

TWO FIFTEENTH-CENTURY LETTERS TO THE GENERAL CHAPTER
Staatsarchiv Wertheim F 73a/68

Among the Carthusian remains shown to the participants in the Tüchelhausen congress on Carthusian History and Spirituality was an exhibition in the Staatsarchiv Wertheim of documents from the former Charterhouse of Grünau. This collection of forty-three items included official letters and bulls concerning the foundation of the house, services and devotions which took place there, correspondence concerning members of the Charterhouse, documents concerning its library and some of the books which had belonged there. All of the documents in this exhibition were described in a handbook catalogue compiled by the archivist, Dr. Hermann Ehmer, to whom we owe a debt of thanks for drawing our attention to a pair of letters from two of the monks of Grünau to the General Chapter, and thus peripherally concerning the edition of the records --the Cartae-- of the Chapters.

The fifteenth-century legislation concerning private correspondence with the General Chapter or the Reverend Father of the Order sets out a series of interesting conditions: an ordination of 1437 states that: "persons writing to the Carthusian Reverend Father or the General Chapter should not begin their letters with proems or harangues, but immediately after an honest and brief recommendation should enter with due speed into the subject of their petitions; which they should separate into articles such that responses may conveniently be given to them. Otherwise, no response shall be made." Another ordination, of 1429, decrees that any Prior, Visitor or other person opening or reading a sealed letter, or impeding its effect, cannot be absolved of this presumption without special licence; on the other hand, monks writing such letters should take care not to write falsehood, if they wish to escape the punishment decreed by Statute. An ordination of 1460 states that because of the growth in number of the houses of the Order, and of their business, it is no longer possible for the Reverend Father to deal separately with all questions; henceforward, all correspondence is to be addressed jointly to the Reverend Father and the Diffinitors of the General Chapter, or it will not be answered. The confirmation of the following year specifically excepts secret matters which are not to be publicized: these may be communicated to the Reverend Father privately.

It is clear that the two letters from Grünau surviving in the Staatsarchiv Wertheim, each containing a series of separate questions with space for responses, addressed simply to the Reverend Father, Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, and other Diffinitors of the General Chapter, and folded so that only the return address was visible from the outside, were written in conformity with these

regulations. The first letter transcribed below is written simply on both sides of a single sheet of paper, which was then folded twice breadthwise, to approximately one-fourth its original length, then once across, and then into thirds, so that only a small square, bearing the name of "Waltherus, professus in Grunaw," its addressee, was visible. This letter was addressed to a "Domino Francisco, Priori Maioris Carthusie" -- thus, since it is written in a mid-fifteenth century secretary hand, it was probably written during the priorate of François Maresme, 1437-1463. The questions in this letter concern the minutiae of the office (whether the first syllable of the word "felix" in the last line of the first verse of the hymn "Ave, maris stella" -- and thus all words in this position in their respective verses -- should be sung with two notes or three, etc.) and the correction of some readings in the Statutes, as well as some questions of more obvious importance. The Reverend Father is asked to specify the four causes reserved to the Apostolic See which Priors may absolve by special commission, for there is a case in the house in which there is some doubt as to the authority of absolution; more specifically, he is asked if it is possible to absolve a willful homicide within the Order from his sins and excommunication, but not from his irregularity. This query might be the result of the letter of indulgence granted by Pope Pius II and published in the Carta of the General Chapter of 1461, which granted to every member of the Order a plenary indulgence, with dispensation from irregularity -- one practical result of which would be the freeing of a willful homicide from his sentence of imprisonment.

The questions of the second letter transcribed below, addressed to "Domino Johanni, Priori Maioris Carthusie" -- John of Roesendael, 1463-1472 -- are of neither as low nor as high an order as the others, and concern themselves with the resolution of various occasionally conflicting offices and responsibilities in the Order and the house at Grünau. The format of this letter requires comment, however. As Dr. Ehmer, who was kind enough to compare the transcript below with the original documents, pointed out, this letter has been folded into octavo format, and written out on the four "pages" thus created. The inside address and the signature of "Syfridus in Grünawe" occur at top and bottom of the first page; the return address occurs at the bottom of the fourth page; and the whole set of four pages was folded twice breadthwise and once across -- again, so that only the return address is visible from outside. The transcript given below is altered, however, to reflect a textual anomaly: the only question in the letter to begin with the word "Quero" is that at the top of the fourth page -- the upper left corner of the sheet when re-opened. All other questions begin with the repetitive "Item" -- including that at the top of the first page. Thus, while the format of the letter would indicate one order for its contents, the logic of its expression would indicate another. The choice has been made -- one hopes not

arbitrarily -- to represent the latter here. To reconstitute the former, the reader needs only begin with the first page (page b of the recto of the second letter, or 2rb, in the transcript) and continue to the end, adding there the questions, but not the inside address, of the fourth page (2r) in the transcript.

