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GLOBALISATION has been defined as 'the process of transformation of local phenomena into global ones . . . a process by which the people of the world are unified into a single society and function together'.[1] Globalisation is a many-headed hydra, but despite a rise in cultural approaches since the 1990s it has often been assumed that money and markets are the unique forces that generate globalisation. Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez posited that globalisation began with the start of transpacific trade in 1571 when the world became 'entangled in a web of silver',[2] as silver became the material of a global currency. Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson contend that globalisation began in the nineteenth century with the integration of commodity markets.[3] Globalisation theories often depart from the normative assumption that money is the unique material that can unify the world. This point of departure is not epistemologically neutral but can be linked to the neo-Kantian belief that money created the basis for a universal civil society.[4] In the shadow of these powerful epistemologies, the notion that there was an earlier attempt at globalisation based upon ideas of poverty and an idealised rejection of money as a currency of exchange, becomes difficult to conceptualise. Yet Franciscan history shows that the quest for an idealised spiritual value of poverty created new global connections and an attempt to create a new world order underpinned by these values in the late medieval and early modern period.

[1] Peter N. Stearns, *Globalization in World History* (London: Routledge, 2010), 1.
[2] Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez, 'Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Journal of World History* 13, no. 2 (2002): 391–427, 401.
[3] Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History, The Evolution of Nineteenth-Century Atlantic Economy* (Boston: MIT, 2001).
[4] G. Simmel, *Philosophy of Money*, ed. D. Frisby (London, Routledge, 1990).

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Global history has often been conceptualised and articulated in economic terms, and while there are some recognitions of the place of religious networks within global history many global historians have recognised the importance of religion on the global stage, but they have often interpreted this global religious history has having a symbiotic relationship with global economic history.[5] Scholars have observed that as trade networks spread, so too did religions, and religion has been seen as an extension of the emergence of global economies. Across the Indian Ocean world Kirti Chaudhuri observed the connections between trade networks and the expansion of Islam.[6] Across Eurasia, the Silk Roads were a nexus of both commerce and culture,[7] and Richard Foltz describes the silk roads as a 'premodern globalisation network' which facilitated the spread of Buddhism and then Islam as well as trade.[8] The Jesuit Order, which was papally approved in 1540, has often been interpreted as the first Christian global Order,[9] and this too has been seen as part of the history of globalisation. Luke Clossey contended that the Jesuits 'helped create' and 'could only have functioned in, a globalised world'.[10] Clossey defines this as the product of a 'merchant-missionary' symbiosis,[11] an idea which he notes was established by the Jesuits themselves in the seventeenth century: 'if there were not merchants who go to seek for earthly treasure in the East and West Indies, who would transport thither the preachers who take heavenly treasures? The preachers take the Gospel and the merchants take the preachers'.[12] For the Jesuits,

[5] This trend can be traced back to Fernand Braudel, who recognised religion as one of the underlying structures of the Mediterranean.

[6] K. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[7] Vadime Elisseeff, ed., *The Silk Roads: Highways of Commerce and Culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000).

[8] Richard Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

[9] Thomas M. Cohen and Emanuele Colombo, 'Jesuit Missions', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750: Volume II: Cultures and Power*, ed. Hamish Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 256–274.

[10] Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20. Clossey later noted that this early modern globalization was not the process of Westernization, as it has often been interpreted in modernity; see Luke Clossey, 'Merchants, Migrants, Missionaries, and Globalization in the Early-Modern Pacific', *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006): 41–58.

[11] Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization*, 89.

[12] António Vierira (1608–1697), *Historia do future* [*History of the Future*], Quoted in Boxer, *Portuguese Seaborne*, 65, cited in Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization*, 255.

the global spread of preaching and profit were symbiotic.[13] Yet the Jesuits were preceded by another religious Order, the Franciscans, whose global network stretched across Asia by the thirteenth century and into the Atlantic to the Canary Islands by the fourteenth, and their relationship with the global spread of money and markets was not symbiotic but dialectic. As they travelled the world from the thirteenth century they continued to explore the meaning of poverty, as they did in Europe.

This paper breaks down the story of the Franciscans' global pursuit of poverty between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries into five parts. First, it introduces readers to the Franciscan Order, their contentious debates about poverty within Europe, and the scale of their global expansion between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Second, it examines Franciscan travel writings, spiritual writings, hagiographies, and chronicles to show that exploration of poverty, and the material and spiritual conditions and values of the people they encountered, was an important part of the Franciscans' global history. Third, it shows that the Franciscans continued to try to maintain their poverty by rejecting money and denouncing greed, and the problems this caused them on their travels around the world. Fourth, it considers the way in which Franciscans were not merely mendicant monks wandering the world in poverty, but missionaries who also wanted to convert the world to their vision of Holy Poverty. Fifth, it reflects that the Franciscans' conception of a world of poverty was not inclusive and egalitarian, but exclusive and hierarchical.

An Overview of Franciscan Poverty

There have been many meanings of Franciscan poverty. It has been debated and adapted by Franciscans, their supporters, and their critics in Europe and around the world for centuries. Elasticity has been essential to the fabric of Franciscan poverty precisely because, from its inception, Franciscan poverty has been conceptualised as a spiritual and material value defined in relation to both man's spiritual relation to God and man's physical and moral relation with the material conditions of the socio-economic context. This dialogic structure has underpinned the malleable material of Franciscan poverty as it has shaped the local and global history of the Order.

[13] James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 157.

The Franciscan Order came into existence in the thirteenth century as a fraught and complex opposition to a changing socio-economic context, a world where money, markets were on the rise and causing moral and spiritual crisis. This was a world they were only just beginning to understand and grasping to articulate. The Franciscans' concept of poverty developed through debates about man's moral and theologically ordained place in the world. The Franciscans' conception of poverty was spiritual as well as material, and they debated the meaning and relationship between the spiritual and material conditions. Their pursuit of highest poverty (*altissima paupertas*) interrogated the boundary and relationship between these worlds. Franciscan poverty, like other conceptions of poverty, has not been a static universal but a concept forever on the move. These debates about poverty were on the move conceptually, but also physically, as Franciscans moved around the world. The Franciscan debates about poverty have been the subject of much scholarly literature, but the historiography has been confined to Europe and here we will see how anxiety for poverty was also part of the Franciscans' global history.

Members of the Franciscan Order swore an oath to the Franciscan Rule (*Regula Bullata*), which dedicated them to a life of poverty.[14] The *Regula Bullata* stipulated that 'the brothers should not make anything their own, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all'.[15] Following their Rule of poverty, Franciscans travelled across North Africa, Central and Far Asia from the thirteenth century, reaching East Asia before Marco Polo, and were the first religious foundation in the New World in the sixteenth century, establishing the Province of the Holy Cross in 1505. They established the Province of the Holy Gospel in 1524 which included the Philippines, and their order encompassed the world. The *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, one of the main sources for the early history of the Order, reported that 'the brothers were sent throughout nearly the entire world, and in the provinces where they arrived they were welcomed as poor men'.[16] Between 1317 and 1330 Odoric da Pordenone (1286–1331) travelled over fifty thousand

[14] The first primitive Rule of St Francis was written around 1209. The *Regula non-bullata*, or Rule without the papal seal was drafted around 1221; the Rule that was finally approved in 1223 after many amendments.

[15] *Regula Bullata*, 'The Later Rule', in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (FA: ED hereafter), Vol. I, The Saint*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellman, O.F. M. Con., William J. Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 1999), 99–106, 103.

