

HISTORY OF THE FRANCISCAN MOVEMENT

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FROM THE YEAR 1517 TO
THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

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Chapter 10
NEW REFORMS AND NEW DIVISIONS:
THE BIRTH OF THE CAPUCHINS
AND REFORMS WITHIN THE OBSERVANCE

The friars “of the Holy Gospel”

The Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, after the union of all the reformed families in 1517, became a powerful religious family dedicated mainly to apostolic missions. A minority of friars, however, continued to insist upon living a simpler Franciscan life in the hermitages. Besides the Amadeiti and Coletani, there were other congregations which preferred eremitical life, like the Clareni and the friars “of the Holy Gospel” or *Capuciati*. This last religious family was one which the Bulla *Ite vos* of Leo X (1517) had not managed to integrate within the Order of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. They were born, as we have already seen, with the initiative of Juan de la Puebla, who had made an experience of Franciscan life in the Umbrian hermitages of central Italy, and then had returned to Spain, founding a congregation of friars who lived the literal observance of the Rule in the hermitages. Among his followers there was Juan de Guadalupe, who in 1508 obtained the approval of the Province “of the Holy Gospel”.¹ The negative reaction of the Spanish Observants, who persecuted the new religious family, compelled the brothers of the Custody of Estremadura to place themselves under the obedience of the Conventuals in 1515, and thus became to be known by the name of “Reformed Conventuals”.² They wore a short tunic with a pyramidal hood, and hence also the name *Capuciati*. They wore no shoes and went barefoot, and therefore were also known as *Discalceati*. They professed the Rule and Testament of St. Francis without the papal interpretations.

The Houses of Recollection

Among the Observants of the early 16th century there were friars who were open to the needs of a more rigorous Franciscan life. In 1502 brother Martial Boulrier, the Vicar General of the Ultramontane Observants, ordered the provinces of Spain to establish “houses of recollection” in which, even without the permission of the superiors, the brothers who so wished could go and live in order to dedicate themselves to a life of prayer and penitence. In 1518 the Minister General of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, brother Francesco Lichetto da Brescia, approved the constitution of “houses of recollection” in Italy, but he then had to suspend this permission because of the fierce

¹ G. ODOARDI, “Guadalupensi,” in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* [DIP], Vol. 4, Rome 1977, 1451-1456.

² G. ODOARDI, “Conventuali Riformati,” DIP, Vol. 3, Rome 1976, 94-106.

opposition of the Italian Cismontane Observants. Some years later, the Minister General Francisco de Angelis Quiñones (1523-27) tried to introduce the “houses of recollection” within his reform programme, by issuing special statutes for these houses and instituting special “recollect” superiors under the obedience of the Ministers Provincial. In the General Chapter of Assisi of 1526 many friars asked for permission to go and live in “houses of recollection”, but this request was strongly rejected by the Observants present in the Chapter. It is truly surprising how, after just a few years from the triumph of the Observant family, who presented itself as the most successful reform of the Order, it was now the turn of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance themselves to reject any attempts at reform and at a more literal observance of the Rule within their own ranks. The fact is not surprising if we come to know that, by 1517, the Observant family was already a great institution that had accepted many of the privileges already conceded to the Conventual family in the preceding centuries, such as the acceptance of yearly revenues, perpetual legacies, the cultivation of fields and vineyards, the excessive recurrence to alms begging, the request for dispensations and privileges, the building of large conventual churches and friaries, and the employment of lay servants in the same friaries.

The origins of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life”

Within this historical context we have to place the beginnings of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life”, who subsequently became the Friars Minor Capuchins, destined to become the third great family of the Franciscan Order.³ The origins of this religious family lie in the decision taken by brother Matteo da Bascio, an Observant friar from the friary of Montefalcone Appenninico in the Marches, who in 1525 went to Rome and obtained from Pope Clement VII the “oral” authorization to “observe the Rule in a literal way,” “to be able to go preaching and receive companions,” and “to be able to wear that habit which, according what is read in ancient documents, the father Saint Francis used to wear.” On the occasion of the Provincial Chapters, Matteo accepted to present himself in front of the Minister Provincial of the region in which he would find himself, “in order to show forth a sure sign of obedience.” From that moment Matteo became a hermit and an itinerant preacher, and went about barefoot, alone, wearing a short habit, which was patched all over, and very rough on the skin, with a pyramidal hood covering his head. He began to preach against vices and sins. His typical expression during his preaching tours remained famous: “To hell! To hell!”

Brother Matteo, however, was not just an itinerant preacher. He was a man with a strong will and determination, and strangely enough became a point of reference to other brothers of the Province of the Marches, who were searching for a more austere life than that of the Observant family to which they belonged. In just a matter of four years, from 1525 to 1529, Matteo da Bascio managed to gather around him the first group of “Friars Minor of the eremitical life.” In 1529 these brothers celebrated their first “general chapter.” In the meantime brother Ludovico da Fossombrone joined the group. He was to

³ MELCHIORRE DA POBLADURA, “Cappuccini,” DIP, Vol. 2, Rome 1975, 203-251. A bibliography on the history of the Capuchins is found in: M. D’ALATRI, *I Cappuccini. Storia di una famiglia francescana*, Rome 1997, 203-204.

be the organizer of the new movement together with brother Matteo, who was more of a charismatic figure.

The reaction of the Observants of the Marches Province was, as expected, one of utter rejection and persecution of the new reformers. Matteo da Bascio was “imprisoned” in the friary of Fano, by the Minister Provincial of the Marches, Giovanni da Fano. The first brothers were subsequently excommunicated by Clement VII, as apostates. So they sought the protection of the Camaldolese hermits. On May 18, 1526, Matteo da Bascio, Ludovico and Raffaele da Fossombrone obtained from the Cardinal penitentiary Lorenzo Pucci permission to live in any hermitage “out of the other houses and regular friaries of the Order.” They were allowed to retain their habit and to observe the Rule of the Friars Minor “under the obedience and the correction of the local bishop in whose diocese they would reside.” At first they found refuge in the friary of the Conventuals at Cingoli. The common people of the Marches region began to call them “Scapuccini” (because of their pointed hood) or “Romiti” (because they were hermits). In this way these brothers enjoyed the same favours of the Clareni, namely, to live as Franciscans outside the Order. But their eventual success was also a direct result of their friendship with the duchess of Camerino, Caterina Cybo, who happened to be the niece of Pope Clement VII. She became a staunch supporter of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life”, after she had witnessed their courage and example in serving the sick during an outbreak of the plague.

The Bulla “Religionis zelus” and the foundation of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life”. The Constitutions of Albacina.

Thanks to the intercession of the duchess of Camerino (*intercedente ducissa Camerini*), on July 3, 1528, Clement VII published the Bulla *Religionis zelus*, addressed to brothers Ludovico and Raffaele da Fossombrone of the Order of Friars Minor.⁴ The document imposed upon them the obedience of falling under the discipline of the Master General of the Conventuals of the province in which they resided. These papal concessions gave them the right to live “an austere and eremitical life” according to the Form of Life, which Saint Francis wrote to those friars who live in hermitages. They could live in those hermitages after having received the favour of the local lords of the place, they could wear their typical habit with their pointed hood, they could gather in their fraternity clerics and laymen, and they could keep their beards long, while at the same time enjoying the same privileges and exemptions of the Order of Friars Minor and of the Camaldolese hermits of Saint Romuald. The Bulla does not mention brother Matteo da Bascio. This is an indication of the fact that Matteo did not show any

⁴ L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. 16, Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi 1933, 257-258: *...auctoritate Apostolica, tenore praesentium vobis, ut secundum Regulam praedictam vitam eremiticam ducere, et habitum cum Caputio quadrato gestare, necnon omnes tam Clericos saeculares et Presbyteros, quam Laicos advestrum consortium recipere, ac tam illi, quam vos barbam deferre, et ad eremitoria, seu loca quaecumque, cum consensu Dominorum eorundem locorum vos conferre, et in eis habitare, vitamque austeram et eremiticam inibi agere, et in quibuscumque locis mendicare: necnon omnibus et singulis privilegiis, indultis et gratis Ordinis Fratrum Minorum hujusmodi, ac Eremo Camaldulensi beati Romualdi, illiusque Eremitis in genere vel in specie hactenus concessis ... plenam et liberam licentiam et facultatem concedimus.*

particular ability to organize his movement or to provide a juridical framework to the new religious family.

In 1529, in the hermitage of Santa Maria dell'Acquarella di Albacina, close to Fabriano, these friars met for the first Chapter of the Friars Minor "of the eremitical life." On that occasion brother Matteo da Bascio was elected "superior general and father of all," but he renounced immediately, and handed over the leadership of the group to brother Ludovico da Fossombrone, who showed good organizational qualities. Ludovico, in fact, was to be the principal, if not the sole instrument, in the drafting of precise norms during this first "general chapter." In history these norms have been known as the "Constitutions of the Friars Minor known as 'of the eremitical life,'" or as the "Constitutions (Ordinations) of Albacina."