The rules of transcription used here are those of the edition of the *Chartae*:¹ all suspensions are expanded silently, with the exception of the ampersand, which is reproduced; capitalization and punctuation are modernized, but generally following indications in the original; and the spellings "ihs", "xpc" and their declined forms are represented by their modern spellings "Jesus", "Christus", in order to avoid the false form "Jhesus", unless specifically spelled out that way by the scribe. The two sides of the first letter are designated "1r" and "1v" in the left margin; the pages of the second letter are designated "2r", "2rb", "2v" and "2vb". All responses are interlineated in the transcript, but only the lines of the original questions are counted in line-numbering.

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¹ The *Chartae* of the Carthusian General Chapter: Cava MS.61. Aula Dei: The *Louber Manuale* from the Charterhouse of Buxheim. Edited, with an introduction and notes, by JAMES HOGG and MICHAEL SARGENT. *Analecta Cartusiana* 100:1, 1982. See page 9.

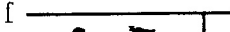
I

(1r) Reuerendo Patri domino Francisco, Priori Maioris Carthusie, &c.

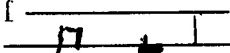
Reuerende Pater, committatis dilecto fratri meo domino Amico aut alicui alteri, qualiter secundum exemplar Domus Carthusie signet hic notata. Primo, queritur vtrum in vigilia Ascencionis Domini in complenda misse sic concludatur:

5 "Dominus noster Jesus Christus, filius, &c." vel sic: "per Dominum nostrum, &c."?

Item: in vigilia Penthecostis, in primis vesperis in responsorio, "Factus est, &c." repeticio post versum fiat hic: "Et impleti," vel hic: "Alleluia"?
Hic: "Alleluia."

Item: in ympno, "Aue maris stella" cum canitur finaliter lij "felix" super
10 prima sillaba haberit tres notas ut sic: f 

Sic. fe - lix & communiter sic in

alijs versibus; vel tantum duas ut sic: f 

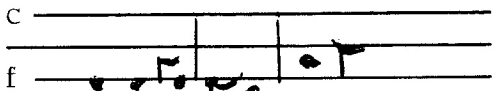

alijs, &c.?

[*Second variant crossed out in MS*]

15 Item: in festo Sancte Trinitatis in matutinis post ebdomadam dicatur oracio de Sancta Trinitate vel "Deus qui hodierna"?

[de Sancta Trinitate vel *crossed out in MS*]

Item: in estate, feria quarta in responsorio "Exultate Deo, &c." cantetur

sic: c  vel sic: c  ?
f Jubilate Deo iacob f Jubilate Deo iacob

[*First variant crossed out in MS*]

20 Item: in festo Beate Fidis virginis, ad vj^{tam} debeat dici "Beata Fides, imploret," vel "Beata Fidis, imploret"; nam in letania dicitur "Sancta Fides, &c." [vel "Beata Fidis, imploret" *crossed out in MS*]

Item: in Statutis Antiquis, in officio Procuratoris, quicumque fuerit "obedienciarius" uel "ebdomadorius"?

[uel "ebdomadorius" *crossed out in MS*]

Item: in capitulo de Priore, ut "porciones" vel "parciones" sint equales? [vel "parciones" sint equales *crossed out in MS*]

1: Domino Francisco Priori Maioris Carthusie: R.P. Dom Francois Maresme, Prior of the Grande Chartreuse 1437-63.

Item: in capitulo de Capitulo Generali, seruata debita "porcione" uel "parcione"?

[non est in illo capitulo quia non est *noted in left margin.*]

Item: queritur an donati, etiam semel in anno, scilicet in die professionis,
5 possint rogare pro quolibet desiderant, fauente tamen Priore?
Non.

Item: dicendo Psalterio pro extraneis, etiam vnum teneatur dici cum venijs?
Sic.

Item: an Procurator domus singulis capitulis teneatur dicere culpam de
fraccione silentij, licet non recordetur se post completorum, aut ante primam uel
10 cum aliquo monacho sine licencia locutum, presertim cum altero videtur habere
licenciam loquendi?
Non tenetur.