[16] Arnald of Sarrant, *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum*, ed. Bernardi A. Bessa, in *Analecta Franciscana, sive Chronica Aliaque Varia Documenta ad Historiam Fratrum Minorum Spectantia*, ed. a partibus collegii S. Bonaventurae, Vol. III, Florence, Quaracchi, 1897, 24.

kilometres throughout the Middle East, India, Southeast Asia, China, and Tibet, always, he said, 'in the habit of Francis', the costume of Franciscan poverty.[17] They established their place in the world based upon an idealised dispossession. Their ideology of poverty was important to the way Franciscans gave meaning to their global network and its purpose not only to encompass the world but to change it.

The Franciscan Order was one of the many mendicant Orders that emerged in the late Middle Ages but the focus upon poverty was both stricter and more central to the Franciscans than it was to the Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians.[18] Unlike these other mendicant communities the Franciscans renounced common as well as individual property. The Jesuit Order which was established much later in 1540, was also a mendicant Order but, as Luke Clossey observed, 'in practice scholars rarely apply the adjective "mendicant" to them, nor did their contemporaries, as the Society had a reputation for avarice'.[19] Like the other mendicant Orders, the Franciscan Order became a wealthy and powerful institution in the Middle Ages, but anxiety for the meaning and proper interpretation of Holy Poverty, which was itself representative of man's proper relationship with the material and spiritual world, remained central to the Order. While global histories of Christian religious movements have typically focused upon the Jesuits, breaking this historiographical routine offers another face of globalisation since Franciscan history was driven by pursuit of an idealised poverty rather than wealth.

In the eight centuries since their emergence the Order and its concept of poverty has gone through many transitions as members have re-negotiated their understanding of poverty in relation to changing socio-economic contexts. Franciscans debated the spiritual meaning of poverty and how it should be enacted physically. Neslihan Şenocak has surveyed the making of Franciscan poverty, observing that the Order's founder, St Francis, had listed poverty amongst five other virtues (wisdom, simplicity, humility, charity and obedience) but that had become the central feature of the Franciscan way of life by around 1242.[20]

[17] Odoric da Pordenone, *The Travels of Odoric*, trans. Sir Henry Yule (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 64.

[18] David Knowles, *From Pachomius to Ignatius: A Study in the Constitutional History of the Religious Orders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[19] Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 22. See also Thomas Banchoff and Jose J. Casanova, eds., *The Jesuits and Globalization: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Challenges* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2016).

[20] See Neslihan Şenocak, 'The Making of Franciscan Poverty', *Revue Mabillon* 5, no. 24 (2013): 5–26, 7–8.

Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio (Minister General of the Franciscan Order 1257–1274) further developed the centrality of poverty to the Franciscans' spiritual condition.[21] Precisely what poverty was and how it should be practiced continued to be debated. In 1279 Nicholas III issued *Exiit qui seminat*, which adopted the theory of poverty developed in particular by Bonaventure separating use and ownership.[22] Peter Olivi (1248–1298) argued this interpretation was too weak as use also needed to be poor. Olivi's writings inspired the Spiritual Franciscans, who developed the most radical interpretations of poverty. Olivi's work was also important as it investigated how the Franciscans could interpret poverty in relation to their socio-economic context. Giacamo Todeschini has argued the Franciscans' investigation of the meaning of Holy Poverty developed in dialogue with changes in the socio-economic context of the late Middle Ages, and that consequently the Franciscans' investigations of poverty helped to develop the language and conceptual framework of capitalism and its place within the Christian world.[23] This was an ambivalent contribution as many Franciscans maintained that their poverty was a direct criticism of the greed and moral danger engendered by money and markets.

The Franciscans' pursuit of poverty was an ongoing investigation that was shaped by internal and external debates and criticisms. In the fourteenth century Pope John XXII challenged the theological foundations of Franciscan poverty and revoked aspects of their legal arrangement. These debates and rulings transformed Franciscan poverty and reduced the possibility of some of the Franciscans' claims about their poverty, but it did not displace the importance of poverty within the Order. As Grado Giovanni Merlo explained, 'after the measures of John XXII the Order of the brothers Minor was no longer what it was before' but 'it retained its social and ecclesiastical connections and its institutional organisational structures were sufficiently strong and stable enough to guarantee its continuity'.[24]

Different beliefs about the interpretation and practices of poverty split the Order into different factions. The more radical Spiritual

[21] *Apologia pauperum contra calumniator* (1269).

[22] Nicholas III, *Exiit qui seminat*, in *Liber Sixtus*, *Corpus iuris canonici*, ed. E. Friedberg, 2 (Leipzig, 1879), (2nd edn, 1959, Graz), col. 1109–1121.

[23] Giacamo Todeschini, 'Franciscan Economics and Jews in the Middle Ages: From a Theological to an Economic Lexicon', in *The Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 99–117.

[24] Grado Giovanni Merlo, *Saint Francis* (New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2009), 319.

Franciscans were condemned as heretics in the fourteenth century, but their ideas remained influential. The Order was divided in 1517 into the Conventuals and the Observants, who had a stricter interpretation of poverty. Observant Franciscans gained the institutional leadership of the Order,[25] ensuring that strict observance of poverty and obedience to the Rule were central to the Franciscans' early modern missions. Observant Franciscans with a strict interpretation of the Rule and a strong commitment to the ideology of poverty led the global expansion of the Order within the Spanish and Portuguese Empires in the sixteenth century. As Steven E. Turley also explained, as the Franciscans expanded across the New World 'their poverty was to be the centrepiece of their mission strategy'.[26] There are many studies of the contested nature of Franciscan poverty, but historical focus on these debates has often been confined to Europe.[27] Here we will see that interest in the spiritual value of poverty and the possible alternatives to a society based on wealth accumulation and a monetary economy continued to shape the history of the Franciscan Order on the global stage.

The Franciscans' Global Exploration of the Value of Poverty

The Franciscans' conversion to voluntary poverty within Europe had been an open criticism of the old *societas Christiana*, and the way that the Roman Church and the secular clergy had been corrupted by greed, money and wealth accumulation, and as they travelled the world they continued to question the material and spiritual conditions and value systems of the people they encountered. Within Franciscan texts, Franciscan travel was often presented as a continuation of their exploration of poverty and contained thinly-veiled criticisms of the greed and corruption of the old *societas Christiana* in Europe.

The Order's founder established the tradition of travel amongst the Franciscans, travelling across Europe and the Mediterranean, reaching North Africa, and planning to travel to the Middle East. In 1219, at the height of the international crisis of the fifth crusade, Francis met with

[25] See Merlo, *Saint Francis*, 412–428.

[26] Steven E. Turley, *Franciscan Spirituality and Mission in New Spain, 1524–1599: Conflict Beneath the Sycamore Tree (Luke 19:1–10)* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 31.

