepen en overtuigd door de gelezen en gesproken woorden besloten sommige deelnemers de Moderne Devotie te vervoegen.

In hoofdstuk 4 is besproken dat de Broeders onderkenden dat persoonlijke gesprekken uitermate effectief waren voor devote kennisoverdracht. Hoewel de Broeders als religieuze gemeenschap zich ogenschijnlijk afkeerden van de wereld, bleven ze in de stad wonen en waren dus betrokken bij het stedelijk leven. In de *consuetudines* werden de Broeders aangespoord persoonlijke en gerichte adviezen te geven aan hun bezoeker. Daartoe werd de moeite genomen de gesprekspartner te leren kennen en een band op te bouwen met de deelnemende scholieren en geïnteresseerde leken. Juist de intieme relaties tussen vrienden en familie maakten religieuze kennisoverdracht het meest effectief. De Broeders maakten hier gebruik van door aan de ene kant een band op te bouwen met hun bezoekers, en aan de andere kant deelnemers aan te sporen ook in eigen kring devote gesprekken te voeren of elkaar vriendelijk terecht te wijzen en

geestelijk te helpen. Dergelijke vertrouwensbanden kunnen niet eenzijdig worden opgebouwd, en bezoekers waren dan ook actief betrokken bij de collatie. Men werd geacht zich de boodschap eigen te maken en met de Broeders het gesprek aan te gaan. Zowel de collatieboeken als geheel als de individuele geschreven collaties weerspiegelen dit doel. De teksten die in de collatie voorgelezen zouden worden zijn geen theoretische verhandelingen maar onderkennen het dagelijks leven. De collaties over het huwelijk zijn hier een overtuigend voorbeeld van. Hoewel het huwelijk een bekende religieuze beeldspraak kan zijn voor de verbintenis tussen Christus en Kerk, of God en de gelovige, zijn deze metaforen goeddeels afwezig in de collaties. In plaats daarvan gaat het over het aardse huwelijk tussen man en vrouw. Het lekenperspectief wordt geaccepteerd en volwaardig behandeld. Zo wordt seks binnen het huwelijk niet afgekeurd, maar wel binnen een geestelijk kader geplaatst. Deelnemers aan de collatie kregen de boodschap mee dat ook buiten een religieuze gemeenschap een devoot leven zeker mogelijk was.

In hoofdstuk 5 werd dieper ingegaan op de inhoud van de collatieboeken, en welke rol de geschreven collaties speelden bij het proces van religieuze kennisoverdracht. Specifiek zijn collaties over het belang van religieuze literatuur in de volkstaal, over het Laatste Oordeel, over de persoonlijke voortgang in deugden (*profectus virtutum*) en over de twee gebeden *Pater noster* en *Ave Maria* behandeld. Hierbij zijn twee belangrijke overkoepelende elementen aan het licht gekomen. Ten eerste zijn de collaties opgebouwd uit excerpten en citaten afkomstig uit de boeken die ook door de Broeders zelf gelezen en overdacht werden. Het zijn dus geen losstaande teksten, maar een afspiegeling van de werken die de Broeders zelf ook gebruikten voor hun eigen geestelijke voortgang. In feite werd door de collatieteksten, en daarmee door de collatie, de bibliotheek van de Broeders opengesteld voor de deelnemende scholieren en leken. Dit werd ook duidelijk naar de deelnemers gecommuniceerd: de bronnen van de collaties zijn doorgaans duidelijk aangegeven en volledig in de tekst geïncorporeerd. Aldus kregen bezoekers niet alleen mee wat van belang was te weten, maar ook van wie het afkomstig was: ‘Augustinus zegt dit, en Bernardus schrijft het volgende’. De Broeders reikten hun bezoekers de teksten aan die zij zelf lazen, opdat de deelnemers aan de collatie de verzamelde inzichten eveneens mochten gebruiken voor een devoot leven. Het tweede gemeenschappelijke element vloeit hieruit voort. De collatieteksten, en daarmee de collatiepraktijk, bieden deelnemers de uitnodiging onderdeel te worden van de tekstgemeenschap (*textual community*) van de Broeders van het Gemene Leven en in het verlengde daarvan de Moderne Devotie. De collaties communiceren niet slechts een tekst, maar geven gelijktijdig aan hoe teksten gelezen en

gebruikt dienen te worden om geestelijke voortgang mogelijk te maken. Deze voortgang ligt niet besloten in een enkele tekst, maar komt voort uit het combineren en herkauwen van gezaghebbende excerpten en citaten. De collaties laten zien hoe relevante teksten geselecteerd en gecombineerd kunnen worden om op een bepaald onderwerp iets nuttigs te vinden. Deze houding tot tekst en tekstgebruik werd door de Broeders zelf gecultiveerd en middels de collatie ook gecommuniceerd naar een breder publiek. Aldus konden deelnemers zich (eventueel slechts tijdelijk) aansluiten bij dezelfde tekstgemeenschap.

In hoofdstuk 6 werd de collatiepraktijk teruggeplaatst binnen het laatmiddeleeuwse religieuze landschap. Meer specifiek is de collatie verbonden met de stedelijke preekcultuur in de Lage Landen. Hoewel de Broeders steeds benadrukten hoe de collatie geen preek was, geeft de stellige ontkenning aan dat er overeenkomsten tussen beide activiteiten waren als vormen van religieuze kennisoverdracht. Het onderzoek op het gebied van de Middelnederlandse preek heeft zich in het verleden met name gericht op de preek als literaire tekst. De daadwerkelijke prediking is daarbij onderbelicht gebleven, wat de suggestie kan wekken dat er in dit gebied weinig gepreekt werd. Dit proefschrift heeft kunnen aantonen dat er wel degelijk veelvuldig gepreekt werd in de Lage Landen, en dat stadsraden hier een actieve bijdrage aan leverden. Dit blijkt onder andere uit de stadsrekeningen van Deventer, Gouda en Zwolle, waar betalingen aan religieuze orden en individuele predikers aangeven dat goede prediking van belang werd geacht. Bovendien was de stedelijke bevolking zeker geïnteresseerd in de preek: zowel de geschreven tekst als de gesproken boodschap werd genoten. Hoewel de collatie formeel van een andere orde was dan de openbare prediking, zal een vergelijkbaar publiek interesse hebben getoond. Daarmee neemt de collatie van de Broeders van het Gemene Leven een zelfverzekerde plaats in binnen het religieuze landschap van de laatmiddeleeuwse Nederlandse steden.

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Men zal mij de Groningse uitdrukking vergeven. Jongens, 't kon minder.

Curriculum vitae

Pieter Boonstra (Groningen, 22 February 1992) obtained his vwo diploma in 2010 at the Willem Lodewijk Gymnasium in Groningen. He went on to study History at the University of Groningen, obtaining his bachelor's degree in 2013. He enrolled in the research master's programme *Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies* at the same university, graduating in 2015 with the distinction *cum laude*. During his ReMa studies, he participated in the introductory course organised by the Dutch Research School for Medieval Studies as part of the NWO Graduate Programme *Communication and the Exploitation of Knowledge in the Middle Ages*. On 1 January 2016, he started as one of four PhD candidates funded by this programme, continuing his research under the supervision of prof. Sabrina Corbellini. Within the framework of his PhD, he has presented his research at both national and international academic conferences, collaborated in public outreach activities (including the *Hidden Deventer* app, released in 2020), and published results in international referred journals, such as *Ons Geestelijk Erf* and *Le foucaldien*.