



The Preacher as a Dog – Some Remarks on the Dog Motif in Early Dominican Iconography

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Zusammenfassung: *Wie bereits Pierre Mandonnet festgestellt hat, ist das beliebte Wortspiel der Dominikaner als domini canes nicht in mittelalterlichen Texten zu finden, sondern erst eine moderne Erfindung. Dennoch spielt das Hunde-Motiv (der Hund als Symbol für den Prediger und Verteidiger des christlichen Glaubens) in der frühen Ordenshistoriographie und -ikonographie des Dominikanerordens eine wichtige Rolle und wurde sowohl in der dominikanischen Selbstdarstellung (z. B. in den Fresken im ehemaligen Kapitelsaal von Santa Maria Novella in Florenz) als auch in der kritischen Fremdwahrnehmung der Dominikaner als Inquisitoren und Judenmissionare aufgegriffen.*

Abstract: *As Pierre Mandonnet has already noted, the popular play on words calling the Dominicans domini canes does not appear in medieval texts and is only an invention of modern times. Nevertheless, the dog motif (the dog as a symbol of the preacher and defender of the Christian faith) plays an important role in the early historiography and iconography of the Dominican order. It was taken up both in the Dominican self-portrayal (e.g. in the frescoes in the former chapter house of Santa Maria Novella in Florence) and in the critical external perception of the Dominicans as inquisitors and as missionaries to the Jews.*

In addition to the lily, crucifix and book,¹ the well-known attributes of Saint Dominic of Caleruega (c. 1170–1221) also include a small dog that usually has a flaming torch in its mouth.² That is what we see in numerous depictions of the saint, for example in the Dominican church St Andreas in Düsseldorf, which was originally looked after by the Jesuits. The dog with the flaming torch can be seen clearly, next to the very noticeable “walking shoes” that protrude above the stucco relief of the 17th century (fig. 1).



Fig. 1: *Saint Dominic, stucco relief of the 17th century, S. Andreas, Düsseldorf, photo: Hans-Josef Harbecke. Image rights: published with the permission of the owning institution, Dominikaner Düsseldorf.*

¹ This essay is based on a lecture I gave for the first time at the lecture series “Light in the Darkness: The Richness of Early Dominican Life” in May and June 2021, which Sabine von Heusinger and I organised on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of Saint Dominic’s death in 1221 and the presumed arrival of the Dominicans in Cologne in the same year. An extended version of the lecture was presented in July 2021 at the annual meeting of the *International Society for the Study of Medieval Theology* on “Dominican Culture, Dominican Theology: The Order of Preachers and Its Spheres of Action (1215–ca. 1600)”.

I dedicate this article to Sabine von Heusinger on the occasion of her 60th birthday, on which I warmly congratulate her. At the same time, I would like to thank her for the wonderful collaboration over the past years, from which the *Institut zur Erforschung der Geschichte des Dominikanerordens im deutschen Sprachraum* (IGDom) of the German Dominican Province has benefited greatly.

² See Mattheus C. Nieuwbarn, *Die Verherrlichung des heiligen Dominikus in der Kunst*, Mönchen-Gladbach 1906; Isnard W. Frank, *Dominikus von Caleruega (Domingo de Guzmán)*, in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 6, Rom [u.a.] 1974, cols. 72–79; Willehad Paul Eckert, *Der Hund mit der Fackel und andere Attribute des hl. Dominikus*, in: *Symbolon*, N.S. 5 (1980), pp. 31–39.

In this essay I want to address the questions as to how Saint Dominic became associated with a dog, but also which stories and interpretations are connected with the dog motif. Texts and images are closely intertwined here. Admittedly, the following covers not only Saint Dominic himself but also the entire Dominican order. While Pierre Mandonnet has already shown that the popular play on words calling the Dominicans “domini canes” does not appear in medieval texts at all and is only an invention of modern times,³ it is nonetheless not disputed that the order as a whole, and not just its founder, was repeatedly tagged with the dog motif even in the late Middle Ages.⁴ The reason for this lies in the long tradition of medieval exegesis, in which preachers were often compared to dogs.⁵ Thus depictions of the dog do play an important role, both in the way the Dominican preachers viewed themselves, and also in the critical external perception of the Dominican friars as inquisitors and as missionaries among the Jews, which I will discuss in the second part of this essay on the basis of a number of examples.

The Dog in Early Dominican Legends

The dog motif is closely associated with the early hagiographic writings about Saint Dominic that appeared after his death in 1221 and especially in the context of his canonization in 1234.⁶ The early biographical texts⁷ include the famous *Libellus de principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum* by Jordan of Saxony, who had known Dominic personally and was elected to be his successor

³ See Pierre Mandonnet, *Saint Dominique. L'idée, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, vol. 2: Perspectives, Paris 1937, pp. 69–81. See also his reprinted article: Id., Note de symbolique médiévale. Domini canes, in: *Mémoire dominicaine* 29 (2012), pp. 17–29. Similarly, Matthias Standke, *Freundschaft in Ordensgründerlegenden. Funktionen legendarischen Erzählens in lateinischen und volkssprachlichen Texten des Mittelalters (Quellen und Forschungen zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte 91=325)*, Berlin/Boston 2017, p. 144, points out, that this play of words does not appear in either the Latin or the vernacular legendary narratives about Saint Dominic.

⁴ See, for example, Walter S. Gibson, *Metaphorical Dogs in the Later Middle Ages: The Dogs of God and the Hounds of Hell*, in: *Our Dogs, our Selves. Dogs in Medieval and Early Modern Art, Literature, and Society*, ed. by Laura D. Gelfand, Boston, Mass., 2016, pp. 363–386, at pp. 368–369.

⁵ See Gianni Festa and Augustin Laffay, *Saint Dominique et sa mission*, Paris 2021, pp. 26–27. See, for example, the commentary *in cantica canticorum* by Robertus de Tumbalena, ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne under the name of Gregory the Great (*Patrologia Latina* 79, Paris 1849, col. 500 C): *Praedicatores quippe sancti aliquando canes per similitudinem dicuntur: quia praedicationibus assiduis, quasi latratibus importunis, adversarios quosque a grege ovium arcere nituntur. Isti canes vulpes Christo capiunt; quia ducem suum dum fideliter diligunt, pro ejus amore laborantes, tergiversantes haereticos ab involutionibus quaestionum, quasi a tenebris caveis ad lucem veritatis educunt*. On dog representations that symbolise the preacher see also Christoph Gerhardt, *Der Hund, der Eidechsen, Schlangen und Kröten verbellt. Zum Treppenaufgang der Kanzel im Wiener Stephansdom*, in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 38 (1985), pp. 115–132, at pp. 118–121.