[27] For an overview of the Franciscan poverty disputes, see Malcolm Lambert, *Franciscan Poverty: The Doctrine of Absolute Poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan Order, 1210–1323*, Rev. and expanded ed. (New York: Franciscan Institute, 1998).

the Ayubbid Sultan, Malik al-Kamil, in Egypt. Thomas of Celano memorialised this encounter in his hagiography of St Francis indicating that Holy Poverty set St Francis apart from other missionaries at this time:

> The Sultan honoured him as much as he could, offering him many gifts, trying to turn his mind to worldly riches. But when he saw that he resolutely scorned all these things like dung, the Sultan was overflowing with admiration and recognized him as a man unlike any other. He was moved by his words and listened to him very willingly.[28]

In this passage Celano illustrates the Franciscan belief that poverty marked the Franciscans' place in the world and indicated that this impressed the Muslim ruler. Bonaventure went further in his hagiographical account of the encounter between Franciscans and Muslims in the thirteenth century to illustrate that poverty marked out the Franciscans' interactions in the world:

> When some of the brothers went to the lands of the non-believers, a certain Saracen, moved by piety, once offered them money for the food they needed. When they refused to accept it, the man was amazed, seeing that they were without means. Realizing they did not want to possess money because they had become poor out of love of God, he felt so attracted to them he offered to minister to all their needs as long as he had something to give.[29]

Here Bonaventure shows that the Franciscans could continue to live lives of voluntary poverty as they travelled the world. Bonaventure indicated not only that the Franciscans valued poverty but that this could be respected by Muslims while it was contested by Christians:

> o ineffable value of poverty, whose marvellous power moved the fierce heart of a barbarian to such sweet pity! What a horrible and unspeakable crime that a Christian should trample upon this noble pearl which a Saracen held in such veneration.[30]

Within Franciscan historiography it is well known that Bonaventure emphasised the importance of poverty within the Order, but here we see that Bonaventure indicates that poverty shaped the Franciscans'

[28] Thomas of Celano, *The Life of Saint Francis*, in *FA: ED, Vol. I*, 180–308, 231.
[29] Bonaventure, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, 555.
[30] Ibid.

place in the world. Bonaventure does not romanticise this as a peaceful position, noting that Franciscans travelling the world were also martyred for their beliefs.

This idea that poverty distinguished the Franciscans and could potentially move people in distant lands who could recognise the value of Franciscan poverty, resonated in Franciscan travelogues of their Eurasian journeys. Franciscans were pioneers of Eurasian travel in the Middle Ages. In 1245 John of Plano Carpini (Giovanni del Pian di Carpini) (c. 1185–1252) journeyed to the court of the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire,[31] between 1253 and 1254 William of Rubruck (c. 1220–c. 1293) lived at the court of the Great Khan in Karakorum, in 1299 John of Montecorvino (1247–1328) journeyed through India and built a church in the Yuan capital of Khanbaliq.[32]

The record of William of Rubruck's journey to the East emphasises how poverty distinguished the Franciscans and how they communicated their message of poverty. When Rubruck arrived at the court of Sartaq, khanate of the Golden Horde, he was at pains to present himself as Franciscan, differentiated by his Rule of poverty. He wrote, 'I excused myself, explaining that as I was a monk, not having, nor receiving, nor handling any gold, or silver, or any other precious thing, save only the books and vestments in which we served God',[33] he added that 'we were therefore bringing no gift to him or his lord, for I who had renounced my possessions could not be the bearer of those belonging to others'.[34] Like Francis's meeting with the Sultan, Rubruck reported that the Mongols whom he encountered in 1252 were in awe of the Franciscans' poverty: 'they [the Mongols] marvelled exceedingly, that we would receive neither gold not silver, nor precious garments'.[35]

[31] Carpini wrote his *Historia Mongolorum* when he returned to Italy in 1247. At this time a fellow Franciscan produced the 'Tartar Relation', based on Carpini's account; Alf Önnerfors, ed., *Hystoria Tartarorum C. de Bridia monarchi* (Berlin, 1967).

[32] Only fragments of the Franciscans' fourteenth century attempts to build the Christian church in China survive, see Francis A. Rouleau, 'The Yangchow Latin Tombstone as a Landmark of Medieval Christianity in China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 17, no. 3/4 (1954): 346–365.

[33] 'excusaui etiam me quia monachus eram, non habens, nec recipiens, nec tractans aurum vel argentum vel aliquid preciosum, solis libris & capella in qua sereniebamus deo exceptis', Rubruck, *Itinerarium*, ed. Beazley, 165.

[34] 'vnde nullam xenium afferebamus ei nec domino suo. Qui enim propria dimiseram, non poteram portator esse alienorum'. Rubruck, *Itinerarium*, ed. Beazley, 165.

[35] 'et mirabantur supra modum, quia nolebamus recipere aurum, vel argentum, vel vestes praeciosas'; William of Rubruck, 'Itinerarium fratris Willielmi de Rubruquis', in *The Texts and Versions of John de Plano Carpini and William de Rubruquis*, ed. C. Raymond Beazley (London: Hakluyt, 1930), 144–183, 177.

The Franciscan had emerged as a critique of the increasing greed and moral corruption of Christians in Europe, and as they travelled the world they explored the material, spiritual and moral conditions of those they encountered. As Rubruck travelled in the Far East he described a world where wealth was abundant but where greed did not prevail:

> There is much gold in their land. Whoever needed gold, could dig until he finds some, and then taking as much as he needs, he gives up the residue within the earth: because if should put it into his chest or storehouse, he is of the opinion that God would withhold from him all other gold within the earth.[36]

Rubruck's description is referencing the Gospel's preaching on against wealth accumulation and greed, which stated 'do not store up for yourself treasures on earth . . . and you will have treasure in heaven'.[37] In descriptions such as this Rubruck projects Franciscan beliefs about poverty, using what only what one needs and opposing accumulation, onto the people whom he encounters and in doing so links the Franciscans and people in the Far East through an imagined value system of poverty.

Similarly, Carpini had also described a place in the Far East where there was abundant wealth but the culture of over-accumulation and greed did not prevail, where 'there are neither thieves nor robbers of great riches to be found, and therefore the tabernacles and carts of those that have any treasure are not locked'.[38] Carpini thought that he found in the Far East a land without the greed that had corrupted Europe. He reported how the Mongols had wealth but were not corrupted by it and lived modestly, writing that the emperors, dukes and nobles had much silk, gold, silver and precious stones, yet they had modest consumption and survived on thinned mares' milk and by eating lice.[39] Franciscan poverty was a reaction to the culture of greed corrupting Christendom, which was embodied by the influx of luxuries such as silk. Odoric reported a society in the Far East where

[36] 'Isti habent multum de auro in terra sua. Vnde qui indigent auro, fodit donec reperiat, & accipiat quando indigent, residuum condens in terra: quia si reponeret in arca vel in thasauro, crederet quod Deus aufferret ei aliud quod est in terra.' Rubruck, *Itinerarium*, ed. Beazley, 182–183.

[37] Matthew 6:19–21

[38] *Libellus historicus Ioannis de Plano Carpini, qui missus est Legatus ad Tartaros anno Domini 1246*, in C. Raymond Beazley, ed., *The Texts and Versions of John de Plano Carpini and William de Rubruquis* (London: Hakluyt, 1930), 43–73, 51.

[39] Ibid.

silk was worn by the poor,[40] an inversion of the European material value system.

John of Montecorvino wrote how India was a land 'abounding in aromatic spices and precious stones', but noted that despite this wealth the local religious elites valued poverty. He claimed that there were religious groups in this abundant land of India that wore habits and practiced 'greater abstinence and austerity than our own Latin monks'.[41] This perception shows the friars' optimism that they might find sympathisers of their valuation of poverty beyond Europe, and acts as a reminder of the Franciscan criticism of how greed had corrupted Christian Europe, including the monastic orders.

These Franciscan travel writings indicate how they viewed themselves in the world, and how they took their exploration of poverty beyond Europe in the late Middle Ages. It is more difficult to know what impact these early Franciscans had in Asia and how they themselves were perceived. We know that they had some modest successes at conversion in the East. In 1288, years after the mission of William of Rubruck, a Nestorian Christian, Rabban Sauma, arrived in Rome and asked the pope to send more proselytising monks to China. Sauma was sent with diplomatic gifts, and a Syriac account of his journey advised 'let your abundance help their poverty'.[42] Language and beliefs about poverty have been an overlooked part of pre-modern global connections as global historians have tended to focus upon more tangible material traces.