Among the rules laid down by these Constitutions of Albacina we find the explicit will of excluding pastoral work, and the prohibition to officiate at funerals, except in the case of poor persons who could not afford to have a proper funeral and burial, and without the direct participation of the same friars. The priest brothers could exercise the ministry of confession, but only in exceptional and urgent cases. The same is said regarding the ministry of preaching, which had been used on a massive and efficient scale by the Observants in order to consolidate their reform in the Church and in society. In fact, the small group limited itself to the simple exhortation of the word of the Gospel. The Constitutions quote abundantly the Admonitions of Saint Francis. The intention to re-propose the "Franciscan model of the origins" is to be found in many other rules. Examples include the location of the hermitages outside the towns, the precarious stability of the same buildings, the modest quality of materials used for construction, the small dimensions of the churches and rooms of the friars, the reduced quantity and poor quality of sacred furnishings and liturgical ornaments. The Constitutions do not mention the procurators or apostolic syndics who administered the goods of the friars. Study had to be limited solely to the reading of the Sacred Scriptures and of some book of devotion or spiritual edification, "inviting the friars to the love of Christ and to embrace the cross." No more than eight friars could live together in a hermitage, while in the larger communities the friars could not exceed twelve.

When one considers that this new Franciscan reform was born during the beginning of the 16th century, one remains surprised at its immediate success. Indeed, it flourished in a period of renaissance splendour, even for the Church, and during the early years of the Protestant reform. The Friars Minor "of the eremitical life" became a sign of a new style of a humble and poor Franciscan life, which presented itself as something different not only from Conventualism, but also from the same Observant matrix from which it eventually was to separate itself.

The persecution of the Friars Minor "of the eremitical life" on the part of the Observants

The Minister General of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, Paolo Pisotti da Parma (1529-1533) tried with all his energy to suppress the houses of recollection, and to make the friars who lived in them return to their friaries of origin. In Calabria a group of friars resisted the Minister General's decision. In 1529 these same

friars obtained from the Pontifical Penitentiary the permission to live as hermits outside the Order. It was in August of that same year that two delegates of the Calabrese friars, namely Bernardino Giorgio da Reggio Calabria and Antonio *de Gratimolis*, went to Rome, where they met brother Ludovico da Fossombrone, who presented himself as “the vicar general of the Order of Friars Minor of the eremitical life according to the Rule of Saint Francis.” With Ludovico these friars came to an agreement to aggregate their Calabrian brothers with the new reform, while still letting them live in the hermitage of San Giovanni di Valletuccio near Reggio Calabria. Three years had to pass until this agreement was implemented, since the Minister General Pisotti tried to outlaw it at all costs. Finally, in July 1532, thanks to the protection of the duke of Nocera, Ferrante Carafa, these Calabrian friars took the habit of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life” and began to take part in the early adventures of their counterparts from the Marches of Ancona.

In the meantime Pope Clement VII died in September 1534 and was succeeded by Paul III. It was at this time that the Observants intensified their attempts at eradicating the new reform. Paolo Pisotti, until 1533, and his successor Vincenzo Lunel, elected in May 1535, tried to suppress this new “confraternity.” On April 15, 1534, Clement VII ordered the cardinal protector of the Order, Andrea della Valle, to command those Observant friars who had passed over to the new reform of the *fratres Capuciati* to return to their friaries of origin within fifteen days. Luckily enough for them, Clement VII was so ill that the cardinal protector refrained from enforcing this order. The new reform group was again able to survive. Moreover, their eventual success was to be confirmed by the future transfer of a great number of Observant Franciscans within their ranks.

The Franciscan evangelism of the first Capuchins

We cannot speak about the beginnings of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life” without referring to events in the Church during the first quarter of the 16th century. On June 5, 1520, Pope Leo X had condemned the 41 propositions of Martin Luther in the Bulla *Exsurge Domine*. On May 13, 1524 the “Twelve Apostles of Mexico” arrived on the east coast of the kingdom of the Aztecs in Mexico, who had been defeated by Cortés in 1520. These Franciscans were instrumental in beginning the systematic evangelization of Latin America. In 1525 the evangelical cult was introduced in Zurich and the German peasants revolted. In 1527 the famous “sack of Rome” took place. Christian Europe was henceforth to be divided between Catholicism and Protestantism.

During the pontificate of Paul III, the new reformed group of Capuchins began to strengthen their new “confraternity.” In the meantime the Minister General Vincenzo Lunel and Cardinal Francisco Quiñones tried to secure the support of emperor Charles V in order to destroy the Capuchin “sect”, while Paul III instituted a commission of cardinals with the aim of resolving the contrasts between the Friars Minor of the Regular Observants and the Capuchins. Under the firm guidance of Ludovico da Fossombrone, the Capuchins managed to secure support from high-ranking personages, among whom there was the marquess of Pescara Vittoria Colonna. In a letter which she wrote to Cardinal Gasparo Contarini in 1536, Colonna defended the “seven hundred capuchin friars” with very strong tones.

In the meantime, between 1535 and 1536, brother Ludovico had entered into a very strong contrast with the friars present in Rome for the General Chapter of November 1535. The contrast regarded Ludovico and the Observant friars who had entered the Capuchin reform, and who Ludovico regarded as not being able to live fully the requirements of the austere life of the Friars Minor “of the eremitical life.” In the Chapter of Rome of 1535 six definitors were elected: Bernardino d’Ochino of Siena, Bernardino Palli d’Asti, Eusebio Fardini of Ancona, Bernardino Duciana of Montolmo, Antonio of Monteciccardo and Giovanni Pili da Fano (ex-Provincial Minister of the Observants of the Marches, who had persecuted Matteo da Bascio and Ludovico da Fossombrone).

During the Chapter of 1535 Bernardino d’Asti was elected as vicar general of the Capuchins. Vittoria Colonna defended the newly-elected brothers, against the wishes of Ludovico da Fossombrone. Pope Paul III confirmed the election of Bernardino d’Asti in 1536. At this moment Matteo da Bascio left the new congregation and went back to live as an Observant friar. More dramatic was the case of brother Ludovico da Fossombrone, who feared the cultural prestige of the newcomers from the Observance. We do not know exactly what happened to Ludovico after 1536. The witness of the *Semplice et divota historia dell’origine della congregazione dei frati Cappuccini*, written by brother Bernardo da Colpetrazo, presents Ludovico who retreated to a solitary life in order to follow the “narrow way” in the following of Saint Francis. In the meantime the Constitutions of the Friars Minor Capuchins had been approved in 1536. From the “literal observance” of the early days the Capuchins had already moved on to the “spiritual observance” of the Franciscan Rule. Among the new elements of these Constitutions we find that the periods in which the Capuchins could preach were greatly extended from the primitive permission to preach only during Advent and Lent.

In the heated debate against the Capuchins during this period, according to the letter of Vittoria Colonna of 1536, we know that one of the accusations levelled against the friars “of the pointed hood” was that “they look like Lutherans, because they preach the liberty of the spirit.”

In general, the early Capuchins had to face great difficulties regarding their relations with the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance and with the papacy. In the Brief *Dudum siquidem* of Paul III (January 5, 1537), the Capuchins were prohibited from going “to the regions beyond the sea or to accept friaries in those regions.” They had to remain in an area where they could fall directly under papal control. This prohibition of the pope coincided with the great expansion of the Observant family in the missions of the New World.

The history of the Friars Minor Capuchins during the 16th century was marked by the refusal of brothers Bernardino d’Asti and Bernardino Ochino to collaborate with the Minister General of the Observants, Vincenzo Lunello, who wanted to unite them again to the Regular Observance in 1542. In August 1542, accused of preaching “the free spirit,” Bernardino Ochino departed from Italy and went beyond the Alps, presumably to join the Lutheran Church.⁵ The new Order was saved by brother Francesco da Iesi, who became vicar general of the Capuchins in 1543.

⁵ L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History*, 206: “Bernardino d’Asti, who was now seriously ill, convoked the chapter for Whit Sunday 1538, and Bernardino Ochino of Siena was elected Vicar General. Since he had joined the Capuchin reform, this distinguished personality had won the unanimous admiration of all the

In spite of all these difficulties, the new Order progressed rapidly, and was soon to give to the Church the gift of persons endowed with a holy life, such as Saint Felix of Cantalice (†1587), Saint Lawrence of Brindisi, the great organizer of the Capuchin family and a doctor of the Church (†1619), and the first martyr of *Propaganda Fide*, Saint Fidelis of Sigmaringen (†1622).

In 1608 Pope Paul V declared that the Friars Minor Capuchins were true sons of Saint Francis. On January 23, 1619 the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins was freed from its submission to the obedience of the Friars Minor Conventuals, and became an autonomous Order with the papal Brief *Alias felicitis recordationis*.