⁶ On the canonization process see Alessandra Bartolomei Romagnoli, *Il processo di canonizzazione di Domenico di Caleruega*, in: *Fra trionfi e sconfitte: “Politica della santità” dell’Ordine dei predicatori*, ed. by Viliam Štefan Dóci and Gianni Festa (*Dissertationes Historicae* 39), Roma 2021, pp. 19–40.

⁷ On the different biographical texts on Saint Dominic see Festa/Laffay, *Saint Dominique et sa mission* (as n. 5), pp. 97–125; Achim Wesjohann, *Mendikantische Gründungserzählungen im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert. Mythen als Element institutioneller Eigengeschichtsschreibung der mittelalterlichen Franziskaner, Dominikaner und Augustiner-Eremiten (Vita regularis 49)*, Berlin/Münster 2012, pp. 362–489. See also the helpful collection: *Saint Dominique de l’ordre des frères prêcheurs. Témoignages écrits fin XIIIe – XIVe siècle*, ed. by Nicole Bériou and Bernard Hodel, Paris 2019.

as Master General of the order in 1221.⁸ However, the material that Jordan was able to make use of in his biography of Saint Dominic was extremely “sparse”, as Berthold Altaner has already determined,⁹ and this especially by comparison with the numerous descriptions of the life of Saint Francis of Assisi that were produced around the same time.¹⁰ It is already clear at this point that within the Dominican order the figure of Dominic noticeably recedes behind his work, despite all the honour due to the founder of the order. He was seen rather more as a “brother among brothers”, as the Mascarella table, i.e. one of the oldest depictions of the saint which was painted shortly after the canonization, shows very vividly (fig. 2).¹¹ For this reason, Saint Dominic has never enjoyed within the Dominican order the same level of popularity that we see in other religious orders concerning their founders.¹²



Fig. 2: *Tavola della Mascarella, c. 1240, S. Maria e S. Domenico della Mascarella, Bologna, photo: Loris Rabiti, Bologna. Image rights: published with the permission of the owning institution, Dominican Province San Tommaso d'Aquino in Italy.*

⁸ See Wolfram Hoyer (ed.), *Jordan von Sachsen. Ordensmeister – Geschichtsschreiber – Beter. Eine Textsammlung*, ed. by Wolfram Hoyer (Dominikanische Quellen und Zeugnisse 3), Leipzig 2002.

⁹ Berthold Altaner, *Der hl. Dominikus. Untersuchungen und Texte* (Breslauer Studien zur Historischen Theologie 2), Breslau 1922, p. 18.

¹⁰ See *ibid.* Altaner cites in particular the legends of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano as a comparison. On Saint Dominic in early Franciscan sources see Niklaus Kuster, *Dominikus in den Franziskus-Quellen. Zum 800. Geburtstag der Dominikaner*, in: *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 79 (2016), pp. 47–84.

¹¹ See Eleonora Tioli and Gianni Festa, *À table avec saint Dominique. La plus ancienne image de saint Dominique à Bologne dans l'église Santa Maria della Mascarella*, in: *Festa/Laffay, Saint Dominique et sa mission* (as n. 5), pp. 233–241.

¹² Isnard W. Frank, *Die Grundlegung des intellektuellen Profils des Predigerordens in seinen Anfängen*, in: *Rotenburger Jahrbuch für Kirchengeschichte* 17 (1998), pp. 13–34, at p. 18, points out that in the Dominican order the “communal realisation of the corporate ideal of the order” should always take precedence over a mere “imitation of the founder”.

Of course, all the hagiographic texts about Saint Dominic cannot dispense with a particular story or motif, which is repeated in almost all the medieval stories of contemporary saints: This concerns signs and miracles that indicate that the saint had already been chosen by God when very young – even at his birth or in early childhood.¹³ Jordan reports correspondingly in his *Libellus* that Dominic’s mother had a dream before the birth of her son: “His mother had a vision before she conceived him: She saw a small dog that had a burning torch in its mouth, which sat on her lap and then seemed to set the whole world on fire once it had left her body. This was a portent that the mother was going to conceive a great preacher. Through the promulgation of the holy teachings he would awaken those souls that were slumbering in sin and spread throughout the whole world the fire that Jesus had brought on earth.”¹⁴

This famous story of the dream is also frequently illustrated in art, for example by Giovanni da Taranto (fig. 3) and in the cycle Francesco Traini painted for S. Caterina in Pisa (fig. 4 and 5). All early examples have in common that in each case they belong to a series of pictures that illustrate the life of Saint Dominic in various scenes,¹⁵ and of course place a heavy emphasis on the stories of miracles that had been passed on. Here the dog is not an attribute of the saint yet, but it is noticeable that the animal is mostly painted as having a white or a black-and-white coat,¹⁶ following the colours of the Dominican habit.

¹³ See C[harles] Grant Loomis, *White Magic. An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend*, Cambridge, Mass. 1948, pp. 15–26; Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints & Society. The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000–1700*, Chicago et al. 1982, pp. 19–47.

¹⁴ Iordanus de Saxonia, *Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 5, ed. by Heribert-Christian Scheeben, in: *Monumenta Historica Sancti Patris nostri Dominici*, vol. 2 (MOPH 16), Roma 1935, p. 27–28: *Cuius matri, antequam ipsum conciperet in visione monstratum est, quod catulum gestaret in utero, qui facem ardentem in ore portabat et de ventre egrediens omnem orbem succendere videbatur. Quo prefigurabatur concipiendum ab ea predicatorem insignem, qui sacre eruditionis latratu soporatas peccatis animas ad vigilantiam excitaret et ignem, quem dominus Iesus venit mittere in terram, mundo spargeret universo.*

¹⁵ On the Traini cycle as an early example of Dominican self-depiction see Joanna Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches. Art in the Dominican Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, New Haven/London 2013, pp. 265–273.

¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 268.