As the Mongol Khanates converted to Islam in the fourteenth century it became harder for Franciscans to travel to the East. When the Jesuits built their church in Beijing centuries later they did not know that it was, most likely, close to the site of the thirteenth century Franciscan Church.[43] As the Middle Ages drew to a close the focus of the Franciscans' missionary expansion shifted to the Atlantic, first the Canary Islands, then the Caribbean, and then the *terra firma* of the New World.[44] By the early sixteenth century the Franciscan Order was entering a new phase of its history, and the discovery of the

[40] Odoric of Pordenone, *The Travels of Odoric*, 111.

[41] John of Montecorvino, 'Second Letter of John Montecorvino', *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. III, ed. Henry Yule (London: Hakluyt, 1914), 51–58, 57.

[42] Syriac account of Rabban Sauma's journey from China to the west, cited in Lauren Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and its Influence on the Art of the West 1250–1350* (San Francisco, 1999), 31.

[43] Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, Desiderata Pr, 47.

[44] See Julia McClure, *The Franciscan Invention of the New World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016).

New World offered new missionary opportunities, and challenges, for the Franciscans.

Reform movements took root amongst the Franciscans of the Iberian Peninsula from the fifteenth century, many of whom were influenced by earlier writings of the Spiritual Franciscans, and their millenarian ideas about Franciscan poverty.[45] As the Observant branch of the Order dominated the institutional leadership the Conventual branch declined in the Peninsula. Franciscan reformers, especially Juan de Guadalupe, called for strict observance of the Rule and re-focused attention on spiritual and material meanings of poverty at the start of the sixteenth century. Franciscans travelling from the Iberian Peninsula to the Americas in the early sixteenth century were influenced by the ideas more radical and millenarian ideas about poverty of the reformist movements and were initially enthusiastic that the New World presented the opportunity to create a world of evangelical poverty. The Franciscan chronicler Gerónimo Mendieta (1525–1604) described the period 1524–1564 as the 'Golden Age of the Indian Church' and the high point of the Franciscans' missionary enterprise in the Americas. By the second half of the sixteenth century the Franciscans early monopoly of the spiritual conquest of the Americas was challenged by anti-Franciscan sentiment in the Council of the Indies and the arrival of other missionaries, including the Jesuits who arrived in Mexico in 1572. Mexico continued to be an important node in the Franciscans' global network, which soon came to incorporate the Philippines, but their early optimism about their ability to create a world of evangelical poverty was strongest in the first half of the sixteenth century. When the Franciscans first arrived in Mexico in 1524, their project to globalise poverty entered a new phase as, for a moment for the Franciscans, space and time collapsed and they believed themselves to be creating a new world of evangelical poverty.[46]

When the Franciscans arrived in the Americas they encountered highly complex societies with their own beliefs and social orders. Despite this, many Franciscan commentators tried to project their beliefs about poverty onto the Amerindians, describing them as people living simply, without covetousness or greed. Mendieta opened his

[45] See John Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), and Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages* (Revised Edition, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

[46] See Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans*.

account of the history of the Americas by labelling the land the '*pobre nacion indiana*', the poor Indian nation.[47] He wrote, 'it is certain, that God did not raise, nor have in the world people who were more poor or more content with their poverty, than the Indians, who were most removed from covetousness and avarice which (according to St Paul) is the root of all evil, and who were most generous with the little that they had'.[48] This Franciscan description of the Amerindians as living, albeit unknowingly, according to a Christian idea of poverty was wishful thinking on the part of the Franciscans, as even Mendieta acknowledged, but it is significant to the way investigating poverty shaped the Franciscans' conception of their place in the world.

The Franciscans saw themselves as sharing the value of poverty with the Amerindians and of having the opportunity in the Americas to build a new world of shared poverty. One of the first 'Twelve Apostles' who met Cortés in 1524, Toribio de Benavente, took the name 'Motolinía', which he interpreted to be the Nahua word for poor. According to Motolinía, 'when the president of the *audiencia* [Don Sebastián de Fuenleal] asked the Indians why they knew and loved [the Franciscans] and were beloved by them' they answered, 'because they go about poor and barefoot like us, eat what we eat, live amongst us, and their talk among us is gentle'.[49] These chronicles depict the Franciscans and Amerindians as allies of poverty, needing to join forces against the greed of the conquistadores.

The Franciscans conceptualised the New World as a battle between two value systems, their Holy Poverty or the greed of the old *Societas Christiana*. Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590) gave a damning critique of the greed of the conquistadores: '[they were] gladdened. As if they were monkeys they seized upon the gold. It was as if their hearts were satisfied, brightened, calmed. For in truth they thirsted mightily for gold; they stuffed themselves with it; they starved for it; they lusted for it like pigs'.[50] Sahagún denounced the greed of the conquistadores and depicts the Franciscans as allies of the Amerindians, but in reality

[47] Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, ed. Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta (Mexico, D.F.: Antigua librería, 1870), 46.

[48] 'es esto cierto, que no crió Dios, ni tiene en el mundo gente mas pobre y contenta con la pobreza, que son los indios, ni mas quitado de cobdicia y avaricia que (según S. Pablo) es raíz de todos males, ni mas larga y liberal de lo poco que tienen'; Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana* (1870), 440.

[49] Motolinía, *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España* (Chávez Hayhoe ed.), 189.

[50] Bernardino de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, Book 12, The Conquest of Mexico*, ed. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1975), 31. For the original manuscript of the *Códice Florentino*, see Biblioteca Laurenziana, Ms Mediceo Palatino.

the Franciscans' position in the New World was far more ambivalent as Franciscans also contributed to the construction of the colonial system that impoverished the Amerindians.[51]

The Franciscans' own rhetoric and pursuit of an idealised poverty should not obscure the fact that Franciscans were entangled with the European imperial project as it developed across the Atlantic in the sixteenth century but rather contribute to our understanding of the complexities of global history. European monarchies sponsored Franciscan missions and their costs were included in the costs of Empire formation,[52] and this payment also helped the Franciscans to claim a notional separation from the wealth behind the missionary enterprise. Further, as in Europe, in the Americas Franciscan institutions were wealthy, but this factual wealth did not end the Franciscans' celebration and performance of Holy Poverty. Rather, as Franciscans spread around the world, their complex beliefs about poverty became part of the history of empire.

The Franciscans' Theoretical Opposition to Money as a Global Movement

Franciscans had been instructed to travel the world but to avoid 'going throughout the world for filthy gain' and to 'beware of money' in particular.[53] Early Franciscan polemic voiced an opposition to wealth accumulation in general and money in particular. The emergence of the Order has been contextualised as a direct reaction to the transformation of the socio-economic environment of late medieval Europe and a denunciation of monetarisation and marketisation. As Barbara Rosenwein and Lester Little summarised, they were born from the 'spiritual crisis brought on by the spread of the cash nexus'.[54] The early Franciscans questioned the impact of this on man's relationship to both the spiritual and material worlds. The *Regula non Bullata* declared that

[51] See Karen Melville, *Building Colonial Cities of God: The Mendicant Orders and Urban Cultures in New Spain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[52] The accounts of the *Casa de Contratación* show that the crown often paid the *matalotaje* (transport costs and maintenance) of the Franciscans. For example, *Archivo General de Indias*, CONTADURIA, 245,A.

[53] *Regula non bullata*; 'The Earlier Rule (The Rule Without a Papal Seal)', in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (FA: ED hereafter), Vol. I, The Saint*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., J. A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M. Con., William J. Short, O.F.M. (New York: New City Press, 1999), 63–86, 70.