The reformed families within the Observance: The Friars Minor Riformati⁶

The Minister General Paolo Pisotti tried to subdue by all means the reform of the Capuchins, who separated themselves from the Regular Observance in 1525. He also tried to hinder the institution of the “houses of recollection” in the Order. In 1532 two Franciscan Observants, who later on became Capuchins, namely Francesco da Iesi and Bernardino d’Asti, obtained from Pope Clement VII the Bulla *In Suprema Militantis Ecclesia* (January 16, 1532).⁷ The Bulla gave all the Provinces of the Order the faculty to

friars and friends of the Order, especially Vittoria Colonna and her circle of humanists, by his devotion to observance of the Rule, his austerity, his unaffected fervour, and his gift for government. The young reform movement was proud to have him as one of its members. Everyone was so satisfied with the way in which he carried out his duties during the first three years in office that he was re-elected without hesitation at the General Chapter of 1542, in spite of his strong reluctance. But from then onward his attitude changed completely. He grew slack in regular observance, exempted himself from the communal life, and used his apostolic activity as an excuse for obtaining personal privileges. The truth was that he felt himself growing far removed from his fellow friars in his doctrine and ideals. His contacts with Juan de Valdés and his devout coterie at Naples gradually drew him away from his orthodox faith, and his preaching smacked of Lutheranism; the Theatines spied on him wherever he went, and finally stirred up suspicion against him in Rome. His decisive step was a public protest in Venice against the imprisonment for heresy of an Augustinian friend of his. He was summoned to Rome; on the way he stopped in Florence, where the Augustinian Peter Martyr Vermigli and other friends from Valdés’ circle warned him of the danger and advised him to flee. He made his way to Geneva after sending the seal of the Order to Bernardino d’Asti, now proctor general.”

⁶ R. SBARDELLA, “Riformati Francescani,” DIP, Vol. 7, Rome 1983, 1723-1748.

⁷ L. WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. 16, Ad Claras Aquas, Quaracchi 1933, 328-331: *Sane postquam felicitis recordationis Leo Papa X praedecessor noster ex certis causis tunc expressis, voluerat et declaraverat sub nomine Reformatorum, ac pure et simpliciter Regulam beati Francisci Observantium comprehendere omnes et singulos Observantes tam de Familia, quam de Reformatis sub Ministris, ac fratris Amedei, de Colletanis, Clarenis, de sancto Evangelio, seu de Capucio, ac Discalceatos nuncupatos, aut alios similes, quocumque alio nomine nuncuparentur, et Regulam beati Francisci hujusmodi, pure et simpliciter observarent, ex quibus omnibus unum corpus insimul efficiens, eosdem ad invicem perpetuo univerat. Itaque deinceps omnia diversitate nominum praedictorum, Fratres Minores sancti Francisci et Regularis Observantiae simul vel disjunctive nuncuparentur, et nuncupari possent et deberent, omnesque, ut praeferretur, unitos Generali et Provincialibus Ministris, et Custodibus dicti Ordinis in quorum Provinciis et Custodiis respective morabantur, in omnibus et per omnia secundum Regulam eandem subiacere debent. Cum nonnulli ipsius Ordinis professores, sicuti fideli relatione percipimus, Spiritu sancto inflammati, ut beati Francisci alumni et veri filii, affectent Regulam ipsam beati Francisci pure et plene juxta ejus litteram, et declarationem bonae memoriae Nicolai III ac Clementis V, Romanorum Pontificum praedecessorum nostrorum firmiter observare... Et Generalis ac Provinciales Ministri et eorum Commissarii non possint impedire praedictos ab eorum strictiori Observantia ipsius Regulae, juxta*

found reformed houses, in order to give to all those friars who so wished, the right to live the Franciscan Rule in more strict way, but always according to the papal declarations *Exiit qui seminat* and *Exivi de paradiso*. In this case, therefore, it was not a question of an attempt to live the literal observance of the Rule, as in the case of the Spirituals, early Observants and Capuchins. The reformed friars could live in extreme poverty, to be expressed in their clothing. However, their habits were in no way to be dissimilar from the habit of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance in form, size or colour. The Reformed friaries could elect their own Custos, who had the right to take part in the Provincial Chapter together with the Guardians.

The leaders of the Regular Observance tried to resist this new internal Reform of the Order, particularly during the period 1532-1579. In 1535 Paul III told the Minister General Vincenzo Lunello that, if he would not put into effect the provisions of the Bulla *In Suprema Militantis Ecclesiae*, the Friars Minor Riformati would obtain permission to pass into the Capuchin reform. The result was in favour of the Riformati, who began to be regarded more positively by the Observants. The Roman Province handed four Franciscan hermitages in the Valle Reatina to the Riformati, namely Poggiobustone, San Fabiano alla Foresta, Fonte Colombo and Greccio.

The beginnings of the Riformati in Italy were similar to those of the Capuchins. The Riformati also gave importance to prolonged periods of prayer and meditation, and to ascetical practices of penance. In 1579 they obtained the Bulla *Cum illis vicem* from Pope Gregory XIII, which rendered them an autonomous family within the ranks of the Regular Observance and under the obedience of the Minister General of the Order. The Bulla prohibited the friars who joined the Reform to return to the friaries of the Observance, but gave permission to the Observants to freely join the Riformati.

The Riformati founded a large friary in Rome, that of San Francesco a Ripa, which was to become their headquarters, until the Union of the Order of Friars Minor in 1897. In 1587 the Minister General Francesco Gonzaga obtained the suspension of the Bulla *Cum illis vicem*. Pope Clement VIII ordered that all the novitiate houses of the Regular Observance had to be instituted in the “houses of recollection” of the Friars Minor Riformati. In 1596 the Minister General Bonaventura Secusi da Caltagirone gave new Constitutions to the Italian Riformati. In the same year Pope Clement VIII gave the Riformati the right to have their own Procurator General and Visitators. This gesture was the cause of bitter conflicts between the Observants and the Riformati, who were accused of wanting to separate themselves from the Order.

The tension between Observants and Riformati became the cause of many problems. In 1621 Pope Gregory XV gave the Riformati the right to have their Procurator appointed by the Cardinal Protector of the Order. In this way the jurisdiction of the Minister General on the Riformati was diminished. For a short period of time the Riformati managed to obtain the right to have their own Vicar General, but this office was abolished by Urban VIII in 1624.

When the Reform spread far and wide, Urban VIII, in 1639, in the Bulla *Iniuncti nobis*, gave the Reformed custodies of Italy and Poland the right to become autonomous

praefatas declarationes Nicolai et Clementis, nec a suo bono modo vivendi, quem inter se pro dicta strictiori Observantia ordinaverint. Nec etiam impediunt, quin vilioribus et repeciatis induantur, et quin nudis pedibus ambulent; sed qui non poterunt, portent calepodia, ut ceteris conformentur. In forma autem habitus et caputii sint ceteris dictae Observantiae conformes.

provinces in the Order, with the faculty of adding the adjective *Riformati* to their names. The Minister General of the Order retained a nominal jurisdiction upon all the Reformed provinces.

In this way, in 1639, the Friars Minor Riformati began to exist as an autonomous family within the ranks of the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, under the obedience of the Minister General, but with their own Procurator General. This state of affairs continued until 1897, although it lasted longer in the case of the Italian provinces, as we shall see later on.

The family of the Riformati gave many saints and blessed to the Franciscan Order. The most famous among them is Saint Leonard of Porto Maurizio (†1751), who entered the Order in the family of the *Riformella*,⁸ founded by Blessed Bonaventura da Barcellona in the Reformed Roman Province, and precisely in the friary of San Bonaventura al Palatino, near the Colosseum. The Friars Minori Riformati established themselves in other parts of Europe, such as in Bavaria, Tyrol, Austria, Bohemia and Poland.

The Friars Minor Alcantarini or Discalceati⁹

The Spanish reform, as we have seen, was born before the division of the Order in 1517. In 1480 Juan de la Puebla began the process of reform, to be followed then by Juan de Guadalupe in 1496. In that particular moment the reform was protected by the Conventual Ministers, and developed outside the control of the Vicar General of the Spanish Observants. In 1496 the Minister General Francesco Nanni Samson gave permission to Juan de Guadalupe to live according to the literal observance of the Rule. In 1499 the group of reformed friars formed the Custody of the Holy Gospel.

The famous reformer and Cardinal Ximenes de Cisneros, with the approval of the Spanish monarchs Fernando and Isabella, wanted to impose the obedience to the Vicars General of the Observants upon all the Franciscan religious in Spain. In 1502 he revoked the permit given to Juan de Guadalupe, and the friars “of the Holy Gospel” were obligated to join the Regular Observance in one of the “houses of recollection” which the Order had founded in Spain. These friars, however, did not want to accept the order, and declared their allegiance to the authority of the unreformed Minister General of the Order. In 1515 these friars became known as the *Fratres de Caputio*, or *Discalceati*, and were given the Custody of Estremadura. They were also known by the name of Reformed Conventuals, because of their obedience to the Conventual Minister General of the Order. The Bulla *Ite vos* of 1517 commanded them to unite with the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. In 1520 the Custody of Estremadura became the Province of Saint Gabriel.