Fig. 3: Giovanni da Taranto, *Saint Dominic and scenes from his life*, c. 1305, Museo nazionale di Capodimonte, Napoli, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Domenico,_Giovanni_da_Taranto_001.jpg. License: CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.



Fig. 4: Francesco Traini, *Saint Dominic altarpiece*, 1344/45, Museo N. S. Matteo in Pisa, *Inventario dei beni storici e artistici della diocesi di Pisa*, [https://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/benistorici/bene/6880463/Traini+F.+\(1344-1345\)%2C+Polittico+di+San+Domenico+e+storie+della+sua+vita](https://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/benistorici/bene/6880463/Traini+F.+(1344-1345)%2C+Polittico+di+San+Domenico+e+storie+della+sua+vita). License: CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.it>.

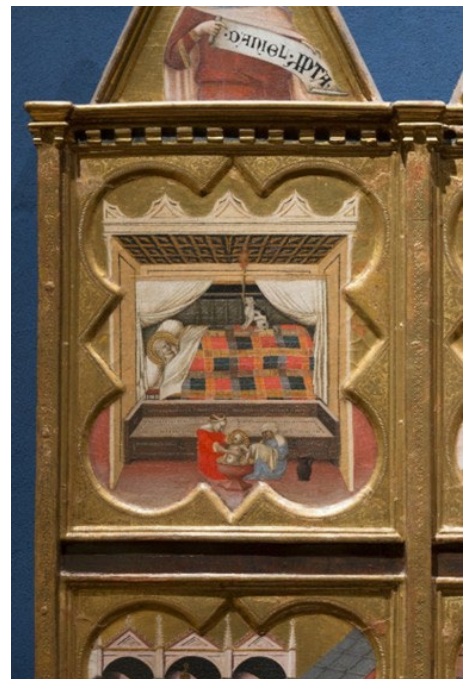


Fig. 5: Detail from Francesco Traini, *Saint Dominic altarpiece*, 1344/45, Museo N. S. Matteo in Pisa, *Inventario dei beni storici e artistici della diocesi di Pisa*, <https://www.beweb.chiesacattolica.it/benistorici/bene/6880466/Traini+F.+%281344-1345%29%2C+Scomparto+della+madre+di+San+Domenico+sogna+un+cane>. License: CC BY-NC-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.it>.

The textual basis of this famous story of the dream can be found in most biographies of Saint Dominic.¹⁷ It has long been assumed that they resort to Jordan's *Libellus* as a source. However, the story of the dream of Dominic's mother only appears in later manuscripts of Jordan's work,¹⁸ in other words, the vision was inserted retrospectively into the *Libellus*. In the meantime, we now know that the legend did not come originally from Jordan at all but was handed down for the first time in the *Legenda Sancti Dominici* produced by Petrus Ferrandi OP ca. 1240. The stories from childhood were of special importance for Petrus, since he wanted to emphasise that Saint Dominic came from a very pious family. His text reads as follows:

*Cuius mater antequam ipsum conciperet uidit in sompnis se gestare catulum accensam in ore faculam baiulantem qui egressus ex utero totum mundum incendere uidebatur. Quo prefigurabatur predicatorem eximium nasciturum qui facem igniti portaret eloquii quo frigescentem in multorum cordibus caritatem uehemencius inflammaret et sedule predicationis latratibus lupos arceret a gregibus, dormientes quoque in peccatis animas ad uirtutum uigilanciam excitaret.*¹⁹

This text evidently harks back to an earlier dog legend, which could already be found in the *Vita prima* of Bernard of Clairvaux.²⁰ The legend about Saint Dominic is thus not at all original, but instead what we have is a “wandering legend”, which was initially applied to Saint Bernard and then transferred later to Saint Dominic.²¹ Here I cannot go into the complex history of the text and reception of the *Vita prima*, which Jean Leclercq summarizes as follows: “There are different versions concerning the colour of the coat of the dog, whether or not he barked, whether he healed wounds by licking them, or if he kept watch. The dream is interpreted [...] in various ways, but always as a precognition of the later work of Saint Bernard as a preacher, pastoral minister and defender of the church.”²²

¹⁷ See, for example, Iacobus de Voragine, *Legenda aurea*, ed. by Bruno W. Häuptli, Freiburg im Breisgau et al. 2014, p. 1400: *Cuius mater ante ipsius ortum uidit in somnis se catulum gestantem in utero ardentem in ore faculam baiulantem. Qui egressus ex utero totam mundi fabricam incendebat.* On this version of the legend see also Markus Schürer, *Die Findung des Heiligen. Dominikus von Guzmán und Petrus Martyr als Figuren zwischen Topik und Singularität*, in: *Das Eigene und das Ganze. Zum Individuellen im mittelalterlichen Religiosentum*, ed. by Gert Melville and Markus Schürer (*Vita regularis* 16), Münster 2002, pp. 339–377, at p. 363.

¹⁸ See Sonja Reisner, *Konkurrenz auf dem „geistigen Markt“*. Dominikanische Wunder- und Mirakelberichte des 13. Jahrhunderts im Lichte neuer motivgeschichtlicher Forschungen, in: *Bettelorden in Mitteleuropa. Geschichte, Kunst, Spiritualität. Referate der gleichnamigen Tagung vom 19. bis 22. März 2007 in St. Pölten*, ed. by Heidemarie Specht and Ralph Andraschek-Holzer (*Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte Niederösterreichs 15/Geschichtliche Beilagen zum St. Pöltener Diözesanblatt 32*), St. Pölten 2008, pp. 663–681, at pp. 665–670.

¹⁹ Petrus Ferrandi, *Legenda Sancti Dominici*, ed. by Simon Tugwell (*MOPH* 32), Rome 2015, p. 268.

²⁰ See the *fragmenta* by Gaufridus Autissiodorensis (William of Saint-Thierry), *Vita prima sancti Bernardi Claraevallis abbatis*, ed. by Pauli Verdeyen and Christine Vande Veire (*CCCM* 89 B), Turnhout 2011, p. 273: *Somnium uidit mater Helizabeth habere se in utero catellum latrantem et territa ualde religioso cuidam uiro conquesta est. At ille ‘Ne timeas’ inquit ‘quoniam magnum quemdam optimumque catellum habes in utero et qui nasceatur ex te praedicator egregius erit’.*

²¹ See Eckert, *Der Hund mit der Fackel* (as n. 2), p. 34; Reisner, *Konkurrenz* (as n. 18), p. 667.