[54] Barbara Rosenwein and Lester Little, 'Social Meaning in the Monastic and Mendicant Spiritualities', *Past & Present* 63 (1974): 4–32, 24.

'the devil wants to deceive those who value money, or deem it more valuable than stones. Let us, who have abandoned everything beware of losing the kingdom of heaven through something so low'.[55] The *Regula Bullata* forbade Franciscans to touch money themselves or through an intermediary.[56] Francis even stipulated what the brothers should do if they came across money accidentally, 'if we find money, let us treat it as only dust that is trampled under foot'.[57] He wrote that if a Franciscan was sound holding money they should be considered 'a deceptive brother, an apostate, a thief, a robber'.[58] This idealised rejection of money also generated many practical problems and contradictory solutions. Here we see that this idealised poverty, enacted through a theoretical and rhetorical rejection of money and attempt to establish an alternate system of exchange and value, shaped not only the history of the Franciscans in Europe but also the way they established themselves in the world. As they travelled the world they were also interested in the alternative exchange systems they encountered.

Franciscans idealised poverty and the rejection of money but they could not do without it, especially on long journeys around the world and away from Christian institutions. In Celano's *Vita Prima* account of the journeys of St Francis, Celano reported that Francis had difficulty travelling to Syria on account of his poverty and refusal to carry coins, describing how Francis 'begged some sailors going to Ancona to take him with them, since there were hardly any ships that could sail that year to Syria. But the sailors stubbornly refused to do so since he could not pay them'.[59] This highlights an important issue; voluntary global movement is an expensive enterprise undertaken by elites or their representatives. Franciscans were not deterred and engineered complex solutions to explain how they maintained their idealised notional poverty and maintain their theoretical distance to money, but these often entangled them in ambivalent contradictions.

Since it was impossible that the institution could exist without money, the Franciscans tried to negotiate an intellectual and legal framework for the separation of themselves from the money that pertained to them. In 1223 it was agreed that the figure of a spiritual friend (*amicus spiritualis*) would receive money and spend it on the friars behalf and in 1230 this principle was extended to all necessities and

[55] *Regula non bullata*, *FA: ED, Vol. I*, 63–86.
[56] *Regula bullata*, *FA: ED, Vol. I*, 102.
[57] *Writings of St Francis*, *FA: ED, Vol. I*, 94.
[58] *Regula non bullata*, *FA: ED, Vol. I*, 70.
[59] Celano, *Vita Prima*, 229.

administered by an 'agent' (*nuntius*). These spiritual friends and agents could not however, lay claim to these goods or funds. This structure was important to the fiction of the Franciscans' separation from money. As the popularity and wealth of the friars increased so too did their critics, who pointed to the wealth of the friars and accused them of hypocrisy and of caring more about the rich than the poor. In the fourteenth century, their opponent John Wycliff targeted the Franciscans' hypocrisy, declaring that 'they boast that they are not allowed to touch money, and get round this by wearing gloves and touching it with a stick'.[60]

When Rubruck travelled across Central Asia he reported his struggle with money while journeying, as well as describing the societies that existed without money. First, he noted that the currency as they journeyed to the court of Scacatai (a local Mongol commander) was not money but cloth. He expressed his frustration when his contingent could not find anything that could be bought for money (*nec inueniebamus aliquid venale pro moneta*), since their provisions were running out as the 'Tartar servants were eating all the victuals'.[61] The Franciscans clearly had money as they traversed across Asia and to overcome the problems of this contradiction they drew upon the solutions that had been developed in Europe. Rubruck's journey was before the time that Nicholas III arranged that 'messengers', *nuncii*, or spiritual friends, would carry the money of Franciscans, but prior to this, in 1230 Gregory IX's bull *Quo elongati* had modified the requirements of the Rule to allow intermediaries to carry funds on the Franciscans behalf for use in the case of necessity.[62] Rubruck took pains to explain that the clerk Gosset held the money; Gosset was referred to as a clerk or minister, *clerico* and an associate, *socius*. The money which the Franciscans carried for their journeys was referred to not simply as 'money' but 'alms' (*eleemosyna*).[63] Rubruck needed resources to travel, encountering problems when the currency was not money, but his account also reflects the Franciscan anxiety to live according to poverty completely separated from money. This performance of the idea of Franciscan poverty on the move must have been quite a spectacle when they

[60] John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 347.

[61] Rubruck, *Itinerarium*, ed. Beazley, 162. The word Tartar was often used to describe the Mongols.

[62] Gregory IX, *Quo elongati*, *Bullarium Franciscanum* 1, no. 68 (1759, reprinted 1983): 20–25.

[63] Rubruck, *Itinerarium*, ed. Beazley, 173.

struggled to explain to the Baatu court why they could not be separated from their clerk.[64]

Rubruck's account contains traces of the Franciscan obsession not only with poverty but also of the world of money and markets that they were consciously rejecting yet locked in dialogue with. He wants to know what the other value systems in the world are, what currencies they use and how they react to money. After noting that the Mongols use cloth not coins for currency, he describes their suspicion of the coins, a suspicion that resonated with his Franciscan discourse on money; 'when our servants offered them any coin called Yperpera, they rubbed it with their fingers, and put their noses, to try to smell whether it was copper or not'.[65] Copper coins were used in the Yuan dynasty, and as European coins looked different the Mongols would be keen to know if they were made from the same material as their units of exchange. Rubruck's inclusion of this detail illustrates his interest in the material conditions, exchange systems and values of the people whom he encountered around the world. The Mongols were depicted as sceptical of the value of this money and interested in what it was made from. This reflects the Franciscan interest in the materiality of exchange and representation of value. Anxiety that money could not credibly represent the value of wealth and human needs was at the heart of Franciscan examinations of poverty in Europe in the thirteenth century.[66]

Rubruck was travelling to the Far East and describing how Mongols interacted with money and what they valued at the same time that Franciscans in Europe were examining the relationship between Franciscan beliefs about poverty and money. These Franciscans, such as Peter Olivi, illustrate how Franciscan poverty had a dialectical relationship with money and markets; as Todeschini summarised, 'the Franciscan writings on the poverty of the Order as a technique of the perfect use of goods (*usus pauper*) and the Franciscan writings on contracts, lending on interest, buying and selling, and usury are two faces of the same linguistic and conceptual making of an economic Christian lexicon'.[67] Olivi developed a theory of poor use, *de usu pauper*, to demonstrate that the state of the highest poverty is better

[64] Ibidem.
[65] Ibid, 160.
[66] Giacamo Todeschini described this an important part of the Franciscan tradition, *Franciscan Wealth*, 99.
[67] Giacamo Todeschini, 'Franciscan Economics and Jews in the Middle Ages: From a Theological to an Economic Lexicon', in *The Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 99–117.

than that of wealth,[68] and his meticulous examination of Franciscan poverty in relation to his economic context led to his contribution to the conceptual infrastructure of Christian economic thought. Olivi examined the meaning of Franciscan poverty and their rejection of money in relation to merchants, for whom money had a tangible use value. Olivi reflected in particular on the predicaments of travellers, and how value could change across distances. Olivi considered the example of a traveller who deposits money with a *mercator* (banker) and pays a premium to collect the money upon arrival at his destination, and argued that in this circumstance lending was not usurious as foreign exchange was necessary.[69] The Franciscans' interest in the spiritual value of poverty and its relation to economic conditions and modes of exchange shaped the history of the Order both within Europe and beyond.