In 1515 Juan Pascual joined this group of reformed friars. He later asked to remain under the obedience of the Friars Minor Conventuals. Paul III gave him permission to accept novices and other Observants who wanted to join his reform. When Juan Pascual died in 1554, he had founded the Custody of San José.

⁸ R. SBARDELLA, “Riformelle Francescane,” DIP, Vol. 7, Rome 1983, 1763-1767.

⁹ G. ODOARDI – A.G. MATANIC, “Alcantarini (o Francescani Scalzi),” DIP, Vol. 1, Rome 1974, 472-478.

A key figure of this Custody was the great Spanish reformer Saint Peter of Alcantara. He became Minister Provincial of the Conventual Reformed Province of Saint Gabriel. In 1557 the Conventual Minister General gave him permission to become General Commissary of the Reformed Conventuals in Spain. Peter founded the hermitage of Pedroso. In 1559 the Custody of San José also became a province. The reform grew as a result of the work of Peter of Alcantara, and it became known as the reform of the Friars Minor Alcantarini, or Discalceati. It was one of the strictest reforms in the history of the Order. During the same year in which Peter of Alcantara died, that is, in 1562, the Province of San José withdrew from the Conventual obedience and entered into the Observant family. Peter of Alcantara had also helped Saint Teresa of Avila in her reform of the Carmelite Order.

The Friars Minor Alcantarini remained firm in their sense of autonomy within the leading family of the Regular Observance. In 1621 the Alcantarini obtained permission to have their own General Commissary and Procurator General. Towards the end of the 18th century, the family of the Alcantarini or Discalced had obtained friaries in Italy (in the Spanish domains in Naples), as well as in Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines. The family of the Alcantarini was also a school of sanctity, with eminent figures like Saint Paschal Baylon, Saint John Joseph of the Cross, and Saints Peter Baptist and companions, missionaries in the Philippines and martyrs in Nagasaki, Japan, in 1597.

The Friars Minor Recollects¹⁰

The family of the Friars Minor Recollects was born in France, with the encouragement of Pope Clement VIII, who asked the Minister General Bonaventura Secusi da Caltagirone to favour the reforms within the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, particularly after the publication of the Bullae *In Suprema* of Clement VII (1532) and *Cum illis vicem* of Gregory XIII (1579).

The first friary to embrace the new reform was that of Nièvre in France, in the Province of Touraine. This friary had been reformed with the personal initiative of Ludovico Gonzaga, duke of Nièvre, who asked Pope Sixtus V, himself a Conventual Friar Minor, for permission to place this friary under the obedience of the Minister Provincial of Paris. A group of Italian Friars Minor Riformati came to live in this friary, but they were not welcomed by the local people and had to return to Italy. The Minister General Bonaventura Secusi da Caltagirone published a new set of Constitutions for the “Recollects of Belgium and Germany” in 1596.

In 1601 four friaries of Recollects asked Clement VIII to permit them to obtain the same rights and privileges of the Riformati in Italy. The Pope acceded to their request and gave them an Apostolic Commissary. He also wrote to the bishops of France and asked them to donate friaries to the Recollects. With the favour of the Pope and of king Henry IV, the Recollects obtained a wide autonomy within the context of the Observant family. In 1602 Clement VIII declared the Recollects as true sons of Saint Francis.

¹⁰ P. PÉANO, “Recolletti,” DIP, Vol. 7, Rome 1983, 1307-1322.

The General Chapter of Rome in 1612 gave the Recollects permission to form two provinces of “houses of recollection” in France, namely the Province of Saint Bernardine in southern France, and the Province of Saint Denis in northern France, together with the Custody of Saint Anthony *in Delphinatu*. In 1614 the Recollects acquired the Province of the Immaculate in Aquitaine. Later on they founded other provinces: Saint Joseph in Belgium (1629), Saxony (1625), England (1630), Thuringia (1633), Northern Germany (1640), Southern Germany (1640), Holland (1640). The Recollects were also missionaries in the French-speaking Province of Quebec in Canada.

The Recollects gave importance to ascetical life, to contemplation, to study, to preaching and to missionary activity. They were an autonomous reform, but they were not so centralized in their internal government as the Riformati or Alcantarini. They lived in hermitages, but also worked without any difficulty in larger friaries in the towns. The French Revolution of 1789 was the cause of the decrease in numbers of the Recollect family in France. The Friars Minor Recollects continued to exist as an autonomous family in the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance until 1897.

Further Reading

IRIARTE Lazaro, *Franciscan History. The Three Orders of St. Francis*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1983, pages 169-182; 195-225.

D'ALATRI Mariano, *I Cappuccini. Storia di una famiglia francescana*, Rome 1997.

Chapter 11

THE LATER HISTORY OF THE SECOND AND THIRD ORDERS

The later history of the Order of Saint Clare¹¹

The 14th century marked a decline in fervour and strictness of observance for the Clarisses just as it did for the First Order. With the increase in numbers came an increase in property and revenues, which accumulated from the gifts of pious benefactors and the dowries of new entrants; greater tolerance was extended to luxury and comfort, and if necessary applications were made for papal dispensations. Noble ladies entered the monasteries and they justified their behaviour by obtaining wide papal privileges, a practice expressly forbidden by Saint Clare in her Rule. The trouble grew worse with the Great Schism and the ensuing chaos. There were a few saintly figures, though not many, like the Blessed Clare of Rimini (†1326), who was converted and won over to the enclosed life after scandalizing her native town by her licentious living, and the Blessed Petronilla of Troyes (†1355), mother general of the convent at Moncel, an offshoot of Longchamp.

Meanwhile, Saint Clare's wish for her daughters to be in the personal care of the Friars Minor was being fulfilled to a greater extent than she could ever have hoped for. At the end of the 13th century the First Order again tried to ignore this responsibility, but in 1296 Boniface VIII renewed Innocent IV's ordinances, and the next year the Cardinal Protector Matteo Rossi promulgated two decrees putting the ministers under a firmer obligation to give total assistance to the nuns. In view of the abuses which were now rife, he urged ministers to persuade all monasteries as far as possible to accept the Rule of Urban IV (1263).

Disciplinary measures were taken to eradicate abuses and strengthen monastic observance. The orders issued by the Cistercian Pope Benedict XII in his constitutions of 1336 for the Order of Minors were important in this respect; they were the only constitutions in the first few centuries to include a special chapter for the nuns. The three most important groups were the *Minorissae*, who followed the Rule of Isabel of Longchamp in France, the Clares, who followed the Rule of Urban IV, and the Damianites, who followed the Rule of Saint Clare. Papal enclosure in accordance with the rules and constitution of Boniface VIII was also stressed.

The Cistercian element in these measures is obvious; but they certainly influenced the character of the communities. Apart from the normal practice of canonical visitation, in the second half of the fourteenth century apostolic visitors extraordinary were appointed, like the four Franciscans commissioned by Gregory XI in 1373 to reform all the monasteries of Clares in the Kingdom of Castille.

¹¹ This section is taken from L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History. The Three Orders of St. Francis of Assisi*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1982, 451-463, and will concentrate mainly upon the reforms of the Second Order.

The Reform of Saint Colette of Corbie

Colette Boylet, born at Corbie in 1381, lived at first as a recluse or a Tertiary. In 1406, in obedience to Saint Francis, who appeared to her urging her to reform his Order, she left her recluse's cell and went to Nice to see the Avignon Pope Benedict XIII. She put into his hands a document containing her profession of the Rule of Saint Clare, and was invested by him as an abbess and a reformer.

Colette began travelling all over France and the Netherlands, reforming female monasteries, and also collaborating with Henry de Baume in the reform of the First Order Franciscans, by founding friaries of Coletans (the male reform), under the obedience of the Conventual Ministers General of the Order. When Colette died at Ghent in 1447, she had reformed or refounded twenty-two monasteries on the Rule of Saint Clare, with constitutions and ordinances dictated by herself. These Colettine constitutions were approved in 1434 by the Minister General and confirmed in 1458 by Pius II.

In the constitutions, a return to the original poverty of San Damiano was treated as a matter of paramount importance. It was forbidden to take any form of dowry from candidates, who were to have given away all their possessions before entry. Poverty and cleanliness were to be the sole adornment of their clothing. It was absolutely forbidden to have any kind of property, fixed revenues, rents, granaries, cellars or stores. All costly or superfluous articles were banished. Work was to be their means of sustenance, and was to be shared by all the sisters equally; they were to make it a rule never to employ outside workers to do tasks or duties they themselves could perform. As a sign of Minorite humility, Colette forbade the solemn blessing of abbesses and even the liturgical consecration of nuns. However, she did not consider intellectual development as contrary to the spirit of the Rule: she included the reading of good books among the sisters' normal occupations, and said there should be a library in every house. Like poverty, fraternal union was considered to be of the greatest importance; in accordance with the Rule, there was to be only one class of sisters. The weekly chapter regained all its value as an expression of shared responsibility. Enclosure was strict and well protected, but the details were simplified.