²² Jean Leclercq, *Bernhard von Clairvaux. Ein Mann prägt seine Zeit*, München et al. 1990, p. 13.

Petrus Ferrandi had the same purpose regarding Saint Dominic, whose calling to become a preacher, pastoral minister and defender of the church was likewise foretold.²³ One point that differs from the story concerning Saint Bernard is that in the legends about Saint Dominic the dog always holds a flaming torch in its mouth and hence does not bark. That might seem surprising at first sight, because in medieval theology the silent dog that did not bark had negative connotations.²⁴ Thus the contemporary biblical exegesis repeatedly referred to Isaiah 56,10: “Silent dogs are those which cannot bark. They are lazy and lie around and dream. Their favourite occupation is sleeping.” This picture of silent dogs that do not know how to bark has been used very often since the 12th century, to pillory bad prelates who did not carry out their task of preaching, or who preach in such a boring or an unclear way that they do not reach their listeners.²⁵ However, no criticism of Saint Dominic and his order was expressed in the Dominic legends. The fact that the Dominicans were especially effective promulgators of the gospel in their capacity as an “order of preachers” (*ordo praedicatorum*) was not questioned at that time.²⁶ Instead, the flaming torch in the mouth expressed the special charisma of Dominic’s preaching. Another biographer of Saint Dominic, Constantine of Orvieto († 1257), writes in the same way: *In quo quid daretur intelligi, nemo, qui predicatorum in catulo, in ardente vero facula divinum eloquium sacra attestante scriptura designari recordatur, ignorat.*²⁷

In any case, the imagery of light plays a prominent role in the hagiographic texts about Saint Dominic. He is repeatedly compared with a shining star²⁸ and is called the “light of the Church” (*lumen ecclesiae*).²⁹ The close interlinking of the flaming torch and the task of universal

²³ Reisner, *Konkurrenz* (as n. 18), cit. p. 681, is of the opinion “that by frankly adopting and transforming Cistercian motives and stories, the Dominicans of the 13th century intended to show that they were also part of the same old tradition and at the same time impressively proved that their self-esteem was high enough to compete actively with their ‘spiritual predecessors’.”

²⁴ See Meinolf Schumacher, *Ärzte mit Zunge. Leckende Hunde in der europäischen Literatur. Von der patristischen Exegese des Lazarus-Gleichnisses (Lk. 16) bis zum Romanzero Heinrich Heines (Aisthesis Essay 16)*, Bielefeld 2003, pp. 19–22.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁶ On dogs connoting preachers in general and the Dominicans in particular see also Carolyn Muessig, *Audience and Preacher. Ad status Sermons and Social Classification*, in: *Preacher, Sermon, and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. by ead., Leiden et al. 2002, pp. 255–276, at p. 273.

²⁷ Constantine de Urbeveteri, *Legenda Sancti Dominici*, 5, ed. by Heribert-Christian Scheeben, in: *Monumenta Historica Sancti Patris nostri Dominici*, vol. 2 (MOPH 16), Roma 1935, p. 289.

²⁸ According to another legend, Dominic’s grandmother or mother saw a shining star on the child’s forehead that seemed to illuminate the world. See Frank, *Dominikus von Caleruega* (as n. 2), col. 74.

²⁹ See the liturgical antiphon “O lumen ecclesiae” in veneration of Saint Dominic, in: *Saint Dominique*, ed. by Bériou and Hodel (as n. 7), p. 1488.

preaching is therefore emphasised in the Dominican liturgy,³⁰ which was made uniform in the 1250s and confirmed by Pope Clement IV in 1267.³¹ The sequence in the mass for the feast of Saint Dominic is as follows:

In the image of a little dog / With the flaming torch in its mouth / it showed to his mother:
/ he will instruct all the people of the world, / teaching them the commandment of love,
/ his preaching warns the world.³²

We can see here that Dominic's dog is not silent at all. In his interpretation of the dream about the dog, Petrus Ferrandi in fact explicitly tackles the issue of the barking: Through his barking the dog watches over the flock that he guards, so here the animal is quite clearly being given positive connotations. Furthermore, Petrus expands on the meaning of the warding off of dangerous wolves and refers to verses in the Bible such as Psalm 58, which plays an important role in Dominican biblical exegesis. Thus, Hugh of Saint-Cher initially refers generally in his commentary on the psalms to the dogs stated in Psalm 58 in terms of preachers who roam through the towns, and then talks about the special importance of the Dominican order, which is intended to chase off the wolves through its barking and biting.³³ This motif is picked up repeatedly in Dominican literature and is even referred to in the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum*. There too the dog is treated as an attribute of Saint Dominic:

*Patet et in alijs sapientibus predicatoribus quotidie lingua canum vulnera et vlcera languentis lacari linge(n)tes [...] Vnde et dux et pater predicatorum ordinis in figura cattuli latra(n)tis et accensam faculam in ore gestantis p(re)monstrat(us) est vt suo latratu vsq(ue) in presens habeat lupos hereticos arcere a gregibus ouium christi.*³⁴

³⁰ On the Dominican liturgy see William R. Bonniwell, *A history of the Dominican liturgy 1215–1945*, New York 1945; Gisbert Sölch, *Die Eigenliturgie der Dominikaner. Eine Gesamtdarstellung (Für Glauben und Leben 7)*, Düsseldorf 1957; Jean-Daniel Balet, *La liturgie dominicaine au XIIIe siècle*, in: Lector et compiler. Vincent de Beauvais, frère Prêcheur, un intellectuel et son milieu au XIIIe siècle, ed. by Serge Lusignan and Monique Paulmier-Fourcart (Rencontres à Royaumont), Grâne 1997, pp. 333–341; Eleanor J. Giraud, *Totum officium bene correctum habeatur in domo: Uniformity in the Dominican Liturgy*, in: *Making and Breaking the Rules. Discussion, Implementation, and Consequences of Dominican Legislation*, ed. by Cornelia Linde (Studies of the German Historical Institute London), Oxford 2018, pp. 153–172.