Franciscans were both anxious to maintain their separation from money, and to describe different currency systems around the world. Andrew of Perugia O.F.M. described how in China the Franciscans received the things of necessity (food and clothing) by an '*alafa*' or 'imperial charity', which he explained was 'an allowance for expenses which the emperor grants to the envoys of princes, to orators, warriors, different kinds of artists, jonleurs, paupers and all sorts of people of all sorts of conditions'.[70] Andrew noted the wealth of China and calculated the exchange rate value of his 'imperial dole', based upon knowledge he gained from Genoese merchants, as 100 golden florins.[71] Andrew took care to report that he had invested this wealth in building a church; yet these early Franciscans were not simply using money to expand a global mission, they were interested in the different systems of currency and how they related to socio-economic and theological value systems.

Franciscans continued to conceptualise their global movement in the Americas as an opposition to the culture of greed and to a society linked by monetary exchanges, to which they had developed in opposition in Europe. The history of the Franciscans in Europe had

[68] Petrus Ioannis Olivi, Q. 8: *An status altissime paupertatis sit simpliciter melior omni statu divitiarum.*

[69] See Julius Kirshner and Kimberly LoPrete, 'Peter John Olivi's Treatises on Contracts of Sale, Usury and Restitution: Minorite Economics or Minor Words?', *Quaderni Fiorentini* 13 (1984): 233–286, 205.

[70] Andrew of Perugia, 'Letter from Andrew Bishop of Zayton in Manzi or Southern China 1326', in *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. III, ed. Henry Yule (London: Hakluyt, 1914), 71–75, 72.

[71] Ibid., 73.

been shaped by numerous debates about tangibility and credibility of this position, but by the sixteenth century the rhetoric of Franciscan poverty as an opposition to money and greed had been reinvigorated by the dominance of reform movements, especially in the Iberian Peninsula. In the early sixteenth century the New World was a stage for Franciscans to showcase their reformist position of reinvigorated poverty. Mendieta wrote, 'I shall abhor and avoid, to the best of my ability, any interest in money and treasure which I may find among my brethren . . . I promise never to discriminate against the natives of this land'.[72] He continued, 'we [the Franciscans] abandon all other human urges and desires and any worldly interests, and trust that this will help us to annihilate and totally root out in us all of these aberrations [of greed]'.[73]

Like elsewhere in their global mission, the Franciscans opposition to money and wealth accumulation was full of practical contradictions as they needed resources to build and expand their missions. Like elsewhere, they engineered ambivalent solutions to maintain their theoretical distance from money and wealth accumulation. For example, the Franciscans were engaged in the tribute system that impoverished Amerindians by appropriating their labour and resources. They established themselves as critics of this appropriation, criticising the greed of the old world. To articulate the difference between the conquistadores' tribute system and their appropriations they described indigenous contributions to their missionary projects as '*limosnas*', charity.[74]

As Franciscans established and expended their global mission they hid their factual wealth in a language of poverty and charity. This marked out the Franciscans' position on the world stage, but it was a deeply ambivalent position that gave obscured asymmetries of power.

The Franciscans' Soteriology of Poverty

In Franciscan' hagiographic texts and art, the Order's founder, St Francis, was represented as the charismatic leader of a global movement

[72] Mendieta, Appendix to a letter (undated), addressed to Don Fray Francisco Gonzaga, 'General of the Order of Friars Minor', in *Historia Eclesiastica Indiana: A Franciscan's View of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico*, Fray Geronimo de Mendieta, critically reviewed, with selected passages translated from the original by Felix Jay (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1997), 15–16, 15.

[73] Ibid., 16.

[74] Instruction from 1694, *Biblioteca Nacional, Archivo de los Franciscanos* (BN AF) caja 54, exped 1142.

to save the world. Francis was often represented not only as following the model of the poverty of Christ but as receiving the stigmata on his own body, visualising the message that Francis was the new *Salvatore Mundi* and consequently, the Franciscans were the new Apostles. In his testament, Francis reminded his followers that through suffering death on the cross Christ redeemed the whole world [*mundum*],[75] and the hagiographies made clear that Francis's stigmata was a symbol of the Franciscan commitment to renew the salvation of the world through the model of suffering established by Christ. The Franciscans developed the medieval tradition of the imitation of Christ, to incorporate the materiality of suffering through the physical enactment of poverty.

The Franciscans' conversion to the poverty of the Franciscan Order was therefore also a mechanism for the renewal and salvation of the world, the project to create a world of Holy Poverty. This is illustrated in the account of the conversion of one of the earliest Franciscans, Bernard of Quintavalle, another wealthy merchant from Assisi: 'the devout and humble man became aware that it was divine wisdom that prompted this unlearned and simple man to live such a harsh way of life for the renewal of the world and the salvation of all'.[76]

For the Franciscans, poverty was, amongst other things, a mechanism for achieving salvation. Their soteriology of poverty is encapsulated in the writings of Bonaventure:

> you know brothers that poverty is the special way of salvation, as the stimulus of humility and the root of perfection, whose fruit is many but hidden. For this is the hidden treasure of the gospel field, to buy it, everything must be sold, and the things that cannot be sold must be spurned.[77]

According to Bonaventure, poverty was essential to the Franciscan path of salvation,[78] and it was therefore important to the Franciscan concept of mission.

Many Franciscans believed that their ideological position of representatives of poverty gave them a powerful and special role in the

[75] St Francis, *The Testament* (1226), in *FA: ED, Vol. I*, 124–127.

[76] *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum*, 47–48. For further discussion of the Franciscans' vision of the world see Julia McClure, 'Earthrise: The Franciscan Story', *The Medieval History Journal* 20, no. 1: 89–117.

[77] Bonaventure, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, *FA: ED, Vol. II*, 525–717, 578.

[78] Bonaventure was one of the main protagonists in the early development of the Order's core ideology of poverty. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St Bonaventure* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 52.

conversion of the world, and their conception of themselves as the world's spiritual leaders was amplified and developed by apocalyptic thinking. From thirteenth century, the Spiritual Franciscans began to take up the idea of the millenarian visionary Joachim of Fiore, who contended that the final Age, the Age of the Spirit, an Age of Evangelical Poverty, would be realised on earth before the final coming of the antichrist. He prophesised that this Age would begin with the appearance of the angel of the sixth seal and would be ushered in by the *viri spirituales*, spiritual men, who would be poor and barefoot.[79] The Spiritual Franciscans identified Francis as the angel of the sixth seal,[80] and themselves as the *viri spirituales*.[81] While the Spiritual Franciscans had been suppressed in the fourteenth century, their ideas remained influential. Franciscan eschatology was invigorated in the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth and sixteenth, and these more radical ideas about poverty were transmitted to the New World in the sixteenth century.[82] This millenarian dimension was important because it affirmed that an age of holy poverty would be established in the terrestrial world *before* the Last Days, giving the Franciscans an important mission to convert the world to poverty.