Item: quando in festis candelarum iij^{or} candeles accenduntur in matutinis,
vtrum omnes 4^{or} debeant poni in summo altari, scilicet in choro, vbi sacramentum
15 & reliquie continentur, vel die earum circa conuersos in altaribus priuatis sicut
aliqui eorum desiderant?
In altari summo omnes debent poni.

Item: vtrum Visitator Ordinis habens ex commisso Reuerendi Patris Carthuse
auctoritatem pape secundum graciam Ordini factam per summum pontificem
20 potuerit absolueri quemdam monachum homicidam voluntarium sacerdotis Ordinis a
peccatis et excommunicacione, licet non ab irregularitate -- vel quid in hoc casu
sit faciendum?
Potuit, quia auctoritas priuilegij ad hoc se extendit.

(1v) Item: finitis officijs dominicalibus ante Aduentum Domini, sed restantibus
dominicalibus; et in aliqua earum occurrente festo xij leccionum siue candellarum sicut
25 anno preterito contigit in festo Hugonis Linckoniensis, an etiam proxima die vacante
super ebdomadam cantetur de dominica uel taceatur in tali casu, eo quod omnia offi-
cia dominicalia prius sint finita?
Non dicitur missa infra ebdomadam in hoc casu.

Item: vtrum tali uel simili casu sequenti die post dominicam sine festo, di-
cantur prima responsoria hystorie ac si hystoria in dominica dicta fuisset, vel
30 dicantur ea responsoria que de hystoria in sabbato restabant?
Dicantur responsoria que sabbato precedenti restabant.

3: Capitulo Generali hec sequentia *noted to right.* 18: Visitator Ordinis:
scilicet Prior Domus added by scribe, above line. 20: sacerdotis Ordinis:
added below by scribe. 23: *totum scripsi* at top of page. 28: post domini-
cam: added by scribe, above line.

Item: an conuerso Ordinis semel in anno petenti pro se &c. etiam dicatur missa, vel solis monachis missa debeat?
Solis monachis, sicut dicat Statutum.

5 Item: vtrum monachus legens missam ex parte monachus pro psalterijs post propriam collectam possit dicere aliquam collectam ad placitum, scilicet pro parentibus, &c; Cum Statuta dicant in missis ad placitum potest quilibet dicere quot & quas voluerit, &c.
In missis ex debitis non debet dicere aliam oracionem vltra debitas oraciones.

Item: vtrum nouicius uel monachus non sacerdos dicendo horas cum alio in conlaudando possit dicere "Dominus vobiscum" ante oracionem uel post, vel semper debeat dicere "Domine, exaudi oracionem meam"?
Debet dicere "Domine, exaudi."

10 Item: cum sepius in cartis Capituli habeatur quod Priores electi & nominati per Reuerendum Patrem Carthusie in 4^{or} casibus sedi apostolice reseruatis non possint absoluere sine dispensacione; et a plerisque ymmo a multis dubitatur que sint isti 4^{or} casus excepti; congruum videretur si fieri possit vt magis elucidaretur qualiter tales Priores et in quibus possint absoluere et dispensare, & in quibus
15 non: nam multi hoc desiderant et in domo nostra propter certam causam heu valde esset necessarium, nam dubitamus an incarcerati nostri sint absoluti uel non, quamuis quidam Visitator habens auctoritatem a Reuerendo Patre Carthusie pape Ordini concessam eorum receperit confessiones. Consulite infra quid sit faciendum quia vnus eorum sacristem occidit, &c.
iiij^{or} casus excepti sunt: heresis, homicidium, mutilatio uel debilitatio membrj, iniectio manuum in Priorem de nostra religione minime existentem.

20 Ad Grünaw in Noua Cella
[At bottom right of 1v]

Waltherus professus in Grunaw
[Vertical, at bottom left edge of 1v]

II

(2r) Reuerendis in Christo Patribus domino Johanni Priori
 Maioris Carthusie, ceterisque Diffinitoribus Capituli Generalis

Quero: queritur an lector refectorij saluis Statutis in cena remanens in re-
 fectorio petita gracia a presidente eandem gratiam possit comedere in refectorio
 5 absente conuentu.

Non, quia esset contra Statutum; nec gracia intelligitur nisi extra refectorium.

Item: queritur cum quis persoluerit centum et 4^{or} breues super annum, te-
 neatur eciam persoluere breues que veniunt super annum in cedulis cum iam qui-
 libet habeat tricennarium in Statuto Capitulo sequenti.
 Tenetur persoluere super annum, sed debet computare in illis centum et iijj^{or}.
 Ratio est quia cum quilibet habeat breues de Statuto et modernis temporibus po-
 nuntur plures in vno tricennario non esset satisfactum singulis si vna sola
 agenda diceretur pro ipsis.