³¹ The liturgy was standardised at the General Chapter in 1256. See *Acta capitulorum generalium*, vol. 1, ed. by Benedictus M. Reichert (MOPH 3), Roma 1898, p. 78,12–15. On one of the surviving *exemplaria* with the authentic texts and melodies which is preserved in the General Archives of the Order in Rome, see *Aux origines de la liturgie Dominicaine. Le manuscrit Santa Sabina XIV L 1*, ed. by Leonard E. Boyle and Pierre Marie Gy, Paris/Roma 2004; Anne-Élisabeth Urfels-Capot, *Le sanctoral de l'office Dominicain (1254–1256) (Mémoires et documents de l'École des Chartes 84)*, Paris 2007.

³² See the sequence on the feast of Saint Dominic, in: *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, vol. 55, ed. by Clemens Blume, Leipzig 1922, p. 133–134, cit. at p. 133: *In figura cattuli / Praedicator saeculi / Matri praemonstratur / Portans ore faculam / Ad amoris regulam / Populus hortatur*.

³³ Hugo de Sancto Caro, *Postilla super librum Psalmorum*, quoted according to Schumacher, *Ärzte mit Zunge* (as n. 24), p. 56–57: *Secundum, quod necessarium est Praedicatori, est defensio fidei: quod notatur, cum dicit, Vt canes. Canes enim arcunt lupos, et fures latratu et morsibus suis. Sic Praedicatorum haereticos per praedicationem et disputationem*.

³⁴ Henricus Institoris [de Schlettstadt], *Malleus Maleficarum*, ed. by André Schnyder (Litterae. Göppinger Beiträge zur Textgeschichte 113), Göppingen 1991, p. 40C.

The task of the Dominicans is to ward off the heretical wolves from the flock of Christ with their barking; a motif that is picked up in Dominican iconography, as is shown in the second part of this essay.

On the other hand, there is another positive property which is discussed in the biblical tradition concerning dogs but which is given scant attention within the Dominican order, namely, the healing power of the dog's tongue. This motif, to which Meinolf Schumacher devoted an entire book,³⁵ refers back to the biblical story of poor Lazarus, whose wounds were licked by dogs (Luke 16). In the medieval exegesis this scene was frequently related to the comforting "healing" speeches of preachers and confessors.³⁶ However, only seldom do we find this motif in the hagiographic presentations of Saint Dominic. Perhaps a depiction of Saint Dominic in a Re-



gensburg manuscript³⁷ (fig. 6) at least refers to this motif: Here a dog with an overly long tongue can be seen next to the saint with his crucifix and staff (fig. 7).³⁸ The dog's tongue points in the direction of the cross, and thus could refer to the comforting power of the death of Jesus the redeemer. However, perhaps it also stands for the empathetic preaching of Saint Dominic and his brothers. But these are all just cautious attempts at providing an explanation.

Fig. 6: *Antiphonale de sanctis* (part for the summer) of the Dominican sisters of Holy Cross in Regensburg, c. 1491: Initial G for the vesper antiphon "Gaude felix parens Hispania", Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek Regensburg, Proskesche Musikabteilung. Image rights: published with the permission of the owning institution, Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek Regensburg, signature: Ch 330-1.

³⁵ See Schumacher, *Ärzte mit Zunge* (as n. 24).

³⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 27–39; Irven M. Resnick, Good Dog/Bad Dog: Dogs in Medieval Religious Polemics, in: *Enarratio* 18 (2013), pp. 70–97, at p. 75.

³⁷ On the history of the Dominican nuns in Regensburg see Christine Andrä, *Die Dominikanerinnen in Regensburg*, in: *Mehr als Schwarz und Weiß. 800 Jahre Dominikanerorden*, ed. by Elias H. Füllenbach, Regensburg 2016, pp. 289–301.

³⁸ *Antiphonale de sanctis* (part for the summer) of the Dominican convent Holy Cross in Regensburg, c. 1491: Initial G for the vesper antiphon "Gaude felix parens Hispania" on the feast of the order's founder Dominicus. Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek Regensburg, Proskesche Musikabteilung, Ch 330-1.



Fig. 7: Detail from *Antiphonale de sanctis* (part for the summer) of the Dominican sisters of Holy Cross in Regensburg, c. 1491: Initial G for the vesper antiphon “*Gaude felix parens Hispania*”, Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek Regensburg, Proschesche Musikabteilung. Image rights: published with the permission of the owning institution: Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek Regensburg, signature: Ch 330-1.

The Dominicans as Black-and-White Dogs

An example of just how difficult it can be to interpret medieval picture imagery is provided by the frescoes in the Spanish Chapel of the Dominican priory Santa Maria Novella in Florence, which have led to differing conclusions and hence also to numerous studies in art history.³⁹ The frescoes of the large room that originally served as the chapter room of the priory were not produced by Taddeo Gaddi and Simone Martini, as Giorgio Vasari erroneously believed,⁴⁰ but instead by the otherwise little-known painter Andrea di Bonaiuto, in the time around 1365.⁴¹ The pictures glorify the Dominican order and its saints, and go back to a foundation of the Florentine merchant Mico (Buonamico) de’Guidalotti, who died in 1355 and was buried there.⁴²

³⁹ On these frescoes see, for example, Serena Romano, *Due affreschi del Cappellone degli Spagnoli. Problemi iconologici*, in: *Storia dell’Arte* 28 (1976), pp. 181–213; Julian Gardner, *Andrea di Bonaiuto and the chapter-house frescoes in Santa Maria Novella*, in: *Art history* 2 (1979) pp. 107–138; Hans Belting, *Das Bild als Text. Wandmalerei und Literatur im Zeitalter Dantes*, in: *Malerei und Stadtkultur in der Dantezeit. Die Argumentation der Bilder*, ed. by Hans Belting and Dieter Blume, München 1989, pp. 23–64, see at pp. 50–52; Margarete Dieck, *Die Spanische Kapelle in Florenz. Das trecenteske Bildprogramm des Kapitelsaals der Dominikaner von S. Maria Novella* (Europäische Hochschulschriften XXVIII, 298), Frankfurt am Main et al. 1997; Joachim Poeschke, *Wandmalerei der Giottozeit in Italien 1280–1400*, München 2003, pp. 362–379; Dillian Gordon, *Andrea di Bonaiuto’s Painting in the National Gallery and S. Maria Novella: The Memory of a Church*, in: *The Burlington Magazine* 151 (2009), pp. 512–518; Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches* (as n. 15), pp. 186–198; Gaia Ravalli, *L’egemonia degli Orcagna e un secolo di pittura a Santa Maria Novella*, in: *Santa Maria Novella. La basilica e il convento*, vol. 1: *Dalla fondazione al tardogotico*, ed. by Andrea de Marchi, Firenze 2015, pp. 157–245, see at pp. 208–229.