The Franciscans' project to convert the world to Holy Poverty before the second coming reached fever pitch in the Americas in the sixteenth century. When friars arrived in the New World they depicted themselves as ambassadors of poverty, as they had in their travels across Eurasia.[83] According to Franciscan historiography, this group consisted of twelve Franciscans, representing the twelve Apostles, who walked barefoot as a symbol of their claim of the New World in the name of poverty. Mendieta wrote that Hernán Cortés received the poor Franciscans in the newly conquered kingdom of Mexico by kneeling before their bare feet, and in doing so became more like an angel than a man as he taught the Amerindians the value of poverty.[84] This

[79] For more on this see Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*.
[80] Bonaventure, *The Major Legend of Saint Francis*, 527.
[81] Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, 187.
[82] See Pou y Marti, *Visionarios, Beguinos y Fraticelos Catalanes (siglos XIII–XV)* (Madrid: Instituto de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 1991).
[83] For example Angelico Chavez, O.F.M., ed. and trans., *Oroz Codex* (Washington, D.C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1972), 90.
[84] 'que así como por hombres pobres y bajos al parecer del mundo, en él la introdujo en sus principios, ni mas ni menos por otros hombres pobres, rotos y despreciados la habia tambien de introducir en este nuevo mundo, y publicar a estos infieles que presentes estaban, y al innumerable pueblo y gentio que de ellos dependia'. Gerónimo de Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiástica Indiana* (Mexico, D.F.: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1971), 211.

iconographic scene was painted onto the walls of Franciscan churches across Mexico. For the Franciscans this was as transformative as the mythical Donation of Constantine, the moment the terrestrial kingdom of the New World was given to the spiritual kingdom of Holy Poverty.

Franciscan texts offer insights into the Franciscans' soteriology of poverty, but given the complexities of the Order the notion of a singular 'Franciscan concept of mission' has been debated. Daniel E. Randolph delineated the different typologies, observing that later in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries individual Franciscans developed an intellectual strand of mission which was more focused upon conversion, and an apocalyptic strand of mission which was more focused upon mass conversion before the second coming.[85] Despite these variations, Bert Roest argues that due to the early professionalization of the Franciscan Order and their education system we can speak of a diachronic Franciscan concept of mission.[86] For Roest this was a 'complex and dynamic phenomenon with fundamental repercussions for shaping the religious outlook and the Christianisation of the masses, a process that was to continue in the early modern and modern periods.'[87] The Franciscans' defining discourse of poverty provides a framework for recognising this diachronic Franciscan concept of mission and continuities between the Franciscans' late medieval and early modern global projects. This soteriology of poverty was important to the Franciscan project to create a world of Holy Poverty.

Mendieta believed that the Franciscans had discovered a perfect example of poverty in the Amerindians of the New World, and that this was a new opportunity to create the world of poverty which they so-long envisaged. In the writings of Mendieta, this new circumstance was imbued with millenarian overtones, and interpreted as the Franciscans' opportunity to create a world of Holy Poverty before the end of the world.[88] The early Franciscan activities in the Americas were fervent and frantic, and they controversially began to conduct mass baptisms to accelerate their conversion of the world.

[85] E. Randolph Daniel, *The Franciscan Concept of Mission in the High Middle Ages* (New York, 1992), see also Amanda Power, *Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 243.

[86] Bert Roest, 'Medieval Franciscan Mission: History and Concept', in *Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Wout J. van Bekkum and Paul M. Cobb (Paris: Peeters, 2004), 137–161, 157.

[87] Ibid., 160.

[88] As previously observed by John Leddy Phelan, Mendieta's conception of the New World was especially millenarian.

Motolinía wrote that the Amerindians 'should not be denied what they want, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, since in the matter of worldly goods they barely achieve a wornout bit of matting to sleep on or one good blanket to cover them, and the poor hut they live in is tumbled down and open to dampness at night'.[89] For Motolinía, the perceived poverty of the Amerindians meant that 'there is hardly anything to hinder the Indians from reaching heaven'.[90] While Motolinía considered the Amerindians as poor, he also described their conversion by the Franciscans as a conversion to poverty, writing, after the baptism 'they wrap the child in very harsh and poor little swaddling clothes, introducing hardship at once to the exiled son of Eve, who is born into this vale of tears and comes to weep'.[91] Motolinía acknowledged that the place of the Amerindians in the new *societas Christiana* was to be defined by the hardship and suffering of poverty.

Motolinía romanticised the Amerindians as poor and as therefore easier to convert to Holy Poverty by the Franciscans, but he did not idealise this as a peaceful process. Like other Franciscan missionaries in the Americas he believed that the Amerindians idolatries and sins needed extirpating and punishing. Franciscan missionaries often cast themselves as protectors of the Amerindians against the conquistadores, but they could also be violent. Diego de Landa (1524–1579) (OFM), for example, was so violent against the Amerindians in the Yucatán that his time there is described as the 'Franciscan Terror'. Franciscans were also violent against Amerindian cultures as they sought to erase their 'idolatrous' past. It is to the dark ambivalence of the Franciscans' global poverty project that we will turn in the final part of this article.

The Inequalities of Franciscan Poverty

The Franciscans' project to convert the world to poverty was not universally inclusive or equal but exclusive and hierarchical.

First, by practicing voluntary poverty in imitation of Christ Franciscans invented themselves as elite leaders of Holy Poverty, with a global project to convert the world to a more spiritual condition. Their poverty was notional rather than factual, and this placed them in a

[89] Toribio Motolinía, *History of the Indians of New Spain*, ed. E. Foster (Berkeley: Cortés Society, 1950), 137.
[90] Motolinía, *Historia de los Indios de la Nueva España* (Chávez Hayhoe ed.), 118.
[91] Motolinía, E. Forster ed., 163.

hierarchical relationship with the real poor. The Franciscans were simulating the model of Holy Poverty established by Christ, who Christians believed had chosen to have lived as a poor person during the incarnation. Franciscan poverty was voluntary, which made them distinct from the factual poor; Christ had instructed his followers to give their possessions to the poor and follow him, and this dictum was repeatedly cited by Francis. In their dress and consumption the Franciscans were quoting poverty, but their point of departure was ideological and not material, making them a distorted simulacra of the true poor. The Franciscan manoeuvre was to represent the poor, but they did not fully become poor.

The Franciscans' relationship with charity brings into focus the hierarchical relationship between Franciscan poverty and the factual poor. As Gert Melville explained, the Franciscans voluntarily became poor, but they also practiced charity which distinguished them from the real poor.[92] Franciscans were supposed to maintain their poverty by giving to the poor, underlining that their poverty was performative and that they were carers for the poor. As a mendicant order, they ideally subsisted through begging, but they could also refuse charity to emphasise the way in which their voluntary (and therefore spiritual poverty) was distinct from factual poverty.[93] The Franciscan conception of poverty was therefore hierarchical. The Franciscans used poverty to invent themselves as spiritual leaders, to guide the world into a new phase of history and create a global community bonded through spiritual poverty.

Through practicing voluntary poverty Franciscans marked themselves as distinct from the real poor, but also the conventional religious institutions of the secular church. Despite their inclusion in the Roman Church, many Franciscans remained critical of the wealth and greed of the secular Church, as well as the merchants in the lay Christian community. Franciscans could denounce fellow Christians for being greedy, and scrutinise the morality of their business. As we have seen, some Franciscans continued this in the Americas, denouncing the conquistadores as being corrupted by greed.

Franciscans were also notoriously opposed to Europe's oldest marginalised minority, the Jews, who had been stereotypically associated as protagonists of the world of money and greed which the Franciscans

[92] Gert Meliville, 'What Role did Charity Play in Francis of Assisi's Attitude Towards the Poor?', in *Aspects of Charity: Concern for One's Neighbour in Medieval Vita Religiosa*, ed. Gert Melville (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), 99–122.