Item: queritur an persone teneantur ad breues que super annum veniunt cum
 10 missa sicut dicunt Statuta. Aliqui putant quod non teneantur ex quo quilibet post
 mortem suam sequenti Capitulo Generali ut communiter habeant tricennarium Ordi-
 nis, et ab hanc causam multi non persoluunt breues in cedulis venientes et sic de-
 functi negliguntur, quod periculosum est.
 Debent omnem soluere breuem et ebdomadarius missam, ut in precedentis.

(2rb) Item: est nobis quedam capella sita extra terminos procul ab hominibus ad
 15 ictum vnius lapidis de qua monasterium nostrum translatum est in hunc locum in
 quo iam iacet dedicata in honorem Beate semper Virginis Marie. Petimus igitur
 humiliter vt tempore dierum minucionum predictam capellam visitare poterimus
 propter ingulencias; istam licenciam dudum habuimus, sed quociens certitudina-
 liter nescimus plus.
 Visitatores anno 1472.

20 Item: queritur an processiones facere teneantur per circuitum galilee cum
 letanie aut responsorijs, cum a domino apostolico hee mandantur exemptis et non
 emptis prout in bulla contra Buhemos manifeste declaratur; cum tamen Statuta

1-2: *Because of the way that this page is folded, these lines occur at the top of 2rb. Alternatively, they may be considered as occurring at the tope of the first page.* 4: eandem: ea eandem MS.

1: Domino Johanni Priori Maioris Carthusie: R.P. Dom Jean Zeewen van Roesendael, Prior of the Grande Chartreuse 1463-72.

nostra omnia prohibent tales processiones ex rationabili causa hec queruntur, quia iam per totum annum et amplius has processiones fecimus timentes excommunicacionem summi pontificis.

Non est de more Ordinis, ymmo contra Statutum.

- (2v) Questio. Item: an solus dyocesanus cum capitulo suo preciperet processiones facere per galileam an teneamur obedire?

Non quia non habet auctoritatem super Ordinem, nec Ordo ei subicitur.

Questio. Item: an infirmarius teneatur orare cum infirmo breues et psalteria ex cartha Capituli Generalis iniuncta quando infirmus talia agere non potest uel forte circa mortem exstiterit, vel an Prior talia habeat prouidere per alios ne infirmarius multum grauetur?

Statuta non obligant nisi ad horas et officia missarum.

- 10 Item: queritur an senes sacerdotes qui ob debilitatem corporis et membrorum celebrare nequuerint teneantur dicere xx psalmos pro tricennario a Capitulo Generali iniuncto sicut non celebrantes.

Sic.

Item: queritur an quando in festis duodecim leccionum iniungitur vni ad legendum tricennarium defunctorum teneatur accipere vltra quinque collectas, scilicet

- 15 "Inclina famulorum & famularum" et 4^{OR} consuetas.

Non.

- (2vb) Item: cum omni anno in cartha Capituli Generalis solet ita scribi, "Concedimus Prioribus et Vicarijs monialium xxv licencias paruas et magnas ex terminos exeundi", queritur quid per licencias paruas et magnas intelligi debeat. Licencie parue sunt quando sic exeunt terminos quod eadem die reuertuntur; magne quando non reuertuntur.

Item: queritur an Prior frangens silentium in mensa infra terminos monachorum vel extra semper teneatur disciplinam accipere cum septem psalterijs.

Non, nisi extra.

Item: questio. Obijt quidam monachus Ordinis habens monachatum in certis domibus ex speciali fraternitate; post hoc sequenti Capitulo Generali predictus monachus ex decreto Capituli habuit monachatum in duabus prouincijs. Queritur an nominatus monachus habuerit duplicem monachatum in predictis domibus vel an vnum

- 25 solum monachatum.

Vnum tantummodo ex declaracione Capituli anni MCCCCXX.

8: cartha: *MS carthta*. 24: duplicem: MS begins, then deletes: *duplex mo*.

Presententur Reuerendissimis Patribus Diffinitoribus Capituli Generalis.
Dubia pro Domo Noue Celle in Grunawe.

Syfridus in Grunawe.
Reponatur ad sacculum Domus Noue Celle.

1-2: Because of the way this page is folded, these lines occur at the bottom of 2rb. 3-4: These lines occur at the bottom of 2r. Alternatively, considering the way the paper is folded, rather than the arrangement of the questions, lines 1-2 may be considered as being at the bottom of the first page, and lines 3-4 at the bottom of the fourth.