⁴⁰ See Poeschke, *Wandmalerei der Giottozeit* (as n. 39), p. 362.

⁴¹ The surviving work contract, in which Bonaiuti undertook to paint the chapter house on 30 December 1365, was first published by Innocenzo Taurisano, *Il Capitolo di Santa Maria Novella in Firenze*, in: *Il Rosario. Memorie domenicane* 33 (1916), pp. 10–30, 80–93, 217–230, see at p. 224–225. See also Stefano Orlandi, *Necrologio di Santa Maria Novella. Testo integrale dall’inizio (MCCXXXV) al MDIV corredato di note biografiche tratte da documenti coevi con presentazione di Innocenzo Taurisano*, vol. 1, Firenze 1955, pp. 617–618.

⁴² On his preserved flat tomb, a large marble slab with an inscription that explicitly recognises the founder as a merchant (*mercator*), see Frithjof Schwartz, *Il bel cimitero. Santa Maria Novella in Florenz 1279–1348. Grabmäler, Architektur und Gesellschaft* (I Mandorli 8), Berlin/München 2009, pp. 167; 171 and 467–468.

In his will he left a sum of money for the room to be painted,⁴³ a task which in fact was not started until ten years later after his death.⁴⁴

One of these frescoes is located on the east wall of the room (fig. 8) and has been interpreted as an illustration of the church militant and church triumphant (*ecclesia militans et triumphans*) since the 16th century.⁴⁵ On the other hand, Millard Meiss and Josef Polzer proposed an interpretation as *via Veritatis*,⁴⁶



while Vasari saw in this illustration a glorification of the Dominican order.⁴⁷ Whatever the case, various topics are combined with one another in the fresco so as to bring before the eyes of the viewer the church as the true path to salvation, and at the same time, to emphasise the importance of the Dominican order.

Fig. 8: Andrea di Bonaiuto, Fresco on the east wall of the Spanish Chapel of the Dominican priory Santa Maria Novella in Florence, 1366–1368, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Way-of-salvation-church-militant-triumphant-andrea-di-bonaiuto-1365.jpg?use-lang=de#Lizenz>. License: none (Public Domain).

The fresco shows the *ecclesia* in the form of a large church building which reminds us of the Florentine cathedral that was being constructed at that time (fig. 9).⁴⁸ In front of it the pope, cardinal, bishop, emperor, king and nobility are enthroned next to one another, representing the

⁴³ See Orlandi, *Necrologio di Santa Maria Novella*, vol. 1 (see n. 41), pp. 460–462.

⁴⁴ See Cannon, *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches* (as n. 15), p. 188.

⁴⁵ See Romano, *Due affreschi del Cappellone degli Spagnoli* (as n. 39), p. 210–211; *A Critical and Historical Corpus of Florentine Painting, Section 4: The fourteenth century*, vol. 6: Andrea Bonaiuti, ed. by Richard Offner and Klara Steinweg, New York 1979, p. 36; Poeschke, *Wandmalerei der Giottozeit* (as n. 39), p. 363.

⁴⁶ Millard Meiss, *Malerei in Florenz und Siena nach der Schwarzen Pest. Kunst, Religion und Gesellschaft in der Mitte des vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Amsterdam 1999, p. 51; Josef Polzer, *Andrea di Bonaiuto's Via Veritatis and Dominican Thought in Late Medieval Italy*, in: *The Art Bulletin* 77 (1995), pp. 263–289.

⁴⁷ See Joseph Anton Endres, “Die Verherrlichung des Dominikanerordens” in der Spanischen Kapelle an S. Maria Novella zu Florenz. Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung des Bildes, in: *Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst* 22 (1909), cols. 323–328, at col. 324.

⁴⁸ See Rahel Meier, *Wie kommt der Florentiner Dom in den Kapitelsaal der Dominikaner von Santa Maria Novella?*, in: *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 61 (2019), pp. 135–143.

unity of ecclesiastical and worldly power. They are surrounded by representatives of the various estates and by the members of various religious orders. At the feet of the pope lie a number of sheep that are watched over by two black-and-white dogs (fig. 10).

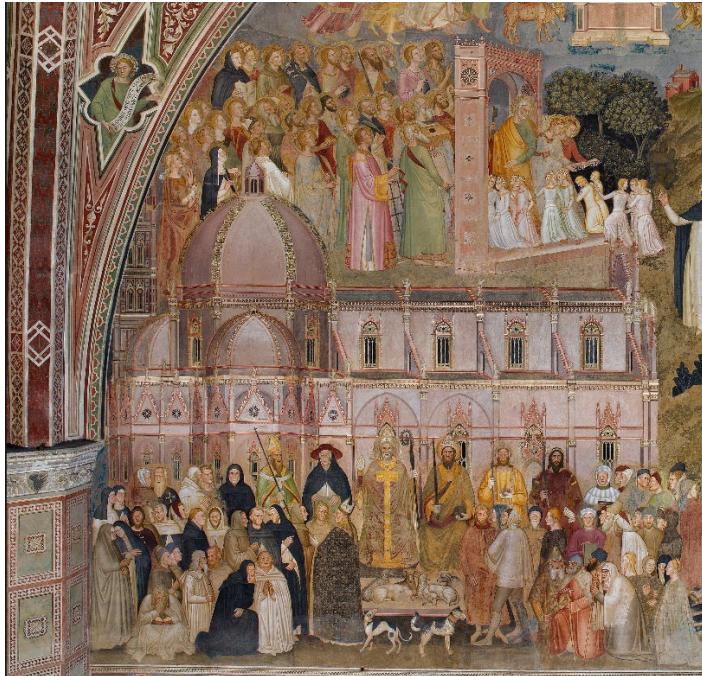


Fig. 9 and fig. 10: Details from Andrea di Bonaiuto, Fresco on the east wall of the Spanish Chapel of the Dominican priory Santa Maria Novella in Florence, 1366–1368, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Way-of-salvation-church-militant-triumphant-andrea-di-bonaiuto-1365.jpg?use-lang=de#Lizenz>. License: none (Public Domain, detail crops by Johanna Ecker).