[93] For example, see *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum*, 50.

opposed. Jews were automatically excluded from the new *societas Christiana* imagined by the Franciscans.[94] As Bert Roest also summarised, 'in this utopian project, there was no place for the heretical other, nor for the Jewish unbeliever or other deviant groups, all of which were increasingly described in terms of anti-Christian demonic figures'.[95] Cary J. Nederman argued that the Franciscans in China contributed to the history of tolerance,[96] but the Franciscans were also historically intolerant, especially towards any groups whom they perceived to be greedy or opposed to their values of poverty. Jeremy Cohen argues that the Franciscans (and their Dominican counterparts) 'sought to implement a new Christian policy with regards to the Jews, one that allotted the Jews no legitimate right to exist in European society'.[97] In the fifteenth century, this persecution and exclusion became systematic in the work of Fray Bernardino of Siena (1380–444), who wrote that 'we are permitted to love them, but there can be no concrete love toward them'.[98] The anti-Semitic stereotyping of the Jews as avaricious and greedy made the friars and the Jews natural enemies. Poverty may have been a global vision for the Franciscans, but it was the basis of exclusion as well as inclusion.

In the Americas the Franciscans constructed the Amerindians as poor, but this did not mean they were seen as equal to the Franciscan but rather their protectorate. Mendieta did not only refer to the Indians as poor, *pobres*, but also as *miserables indios* and *personas miserables*.[99] The term *personas miserables* was another way to describe the poor, and it was derived from '*personae miserabilis*' which denoted the legal definition of the poor in civil and canon law. Later in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, drawing upon earlier depictions of the *miserables indios*, this category of the '*personae miserabilis*' was used in

[94] See Giacomo Todeschini, 'Franciscan Economics and Jews in the Middle Ages: From a Theological to an Economic Lexicon', in *The Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages*, ed. Steven J. McMichael and Susan E. Myers (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 99–118, 102. See also Giacamo Todeschini, *I mercanti e il tempio: la società cristiana e il circolo virtuoso della ricchezza fra Medioevo ed età moderna*.

[95] Bert Roest, 'Giovanni of Capestrano's Anti-Judaism within a Franciscan Context: An Evaluation Based on Recent Scholarship', *Franciscan Studies* 75 (2017): 117–143, 127.

[96] Cary J. Nederman, *Worlds of Difference: European Discourses of Toleration, c. 1100–c. 1500* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

[97] Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Semitism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 14.

[98] See Amanda D. Quantz, 'Focus on the Family: Bernardino de Siena and the Nefarious Other', in *Franciscans and Preaching: Every Miracle from the Beginning of the World Came about through Words*, ed. Timothy Johnson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 299–325.

[99] For example, Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, ed. Joaquin Garcia Icazbalceta (Mexico, D.F., 1870), 39 and 530.

the legal construction of the Amerindians as poor subjects in the Spanish Empire. The implication of this conceptualisation of the Amerindians as poor was that they were too weak to govern and in need of protection. The conceptualisation of the Amerindians as poor facilitated their placement in the Spanish Empire as colonial subjects. The legal construction of the Amerindians as '*personae miserabilis*' was developed in particular by Juan de Solórzano Pereira (1575–1655),[100] but the Franciscans were the first to identify the Amerindians both as poor and in need of protection. The powerful Spanish Franciscan Cardinal Cisneros created the office of 'Protector of the Indians' in 1516. This came out of the ecclesiastic law tradition under the protection of the church, and the civil law tradition of the municipal protection of orphans by the office of the 'Father of the Orphans'. The creation of this office endorsed the imperial ideology that the Amerindians were too weak to govern and needed protection. Franciscans may have celebrated the perceived poverty of the Amerindians, but they did not see them as their equals but their protectorate.

Franciscan missionaries did not interpret all Amerindians as poor, but favoured some indigenous groups over others. For example, they denounced the *Chichimecas* of northern Mexico as 'barbarians' who were challenging their conversion of other indigenous communities.[101] Amerindians favoured by Franciscan missionaries did not find themselves in a better condition as Franciscans often pursued their conversion project with physical violence, intimidation and the destruction of their culture.

Presenting themselves as spiritual leaders, Franciscans coerced Amerindians into building the New World missions, appropriating their labour and resources. In Huezotzingo, for example, they moved the local community so that they would be more readily available to help build their new missionary complex. They then consolidated their position as spiritual leaders by dispensing 'charity' to local populations, weakened by disease and the appropriation of their labour and resources. Franciscans distinguished themselves from Spanish conquistadores and fought to reduce the tributes extracted from the Amerindians,[102] but they also expected local populations to sustain them through 'charitable donations'. By the seventeenth century, the Minister General of the Franciscan Order recognised these New World missions

[100] See Susan Scafidi, 'Old Law in the New World: Solorzano and the Analogical Construction of Legal Identity', *Florida Law Review* 55 (2003): 191–204.

[101] *Oroz Codex*, 310.

[102] For example, BN AF, caja 89 exped 1376, Fs 1-28.

as a source of wealth for the Order and ordered them to send alms from the Americas to the Holy Lands.[103]

The Franciscans' dialectical relationship with wealth took new forms in the colonial system that emerged in the Americas. The Order was enriched by its role as missionary leaders, yet the increasingly ambivalent rhetoric of poverty remained central to their self-conception, their rhetoric and their preaching. Franciscans instructed Amerindians in the values of Holy Poverty, which included the spiritual value of embracing servitude and humility as well as understanding poverty as a virtue. In short, through their dynamic project to globalise poverty the Franciscans also played a role in the construction of colonial subjectivity.

In the New World the Franciscans were spiritual leaders of Holy Poverty. Franciscans made gestures of poverty through their language, customs and dress, but they seldom shared in the real hardships of the factually poor. They could express solidarity with impoverished Amerindians but they could not transcend the social distance between perpetrator and victim that emerged in the construction of the colonial society of the Spanish Empire. The political implications of the power differential between the impoverished Amerindians and the performatively poor Franciscans are encapsulated in José Clemente Orozco's *The Franciscan and the Indian*, painted in 1929. This image, which was intended as a critique of Spanish colonialism, provides a powerful visualisation of the way in which Franciscans appropriated the impoverishment of the Amerindians to increase the authority of their spiritual poverty within the colonial context.

Conclusion

Franciscan history reminds us that one of the earliest forms of globalisation, the attempt to realise a local conception of a community on a global scale, was driven not by the desire for wealth accumulation but pursuit of poverty. For the Franciscans, this poverty was a spiritual and material value shaped in relation to changing socio-economic contexts. Globalisation has often been depicted flattening, the spread of money and markets and the homogenisation of the values of capitalism. Franciscan history reminds us that the spread of money and markets prompted resistance and criticism within Europe in the Middle

[103] BN AF, caja 88, exped 1375, Fs 27–28.

Ages, and that critical examination of money and markets and denunciation of the greed they engendered drove an alternate attempt to create a world order in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period, one that was unified not by wealth but by an idealised poverty. The Franciscans' pursuit of poverty was an ongoing examination of spiritual and material values, a pursuit which drove them beyond Europe and shaped their encounters around the world.

Narratives of global history and the making of the modern world have tended to emphasise the expansion of money and markets and a world based on the new wealth. Franciscan history prompts a reorientation of perspective that calls on global historians to focus on poverty as a creative force, to unmask its many faces, and to dissect its many layers. Poverty has often been seen as the by-product of wealth accumulation, seldom have notions of poverty themselves been seen as a creative force. For the Franciscans, poverty was not simply a material condition, but a whole system of values and the basis for a new society. This vision of a new society was not an egalitarian utopia, but a hierarchical schema granulated by multiple inclusions and multiple exclusions. Franciscan history spotlights the historically constructed nature of poverty and its ambivalences. The material wealth of the Franciscans' global network has often led the significance of their ideological poverty to be overlooked, but it is precisely within through the negotiation of this paradox that the Franciscan Order constructed and concealed inequalities of power. It is the obfuscation of power disparities that we must focus upon as we place poverty at the core of new global histories.