Colette also followed Saint Clare in her wish to maintain close links with the First Order; the monasteries remained subject to the authority of the Ministers; as the Rule required, there were to be four friars (the Coletans were founded for this purpose), two priests and two lay brothers, to serve each nunnery.

The Observant reform in the Second Order of Saint Clare

The General Minister Guglielmo da Casale strongly supported Saint Colette in her reform of the Second Order in France, and in 1431 Eugene IV gave him extraordinary powers to see that this reform was carried out.

The same Pope, as we have seen, had encouraged and supported the Observant reform championed by Saint John Capestrano. At first the Observants refused to assume the responsibility of the *cura monialium*, but after a time they were compelled to do so by order of the Holy See. The difference between the reforms of the Second Order in Italy and the Colettine reform was that, in this latter case, Saint Colette wanted her reform to

remain *sub ministris*, while the Observant attempts at reform in Italy placed all the monasteries under the guidance of the Observant Vicars, and tried to reintroduce the observance of the Rule of Saint Clare of 1253, preferring it to the Rule of Urban IV of 1263.

The important centres of reform in Italy were the monastery of Corpus Christi at Mantua, a house of female tertiaries who adopted the Rule of Saint Clare in 1420; the monastery at L'Aquila, founded by Blessed Antonia da Firenze (†1472); the monastery of Corpus Domini at Ferrara, founded by Saint Catherine Vigri (†1463) in 1456, and the monastery of Corpus Domini at Bologna, also founded by this saint and mystic; the monastery of Monteluca near Perugia, founded according to the spirit of the San Damiano community; the monastery of Santa Lucia in Foligno; the monastery of Montevegine in Messina, Sicily, founded by Saint Eustochium Calafato (†1491); and the monasteries of Camerino and Fermo, founded by Blessed Battista Varano (†1524).

In France and Holland there was an important reform movement under Observant influence, originating from the tertiary community at Metz, where in 1482 the nuns adopted the Rule of Saint Clare. In 1485 the monastery of Ave Maria in Paris followed their example. It was founded by Nicole Goeffroy and Etienne de Saillant.

In Spain the reform of the Second Order came from that of Saint Colette, and its centre was the monastery at Gandía, where in 1458 a group of Colettine nuns arrived from Lézignan in France. The reform eventually spread to other monasteries in Spain and Portugal, including the Royal Discalced monastery in Madrid (1559). The Discalced reform was initiated by Marina Villaseca, who in 1490 obtained permission from Innocent VIII for her community of regular tertiaries at Cordova to profess the Rule of Saint Clare and to receive Urbanist nuns. Another centre of reform was the monastery of Santa María de Jerusalén in Barcelona, also for regular tertiaries, who in 1494 embraced the Rule of Saint Clare, as did the monasteries of Saragossa and Valencia in 1496.

However, not all monasteries accepted reform of their own accord, and the Observants tried to introduce it throughout the Order by using coercive methods when necessary. Saint John of Capestrano distinguished himself by his determined efforts to speed up the process of reform. In 1435, wishing to unite the reformed monasteries under the sole direction of the Observants, he tried to incorporate the Colettine monasteries as well, but Saint Colette opposed him, since she wanted her reform to remain under the direction of the Conventual Ministers General. In 1449 the Cardinal Protector appointed the Observant Francis of Sassoferrato reformer of all Italian Clares, giving him full powers.

In the reformed and newly founded monasteries, the Clares of strict observance had won a complete victory by the end of the 15th century. The struggle between Observants and Conventuals to keep the monasteries under their own control inevitably caused confusion. The general reform carried out in Spain under the direction of Jiménez de Cisneros caused considerable tension, to the point that the monastery of Saint Clare in Barcelona chose to pass over to the Benedictine Rule in order not to fall under the Observant reform.

From 1517 onwards most Poor Clare monasteries, including those of the Colettines, were made subject to Observant authority. When Pius V suppressed the Conventuals in Spain in 1566, he transferred the monasteries under their control to the Observants.

In 1582 the Minister General Francisco de Gonzaga issued new ordinances for the monasteries.

During the expansion of Protestantism and the Wars of Religion in France, when a great number of monasteries were swept away, the communities of reformed Clares gave moving examples of steadfastness in the faith and fidelity to their vow of virginity. One famous figure was the intrepid abbess of the monastery of Nuremberg, Charity Pirkheimer (†1532). During the French Revolution, a Clare from the monastery of Valenciennes, Blessed Josephine Leroux (†1794) was martyred under the guillotine.

The reform of the Capuchin Poor Clares

The first Capuchin expansion started a fresh movement of return to the early ideal in some Poor Clare monasteries. In Naples a noble Catalan lady, Maria Lorenza Longo, founded a hospital for incurables, and formed a community of Franciscan Tertiaries. When the Capuchins arrived in 1529 they stayed at the hospital, and began to take charge of the community. In 1533 this direction passed to Saint Cajetan of Thiene, founder of the Theatines. In 1535 he obtained canonical approval from Rome for the community, known from that time as Franciscan Sisters of the Third Order, who henceforth began to live in strict enclosure. In 1538 Saint Cajetan put them in the care of the Capuchins. A Brief of Paul III (December 10, 1538) gave definite confirmation to the foundation of the monastery under the Rule of Saint Clare and Capuchin direction, enabling the sisters to live in “the strictest observance of the Rule of Saint Clare.” Maria Lorenza adopted the constitutions of Saint Colette. The foundress died on December 21, 1542.

The Naples community caused houses of Capuchin Poor Clares to be founded in other Italian cities: Perugia (1553), Gubbio (1561), Rome (1575), Milan (1576), in the last case especially through the initiative of Saint Charles Borromeo. The Capuchin friars at first refused to take any responsibility for the direction of the female branch, except for the original house in Naples. Later the nuns were able to exert pressure through bishops and princes, so that the Holy See compelled the friars to take responsibility for the nuns.

The first foundation of Capuchin Poor Clares outside Italy was at Granada, where in 1588 Lucía of Ureña (†1597) established a community of “capuchinas mínimas del Desierto de Penitencia.” In 1599 the monastery of Barcelona was founded by Angela Margaret Seraphina Prat (†1608). In 1665 a group of Capuchin Poor Clares from the monastery of Toledo founded the first monastery in Mexico City, and later on other monasteries were founded in Lima, Guatemala, and Santiago of Chile.

The first monastery of Capuchin Poor Clares in France was founded in Paris in 1603 by Queen Louise of Lorraine, in Bourges. In 1615 a community of Colettines at Amiens passed over to the Capuchin reform. A third monastery was founded at Marseilles in 1622 and a fourth one at Tours in 1637. In 1665 a monastery of Capuchin Poor Clares was founded in Lisbon.

In 1630 Urban VIII approved new constitutions for the Barcelona monastery, which were accepted also by the Blessed Angela María Astorch (†1665) who founded the Saragossa and Murcia monasteries.

The most distinguished example of sanctity among the Capuchin Poor Clares is Saint Veronica Giuliani (†1727 at Città di Castello), a great mystic and author of some

mystical treatises. The Blessed Mary Magdalen Martinengo (†1737), who led a life of extraordinary austerity and penitence, was almost her contemporary.

The Conceptionists of Saint Beatrix de Sylva

The Conceptionists were founded by the Portuguese saint, Beatrix Menez de Sylva (†1492). In 1489 she obtained permission from Innocent VIII to found a monastery in Toledo dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. After the death of the foundress, Archbishop Jiménez de Cisneros, with the nun's consent, obtained a Bulla from Alexander VI giving them permission to adopt the Rule of Saint Clare. In 1511 Julius II approved a special Rule, which was modelled on Saint Clare's, but allowed communal property and mitigated fasting, although it imposed strict enclosure. Francisco de Angelis Quiñones drafted the text of the Rule and the first constitutions in 1514. By virtue of the papal Bulla, the Conceptionists were under the control of the superiors of the First Order. In 1520 Leo X granted them all privileges held by the Poor Clares.

The Conceptionists spread rapidly through Spain and other European countries, but especially in the Spanish and Portuguese domains of Latin America.

The Third Order Regular of Saint Francis

The Third Order Regular of Saint Francis refers to a male religious family which has been recognized as an independent Order by the Church ever since July 20, 1447, when Pope Nicholas V united all the various Tertiary religious in Italy into one family, by publishing the Bulla *Pastoralis officii*. Up to that time there were a number of scattered communities of religious hermits who followed the Rule of Nicholas IV given to the Third Order of Saint Francis with the Bulla *Supra montem* (August 18, 1289).

The Franciscan scholar Raffaele Pazzelli, a member of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, and author of various publications regarding its history,¹² places the origins of the Third Order during the life of Saint Francis himself. We have already seen how the Franciscan Sources speak about the primitive name that the friars gave themselves, when they regarded themselves as being “penitents coming from Assisi.”¹³

Although we have no proof that the penitential ideal was truly the foundational characteristic of the Order of friars Minor, we can conclude that Francis himself was a penitent at San Damiano, and that during his own lifetime there were various persons who wanted to follow his example by living a penitential life in the world.