The fact that these black-and-white dogs clearly relate to the Dominicans is shown in the right half of the picture: Saint Dominic sends out another group of these dogs who hunt brown predators so as to protect white lambs and sheep (fig. 11). Without a doubt, this is an allusion to the watchfulness of the Dominican order against erroneous teachings. The predators shown here symbolise heretics,⁴⁹ in the same way as we see them in other depictions of Saint Dominic in which he defeats a fox (fig. 12). On the other hand, in all likelihood the animals in the Florentine fresco are wolves. While foxes could be used to depict heretics, mostly all they do is to destroy a vineyard, and they do not threaten sheep.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ On this animal iconography, in which heretics are often symbolised by wolves or foxes, see Joanna Dobkowska-Kubacka, *Animals as Symbols of Heretics in Latin European Literature and Art from the 9th to the 16th Century*, in: *Quart* (The Quarterly of the Institute of Art History at the University of Wrocław) 49,3 (2018), pp. 3–19.

⁵⁰ See Schumacher, *Ärzte mit der Zunge* (as n. 24), p. 55.



Fig. 11: Detail from *Andrea di Bonaiuto, Fresco on the east wall of the Spanish Chapel of the Dominican priory Santa Maria Novella in Florence, 1366–1368*, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Way-of-salvation-church-militant-triumphant-andrea-di-bonaiuto-1365.jpg?u-selang=de#Lizenz>. License: none (Public Domain, detail crop by Johanna Ecker).



Fig. 12: *Anonymous, Saint Dominic, c. 1527–1534, Museo de Bellas Artes de Córdoba*, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santo_Domingo_de_Guzm%C3%A1n_%28CE2196P%29_-_Museo_de_Bellas_Artes_de_C%C3%B3rdoba.jpg. License: none (Public Domain).

This heavy emphasis on the struggle against unbelievers and heretics is therefore especially interesting, since in central Italy the Inquisition had been in the hands of the Franciscans since 1254.⁵¹ In fact, in the first decades of the 14th century, it was in Florence that the Franciscan inquisitors were blamed for so many transgressions that in 1333 Pope John XXII sent a special investigator, who accused the inquisitor of that time of corruption and of misusing his office.⁵² Rahel Meier assumes on the basis of these grievances, that the Dominicans were recommending

⁵¹ See Jill Moore, *Inquisition and its Organisation in Italy, 1250–1350* (Heresy and inquisition in the Middle Ages 8), Woodbridge, Suffolk/Rochester, NY 2019, pp. 54–56. On the Franciscan inquisition in Tuscany, see also Caterina Bruschi, *Inquisizione francescana in Toscana fino al pontificato di Giovanni XXII*, in: *Frati minori e inquisizione. Atti del XXXIII convegno internazionale, Assisi, 6–8 ottobre 2005* (Atti dei convegni della società internazionale di studi francescani e del Centro interuniversitario di studi francescani, Nuova serie 16), Spoleto 2006, pp. 285–324.

⁵² See Frédéricand Callaey, *Un épisode de l'inquisition franciscaine en Toscane. Procès intenté à l'inquisiteur Minus de Saint-Quirico (1333–1334)*, in: *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à Charles Moeller à l'occasion de son jubilé de 50 années de professorat à l'Université de Louvain, 1863–1913*, vol. 1: *Antiquité et Moyen Age* (Recueil de travaux 40), Louvain/Paris 1914, pp. 527–547.

through the depiction of the black-and-white dogs that they should take over the Inquisition.⁵³ She even considers it possible that the unusual light-brown colour of the wolves could be understood as a pointed jab at the Franciscans with their brown habits.⁵⁴



Fig. 13: Detail from Andrea di Bonaiuto, Fresco on the east wall of the Spanish Chapel of the Dominican priory Santa Maria Novella in Florence, 1366–1368, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Way-of-salvation-church-militant-tri-umphant-andrea-di-bonaiuto-1365.jpg?uselang=de#Lizenz>. License: none (Public Domain, detail crop by Johanna Ecker).

The struggle against false and erroneous teachings is expressed once again in these scenes, albeit in a less aggressive way (fig. 13): Two Dominican saints, Peter of Verona and Thomas Aquinas (with an opened copy of his *Summa contra gentiles* in his hand) are in discussion with a group of men who are characterized as heretics or unbelievers, including Saracens and Jews⁵⁵, due to their foreign-looking and somewhat oriental clothing. There are various reactions: There is both rejection and acceptance. One man has his hands pressed over his ears, others discuss with one another and hold their hands up high in a defensive manner, while two others (most likely a Muslim and a Jew due to their clothes) kneel down in front of Thomas, and a third, who is probably intended to be depicted as a heretic due to his unusual hat, tears out one or more pages from his own book. In this way, the fresco puts before one's eyes the intellectual superiority of the Dominicans. Also and for that very reason, the book that Saint Thomas Aquinas holds in his hands is not to be interpreted as a glorification “of his speech”, as Margarete Dieck

⁵³ See Meier, *Wie kommt der Florentiner Dom in den Kapitelsaal* (as n. 48), p. 142.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵⁵ See Nirit Ben-Aryeh Debby, *Art and Sermons: Dominicans and the Jews in Florence's Santa Maria Novella*, in: *Church History and Religious Culture* 92 (2012), pp. 171–200. See also ead., *Mendicants and Jews in Florence*, in: *The Jewish-Christian Encounter in Medieval Preaching*, ed. by Jonathan Adams and Jussi Hanska, New York/London 2015, pp. 282–295.

states,⁵⁶ but instead illustrates the power of the work he had authored,⁵⁷ in which the viewpoints of his opponents are rebutted with arguments. In any case, it is noticeable that nowhere in these frescoes are books being burned,⁵⁸ and for this reason the reference to the Inquisition should not be stressed unduly.