¹² R. PAZZELLI, *Il Terz'Ordine Regolare di San Francesco attraverso i secoli*, Rome 1958; *San Francesco e il Terz'Ordine. Il movimento penitenziale pre-francescano e francescano*, Padova 1982.

¹³ See notes in Lesson 6. AP 19 (FAED II, 43): “Some people willingly and joyfully listened to the brothers; others, however, jeered at them. Many people repeatedly questioned them, and it was extremely wearisome to answer so many questions because new situations often gave rise to new questions. Some asked them: ‘Where do you come from?’ While others asked: ‘To which Order do you belong?’ They answered simply: ‘We are penitents and were born in Assisi.’ At that time the religion of the brothers was not yet called an order.” Parallel text in L3C 37 (FAED II, 90).

“It is important to note at once that even during the life of Francis some hermits and recluses were becoming part of the Order of Penance, considered at that time juridically as true religious. Some of them were received by Francis himself as, for example, Veridiana of Castel Fiorentino, the noblewoman Praxedes of Rome, and Gerard of Villamagna near Florence. There is also record of a community of penitents, that of Bartolomeo Baro, directly instructed by Francis himself.”¹⁴

During the 14th century many groups of Franciscan Tertiaries began to live together in scattered and independent communities, which slowly but surely began to resemble religious communities. This phenomenon happened contemporaneously in Italy, France, Spain, Holland and Germany. According to Pazzelli, the earliest example of a Franciscan Tertiary who made a profession of the religious vows is that of friar Agostino Rapondo of Lucca, whose profession is dated August 28, 1307. Pope John XXII approved of this way of life with his Bulla *Altissimo in divinis* (November 18, 1323).

These small and scattered communities of Tertiaries soon encountered various difficulties and opposition. They were often confused as being linked with the heretical *Fratricelli*, who had been condemned in 1317. On the part of the Community of the Order they also encountered opposition, since the Visitators continued to insist that the Rule of Nicholas IV, which these hermits professed, does not envisage a kind of community life, which can be considered as being truly religious, since it was addressed to lay persons living in the world.

The Bulla *Pastoralis officii* of Pope Nicholas V (July 20, 1447) had the aim of responding to the requests of the “friars” of the Third Order living in Italy, by giving them the right to possess “houses, oratories, and other places” (*domus, oratoria atque loca*), together with the right to found other houses “with the permission of the diocesan bishop,” so that their priests could celebrate the Mass and the Divine Office. Their unity would be guaranteed by a “visitor or father” and a group of four friars who would be his councillors. Since the first Regular Tertiaries seem to have been hermits, Nicholas V invited them to adopt a habit which would distinguish them from simple hermits, and at the same time from other religious Orders.

The problem regarding the link of the Regular Tertiaries with the *Clareni* and *Fratricelli* still constituted a problem. In the General Chapter held at Montefalco in 1448, the first Visitor General was a *Fratricello*, namely brother Benamati of Perugia. This election prompted Pope Nicholas V to revoke the *Pastoralis officii* of 1447 with another Bulla, *Romanus Pontifex* (September 18, 1449). This Bulla sealed the definitive separation of the newly established Regular Tertiaries from the *Clareni*. The Bulla placed the new Order as an autonomous family from all other communities belonging to the First Order. The pope commanded those friars who wanted to live a way of life different from that contained in the new Bulla, to leave the Third Order Regular and join the Order of friars Minor in order to observe the Franciscan Rule professed by the other friars.

In 1467 Pope Paul II addressed the Bulla *Excitat arcanum*, which speaks explicitly about the Italian Regular Tertiaries of the Congregation of Lombardy. The Bulla gives permission to the friars of the “Congregazione Lombarda” to extend all

¹⁴ R. PAZZELLI, *A Summary Presentation of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis*, in website: http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/resources/Histories_Third_Order_Regular/stf_brief_history_of_the_order.htm

privileges, faculties and indulgences received from Eugene IV and Nicholas V to the other friars living in Spain. The main privilege regarded their faculty to live as an independent Congregation under one Minister General.

The Italian Regular Tertiaries were probably the most numerous among other similar congregations of Regular Tertiaries, who had obtained the same privileges in other countries and cities: Holland (1401), Belgium (1413), Cologne (1427), Spain (1442), Liege (1443), Ireland (1456).

Pope Sixtus IV, in 1476, gave the Third Order Regular friars in Italy, under the direction of their own Minister General, the faculty to organize themselves into religious provinces. During the early years of the 16th century these provinces included Milan, Brescia, Venice, Bologna, Marche, Umbria, Rome, Abbruzzi, Naples, Calabria and Sicily.

The General Chapter of Florence, in 1472, compiled the Statutes of the Order, which explained the contents of the 1289 Rule of Nicholas IV. These Statutes were approved in 1475. In 1521 Pope Leo X gave the Regular Tertiaries a new Rule, dedicated to the “Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of blessed Francis living in congregation under the three essential vows.” The Italian Third Order friars acquired new Statutes in 1549. This document continued to be the official interpretation of the form of life of the Regular Tertiaries until the new Rule of Pius XI in 1927.

In 1925 Pius XI entrusted a commission of friars from all Franciscan families to prepare a new Rule for all the male and female congregations of the Third Order Regular, particularly after the publication of the 1917 Code of Canon Law. The new text was published on October 4, 1927, with the Apostolic Constitution *Rerum condicio*. A new Rule was formulated in the period 1972-1982, in line with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Pope John Paul II approved this Rule on December 8, 1982, with the Brief *Franciscanum vitae propositum*. It is the present “Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis.”

During the mid-16th century, the Third Order Regular underwent a period of crisis when Pope St. Pius V, with the Bulla *Ea est officii nostri* (July 3, 1568), suppressed the office of Minister General and placed the entire Order under the government of the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. The Tertiaries were allowed to have their own General Commissary obedient to the Minister General of the Friars Minor. The same reforms of Pius V were then extended to all the other Congregations of Third Order Regular friars in Europe.

The Franciscan Conventual Pope Sixtus V restored the Italian Congregation of the Third Order Regular to its independent status as an autonomous Franciscan family, with the Bulla *Romani Pontificis* (March 19, 1586). The Bulla stated: “Contrary to the dispositions of our predecessor Pius V, we have decided that the Tertiaries of Italy may celebrate a general chapter every three years as prescribed by their rule for the election of the visitor and other officials, with no interference or imposition of obstacles of an historical nature from the Minister General of the Observants.” This Bulla gave new life to the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, and guaranteed its survival as an independent Franciscan religious family up to the present.

The 17th century saw a significant progress made in the number of provinces, friaries and members of the Third Order Regular. The provinces of Dalmatia and

Belgium were joined to the Order in 1602 and 1650 respectively, and the Third Order friars numbered nearly 2500, scattered in 13 provinces.

As a result of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment and the civil suppressions of the mid-19th century, the Third Order Regular underwent a very difficult period, just like all the other religious Orders. It was only during the 20th century that various new congregations of Third Order regulars joined the Order, which could go through a period of rebirth.

Nowadays the Third Order Regular is divided into 7 provinces and 6 vice-provinces, and its headquarters are in the friary of Saints Cosmas and Damian, near the Colosseum, in Rome.

Franciscan Female Congregations

The Third Order Regular includes a long list of female congregations of Franciscan Sisters of the active life. Many of these congregations follow the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, and their long history has been an interesting one. It is not possible here to give a detailed picture of the history of these various Franciscan female congregations.¹⁵

The remote beginnings of female religious life, outside the classical monastic framework, can be traced to the institution of the Beguines or *mulieres religiosae* of the Middle Ages. In 1170 some communities of Beguines already existed in Liege, in Belgium. Jacques de Vitry, bishop of Acre, who is a prime witness of the early years of the Order in 1216, was himself the spiritual director of a holy Beguine, St. Marie d'Oignies.

There are examples of *mulieres religiosae* in the Franciscan environment, who followed the way of life of the Order of Penitents, and can be regarded as the forerunners of the way of life of Franciscan sisters. Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231), Saint Rose of Viterbo (1234-1253), Saint Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297), Blessed Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), are some among the most famous figures of female Franciscan religious, who were members of the Order of Penitents, and therefore were not members of a female monastic Order.

At the end of the 13th century we find examples of religious female communities in Bavaria, Strasbourg, Switzerland, who were eventually organized on more professional lines according to the Rule of Nicholas IV of 1289.

Saint Clare of Montefalco (1268-1308) was the foundress of a monastery of Franciscan female Penitents. She was canonized by Leo XIII in 1881, but the monastery which she had founded was eventually given the Rule of Saint Augustine by bishop Gerard of Spoleto in 1290, and it continued to observe this way of life until 1411. In 1460 the bishop of Spoleto joined the monastery of Montefalco with the Augustinian monastery of Santa Maria della Stella in Spoleto. Some of the nuns, however, wanted to observe the way of life of the Poor Clares. In fact, way back in 1363, Pietro di Simone, vicar of the bishop of Spoleto, had written that the nuns of Montefalco were united with

¹⁵ For a good historical study of Franciscan female congregations, cfr. R. PAZZELLI, *The Franciscan Sisters. Outlines of History and Spirituality*, Translation from the original text in Italian by A. Mullaney, Franciscan University Press, Steubenville, Ohio 1993.

the Order of Saint Clare. In 1478 Pope Sixtus IV wanted to solve this problem, and split the monastery into two. Thus two monasteries began to exist, one adjacent to the other, as they are to this very day, one observing the Rule of Saint Augustine and the other one the Rule of Saint Clare.

The decree *Periculoso ac detestabili* of Boniface VIII (1298) codified the concept of cloistered life for female religious, and from that moment legislation regarding female religious became very strict. Boniface VIII decreed that female religious had to live in perpetual enclosure, and therefore the female Franciscan religious were considered to be Beguines and not true religious at all. The fact that some Beguine communities were suspected of being heretical did not help at all the situation of the Franciscan sisters. The fact that they observed the Rule of Nicholas IV, *Supra montem*, of 1289, did not help them much, since this Rule was given to the secular Penitents, and did not envisage a form of life for religious within the structure of the Third Order.

On February 23, 1319, Pope John XXII defended the female members of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis by issuing the Bulla *Etsi Apostolicae Sedis*.¹⁶ He declared that the decisions taken by the Council of Vienne against the Beguines, should not be applied to the Penitents of the Third Order of Saint Francis, whose way of life had been approved by Nicholas IV.

The second half of the 14th century marks the period when new congregations of Franciscan sisters came to light. The first among them are the Elizabetines, who lived in semi-cloistered communities in Austria, Germany and France. Later on other congregations were born out of the original Elizabetines, namely the Elizabetines of Aachen, founded by Apollonia Radermacher in the 17th century, the Elizabetines of Padova, founded by Elizabeth Vendramini in the 19th century, and the Franciscan Elizabetines, in Italian known as the *Suore Bigie* (Grey Sisters), founded by Ludovico da Casoria (1814-1885).

The first congregation of Franciscan sisters to receive official papal recognition in Italy was that of Blessed Angelina of Montegiove, or Marsciano. The official approval of this congregation was given by Pope Martin V with the Bulla *Sacra religionis* on August 19, 1428. Angelina was born in Montegiove (Terni province) in 1357. She married Giovanni de Termis, Count of Civitella, but eventually she became a widow. So she joined the Franciscan Order of Penitents and distributed her wealth to the poor. On July 31, 1395 she visited the tomb of Saint Francis in Assisi, and on August 2, feast of the Porituncula, she was inspired to found a monastery of Tertiary sisters. So she informed the bishop of Foligno regarding her plans. In Foligno Angelina founded the Tertiary Sisters of the Observance in 1395 in the monastery of Saint Anne, which had been refounded by Paoluccio dei Trinci of Foligno in 1388. In 1403 Pope Boniface VIII gave official recognition to the monastery in the Bulla *Provenit ex vestrae devotionis*. By 1428 there existed a congregation of six monasteries in Foligno, Todi, Assisi (San Quirico), Ascoli, Florence, and Viterbo. Pope Martin V issued the Bulla *Sacra religionis* in 1428, by which he formally approved this new congregation. Blessed Angelina was instrumental in the relations with the male branch of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis, particularly with the Congregation of Lombardy. The Bulla *Ad apostolicae dignitatis apicem* (November 15, 1431) gave the Congregation of Blessed Angelina and

¹⁶ *Bullarium Franciscanum* V, n. 354, 163-164.

the monastery of Saint Anne in Foligno the right to fall directly under the obedience of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis.

During the 15th century the Third Order Regular nuns also had to face the problem of jurisdiction. Who was to be juridically responsible for them, the Observants or the Congregations of Third Order Regular brothers? The Franciscan Pope Sixtus IV published the Bulla *Romani pontificis* (December 15, 1471). This Bulla placed the Third Order Regular brothers and sisters directly under the jurisdiction of the Observants and the Conventuals. However, it seems that the Bulla was addressed to the Secular Third Order Franciscans, and not to the Regulars. In fact, in the Bulla *Decet Apostolican sedem* of November 17, 1473, Sixtus IV declared that the ministers of the Third Order Regular had the duty to visit, correct, admit and profess the candidates for the male and female branches of the Third Order Regular. It was also Pope Sixtus IV who declared, in the Bulla *Christi vicarii* (November 14, 1480), that the brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular had to take perpetual vows.

The problem of the cloistered life for nuns was dealt with during the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The later history of the Third Order Regular sisters was to be that of a continual tension between the official demands of the Church to keep them in an enclosed life, and their belief that the identity of the Third Order was never meant to be one of a monastic and enclosed community.

In 1521 Pope Leo X had promulgated the Bulla *Inter coetera nostri regiminis* (January 20), in which he gave a new Rule to the brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis. The Pope admits that the 1289 Rule of Nicholas IV was never meant to be a Rule for religious, but only for secular members of the Third Order, since it does not make any reference to religious life. The Rule is addressed “to our beloved sons and daughters, friars and sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis, who live in various congregations and who are bound by the three religious vows.” The Rule declares that cloistered life was still to be observed in monasteries which had already been founded in the past, but that new monasteries could choose to embrace the cloistered life, as long as this did not interfere with their charitable apostolate in favour of the care of the sick.

The 25th session of the Council of Trent published the constitution *De regularibus et monialibus* (December 3, 1563). The document makes explicit reference to the constitution *Periculoso* of Boniface VIII (1298), and orders all bishops to enforce enclosure upon nuns. These constitutions were then enforced by Pope Saint Pius V in the constitution *Circa pastoralis officii* (May 29, 1566). To complicate matters, the question of jurisdiction was far from having been solved, since the Third Order Regular brothers and sisters did not want to accept visitators sent to them by the Friars Minor, when they themselves had their own legitimate superiors. Ever since the time of Eugene IV, who had published the *Ordinis tui* in 1447, placing the Franciscan sisters under the jurisdiction of the Friars Minor, the problem continued to exist, since the Church authorities did not always distinguish between the Third Order Seculars and the Third Order Regulars regarding the question of jurisdiction. Whereas the first category definitely needed the juridical assistance of the First Order brothers, the second did not, since it had its own religious superiors.

Thus the effects of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and particularly the constitution *Circa pastoralis* of Pius V, regarded the Franciscan sisters as nuns living in enclosure. It was only after many protests, even on the part of the secular authorities, that

in 1580 the Church began to relax its rules regarding enclosure for the sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis. During the 17th century various new male and female congregations were born, with the aim of engaging in works of charity. Examples include the Sisters of Charity, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac in 1633, the Brothers of the Christian Schools founded by Saint John Baptist de la Salle in 1682, the Sisters of the Visitation founded by Saint Francesca de Chantal in 1610, and the Ursuline sisters, founded by Saint Angela Merici in 1535, who was herself a Franciscan Tertiary.

The period of the Enlightenment and the civil suppressions of the 19th century limited the activity of new congregations. However, it was during this modern period that many of today's Congregations of Franciscan Sisters were born and flourished. Lazaro Iriarte gives a list of these Congregations in his study on Franciscan history.¹⁷

Further Reading

IRIARTE Lazaro, *Franciscan History. The Three Orders of St. Francis*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1983, pages 451-462; 511-523.

PAZZELLI Raffaele, *Il Terz'Ordine Regolare di San Francesco attraverso i secoli*, Rome 1958; *San Francesco e il Terz'Ordine. Il movimento penitenziale pre-francescano e francescano*, Padova 1982.

History of the Third Order Regular Rule, edited by M. CARNEY, J.F. GODET-CALOGERAS and S.M. KUSH, The Franciscan Institute, NY 2008.

PAZZELLI Raffaele, *The Franciscan Sisters. Outlines of History and Spirituality*, Translation from the original text in Italian by A. Mullaney, Franciscan University Press, Steubenville, Ohio 1993.

¹⁷ L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History*, 524-541.

Chapter 12

THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY OF THE FIRST ORDER IN MODERN TIMES

The period going from the separation of the Order in 1517 to the French Revolution in 1789 was marked by a great numerical increase of friars in all Franciscan Orders, and hence by a great flowering of ministries and missions. The period going from the Catholic counter-reformation, to the Baroque, to the Enlightenment, is a long one and would merit much more attention, particularly in the case of the family of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. We have already spoken about the inner reforms of the Order of Friars Minor and so here we will concentrate more on the other two Franciscan families, namely the Conventuals and Capuchins.