In my opinion, what is emphasised above all in the frescoes of the Spanish Chapel is the importance of the Dominican order for knowledge and study and its role as an arbiter of salvation. In the fresco on the east wall, Saint Dominic points out to people the way to heaven, and in doing so is alluding to depictions of the Last Judgement, in which the archangel Michael is given this role. Just how heaven can be reached by believers despite their personal failings is shown by a confession scene in which a Dominican grants absolution (fig. 14).⁵⁹ This was probably influenced by the *Specchio di vera penitenza*, a popular text on confession by the well-known Dominican Jacopo Passavanti, who was no longer alive when the frescoes were painted.⁶⁰



Fig. 14: Detail from Andrea di Bonaiuto, Fresco on the east wall of the Spanish Chapel of the Dominican priory Santa Maria Novella in Florence, 1366–1368, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Way-of-salvation-church-militant-triumphant-andrea-di-bonaiuto-1365.jpg?uselang=de#Lizenz>. License: none (Public Domain, detail crop by Johanna Ecker).

⁵⁶ Dieck, *Die Spanische Kapelle* (as n. 39), p. 121.

⁵⁷ See Thomas Werner, *Den Irrtum liquidieren. Bücherverbrennungen im Mittelalter* (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 225), Göttingen 2007, p. 173.

⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 221.

⁵⁹ Roberto Lunardi, *Arte e storia in Santa Maria Novella* (per un museo fiorentino di arte sacra), Florenz 1983, p. 67, suspects that the penitent could be the donor of the chapter house.

⁶⁰ As Gardner, *Andrea di Bonaiuto* (as n. 39), p. 108 and p. 120, emphasises, Passavanti's influence on the frescoes should therefore not be overestimated.

The question of whether there is a textual template for the complex imagery of the frescoes is repeatedly followed up in literature relating to art history. In her dissertation, Margarete Dieck also asks about a text that formed its basis and believes to have found this in a *Credo* commentary by Thomas Aquinas.⁶¹ I personally consider such questions to be pointless. Back in 1989, Hans Belting noted that it is neither possible nor necessary to assume that medieval paintings only reproduced literary texts.⁶² We can only say with certainty that, on the east wall of the chapter room of Santa Maria Novella, the Dominicans portrayed themselves as competent defenders of the true faith and as guarantors for attaining salvation of the soul.

While the former chapter room in Florence presents the achievements of the Dominican order as a “place of self-depiction by the Dominicans”⁶³ while very consciously resorting to the dog motif, we also know of dog depictions that take a critical view of the role of the Dominicans as inquisitors and missionaries among the Jews. Here I can only go into more detail based on a well-known example, which Kurt Schubert brought to my attention some years ago⁶⁴ and which I have already written about several times.⁶⁵ An illustration of hunting a hare can be found in a Spanish Passover Haggadah dating from the 14th century and currently held by the Rylands Library in Manchester: a hare is being chased by a black-and-white hound; the dog has already bitten the hare in the leg and blood is streaming out.⁶⁶ According to Marc M. Epstein, in the Jewish perception the hare was transformed “from an emblem of infamy to a superlative metaphor for Jewish selfdefinition”.⁶⁷ Presumably this illustration in the Rylands Haggadah is a

⁶¹ See Dieck, *Die Spanische Kapelle* (as n. 39), pp. 139–154.

⁶² See Belting, *Das Bild als Text* (as n. 39), p. 47.

⁶³ Werner, *Den Irrtum liquidieren* (as n. 57), p. 218.

⁶⁴ See also Ursula Schubert and Kurt Schubert, *Pesach Haggadot*, in: *Spharadim – Spaniolen. Die Juden in Spanien – die sephardische Diaspora*, ed. by Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek and Kurt Schubert (*Studia Judaica Austriaca* 13), Eisenstadt 1992, pp. 97–106, at p. 102.

⁶⁵ See Elias H. Füllenbach, *Hunting Dogs? Dominican Mission to the Jews in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, in: *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, N.S. 2 (2017), pp. 157–168; id., *Die „Hunde des Herrn“ auf der Jagd. Dominikanische Judenmission im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert*, in: *Huit siècles de mission et de dialogue interreligieux dans l’ordre des Prêcheurs*, ed. by Mariano Delgado and Bernard Hodel (*Studia Friburgensia*, 3, 2), Paris 2020, pp. 65–76.

⁶⁶ University of Manchester Library, The John Rylands Library, Hebrew MS 6, fol. 29v, <https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-HEBREW-00006/64>. For the manuscript see *The Rylands Haggadah. A Medieval Sephardi Masterpiece in Facsimile. An Illuminated Passover Compendium from Mid-14th-Century Catalonia in the Collections of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester with a Commentary and a Cycle of Poems*, ed. by Raphael Loewe, London 1988.

⁶⁷ Marc M. Epstein, *Dreams of Subversion in Medieval Jewish Art and Literature*, University Park, Pa., 1997, p. 27. On the symbolism of hunting scenes in Hebrew Manuscripts see also Kurt Schubert, *Wikkuach-Thematik in den Illustrationen hebräischer Handschriften*, in: *Jewish Art* 12/13 (1986/1987), pp. 247–256; Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Illuminated Haggadot from Medieval Spain. Biblical Imagery and the Passover Holiday*, University Park, Pennsylvania 2006, p. 149; Sarit Shalev-Eyni, *Jews among Christians: Hebrew Book Illumination from Lake Constance*, Turnhout 2010, pp. 71–76.

cautious allusion to the contemporary activities of the Dominicans in the black-and-white habit of their Order, as missionaries among the Jews.⁶⁸ This image could suggest that the Dominican Order was perceived by the Jews as a threat, and sometimes even as a serious danger.

Conclusion

This last example shows how pictures can convert and consolidate. While initially the dog only served as a symbol for the preaching and the apostolic zeal of Saint Dominic, over the course of time it became a symbol for the entire Order,⁶⁹ whose effect was assessed differently according to one's viewpoint: In the Dominican self-perception black-and-white dogs became stylized as defenders of the Christian faith and of the flock of God, while on the other hand, to the Jewish minority and other 'outsiders' in Christian society the dogs represented a menace that was to be avoided if at all possible.

⁶⁸ See Füllenbach, *Hunting Dogs?* (as n. 65), p. 157; Sara Offenberg, *Beauty and the Beast: On a Doe, a Devilish Hunter, and Jewish-Christian Polemics*, in: *AJS Review. The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies* 44 (2020), pp. 269–285, at p. 270.

⁶⁹ See Eckert, *Der Hund mit der Fackel* (as n. 2), p. 35.