The Friars Minor Conventuals

The Bulla *Omnipotens Deus* (June 12, 1517) declared the Friars Minor Conventuals to be an independent Franciscan family, having the right to retain all privileges conceded by the Apostolic See, as well as all possessions in common. The Conventuals were to elect their own Master General, who had to be confirmed by the Minister General *totius Ordinis*. The Conventuals, however, always resisted the title “Master General” and continued to refer to their superiors as “Ministers General” and include them as legitimate successors of Saint Francis. Their general curia was to reside in the convent of the Holy Apostles in Rome. The Minister General was not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Friars Minor Conventuals, and the Observants had no right to occupy any of the friaries of the Conventuals. The Bulla also encouraged reform in the Conventual family, and permitted to those Conventuals who wanted to pass on to the Observant family to do so without hindrance. From henceforth the Conventuals had to cede their precedence to the Observants during processions and other solemn functions.¹⁸

The Friars Minor Conventuals embarked upon a reform of their Order with increasing zeal. We have already seen the development of the family of Reformed Conventuals in Spain. The same reform later spread to Italy, particularly after 1566 when Saint Pius V incorporated the Reformed Conventuals of Spain into the Observant family.

The Council of Trent upheld the Conventuals’ right to hold possessions in common. In the meantime Pope Pius IV had tried to encourage reform during the 1565 General Chapter, which issued the so-called *Pian Constitutions*. These reforms had little effect. When Saint Pius V became pope he tried to do to the Franciscan family what he had done in the case of his own religious family, that of the Dominicans, namely to abolish the Conventual family altogether and incorporate it within the Observance. The time seemed ripe and the Master General Juan Tancredi supported such a union during the chapter of 1568. The process was halted by the intervention of Martino de Azpilcueta, a Navarrese Conventual, who convinced the pope not to intervene.

¹⁸ LEO X, Bulla *Omnipotens Deus*, in L. Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. 16, Quaracchi 1933, 51-54.

The Order was saved through the efforts of Felice Peretti de Montalto, who had been Vicar General from 1566 to 1568, and who later became Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590). As Pope Sixtus V did all in his power to give prestige to the Friars Minor Conventuals, and protected the Reformed Conventuals, present in a special way in the kingdom of Naples. During this time two reform movements were born, that of Girolamo Lanza, and that of Giovanni Battista Lucarelli di Pesaro, who had been a member of the Discalced Province of San José. Both ended up being absorbed by the Reformed Conventuals, although these were often persecuted by the Capuchins, since they led a life and wore a habit very similar to that of the Capuchin reform. The Reformed Conventuals were suppressed by Urban VIII in 1626, and again by Innocent X in 1646, but continued to thrive until Clement IX abolished them once and for all in 1669 and handed their houses to the Alcantarine Friars Minors of Naples.

The legislation of the Order also underwent a period of crisis. In 1593 the Chapter abolished Pius IV's Constitutions and tried to reintroduce the Constitutions of Alexander VI. In 1615 the Vicar General Giacomo Montanari published new statutes, and tried to impose them as new Constitutions when he became Minister General (1617-1622). But the General Chapter of 1625 issued new Constitutions, which were confirmed by Pope Urban VIII in 1628 and were called *Urban Constitutions*. These were the last interpretation of the Rule in the Conventual family, and for many centuries the profession of the Rule would include the expression *iuxta Constitutiones Urbanas*.

The Friars Minor Conventuals succeeded in thriving against all odds, and in continuing to be a major religious family in prestige, property, study and apostolate. Two Conventuals became Popes, namely Sixtus V (1585-1590) and Clement XIV (1769-1774). He remained famous in history because it was he who suppressed the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), under pressure from the Bourbon royal family. This led to a dislike of the Franciscans at large, but the intrigues of politics had their part in this sad decision, in the difficult moment of the movement of Enlightenment, on the eve of the French Revolution.

The Franciscan Conventual family was also blessed with saints, enriching the long list of Franciscan saints and blessed. The most famous among them are Saint Joseph of Copertino (†1663), a mystic and humble Franciscan who made it possible to prove that the Conventual family was also a rich school of spirituality and holiness; Saint Francis Anthony Fasani (†1742), a zealous preacher in the Puglie region of Italy; Blessed Bonaventure of Potenza (†1711), and the martyr of the French Revolution Blessed Jean-François Burté (†1792), who was the last guardian of the great convent of studies in Paris. In more recent times the Franciscan Conventual Order has had another famous saint, venerated in the entire Church, namely Saint Maximilian Mary Kolbe (†1941), who died a martyr offering his life in an act of supreme Christian charity in the concentration camp at Auschwitz, and who was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 1982.

The Conventuals have been very active in the field of Franciscan studies. In 1587 Pope Sixtus V established the College of Saint Bonaventure in Rome, and the study houses of the Order continued to teach Franciscan philosophy and theology, particularly that contained in the writings of the Subtle Doctor John Duns Scotus. The Conventuals were also at the forefront in their defence of the doctrine on the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Although Franciscan theologians were prohibited from teaching this doctrine by various popes (Sixtus IV, Paul V, Pius V, Gregory XV), the triumph finally

came for all the Franciscan families when Innocent XI approved the divine office of the Immaculate Conception, and Clement XI declared it as an obligatory feast in 1708. Pope Pius IX finally defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 4, 1854 in the Bulla *Munificentissimus Deus*.

The Friars Minor Capuchins¹⁹

After 1619 the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins began to exist independently as the third great Franciscan family of the First Order. During the 17th century the Capuchin Order found support and encouragement from Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644), partly owing to the influence of his Capuchin brother Antonio Barberini of Florence, whom he made Cardinal. During his pontificate the Holy See issued 416 documents referring to the Capuchins; notable among other marks of favour was the building of the great friary in Piazza Barberini in Rome. However, the same Antonio Barberini began to interfere in the internal matters of the Order after he had been elevated to the dignity of Cardinal Protector.

The Minister General Antonio da Modena (1633-1636) was forced to resign because he had stood up to the Cardinal. His resignation was followed by a stormy General Chapter (1637). Matters were further complicated by an outbreak of the nationalist quarrel, directly provoked by King Louis XIII of France, who banned all the French voters from attending the Chapter because he had not succeeded in obtaining a guarantee of equality of votes among all the provinces or a place for his nation in the definitory. The Spanish voters and other Ultramontanes refused to take part in the Chapter until the equality they claimed was granted. The intervention of Urban VIII temporarily restored calm.

From the earliest times some Italian provinces had sent a larger number of custodes than others to the general chapter. As the proportion of delegates from other nations increased, the anomaly seemed all the more intolerable. For the Ultramontanes it was not just a question of having a fair share of the supreme government; it was mainly a matter of outlook and attitudes to fundamental points concerning the life of the Order. The tension between the Cismontane and Ultramontane Capuchins was very strong in 1643, since they could not agree to have six definitors each in the general government, as was the case in the Observant family.

The new General, Innocenzo di Caltagirone (1643-1650) succeeded in winning all hearts by his tact and outstanding holiness. He toured the provinces of France and Spain. On the death of Urban VIII, the influence of Cardinal Barberini at last dwindled. None of his interventions had been so unwelcome as the revision of the Constitutions, which had been prepared by himself on the occasion of the Chapter of 1637 and promulgated the following year through a brief of Urban VIII without having been admitted to the Chapter for its approval. In the end the Cardinal Protector had to agree to withdraw the revision, and at the Chapter of 1643 it was decided to make a new draft, which was to keep the original text while making the necessary additions taken from the decrees of previous chapters. This produced the Constitutions of 1643, promulgated by a Bull of Urban VIII. These Constitutions governed the Order for two and a half centuries.

¹⁹ This section is taken from L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History*, 219-225.

During the generalate of Marco Antonio di Carpendolo (1662-1665), in 1663, the rumour began to spread, first in Rome and then throughout Italy, France and Spain, that Pope Alexander VII had in readiness a Bull abolishing the Capuchin Order. It proved a hard task to refute this falsehood, which caused a great distress among the friars. Finally the Cardinal Protector Girolamo Farnese issued a statement refuting it.

At the General Chapter of 1678 the vexed question of equal rights among the provinces came to a head. When the Ultramontanes decided to boycott the meeting, Innocent XI at last decreed absolute equality.

During the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-1697), as previously during the Thirty Years' War, the German provinces suffered greatly. But the worst calamities occurred during the War of the Spanish Succession (1700-1713). This was followed by an intensification of regalism on the part of the monarchs. During Amadeus of Savoy's rule in Sicily (1714-1718) the Capuchins of the island's three provinces were expelled for defending the rights of the Holy See.

The most distinguished Generals of this period were Bernardino of Arezzo (1691-1698) and Michelangelo of Ragusa (1712-1719). The Chapter of 1726 elected the first non-Italian Minister General, Hartman of Brixen (1726-1733) of the Province of Tyrol. He was succeeded by Bonaventura of Ferrara (1733-1740), a preacher at the Papal Court. Clement XII (1730-1740) again declared in an apostolic constitution of May 14, 1735, that the Capuchins were true sons of Saint Francis. Even greater enthusiasm was shown by Benedict XIV (1740-1758), who decreed that from now on preachers to the Papal Court would be chosen exclusively from the Capuchin Order. In 1746 he canonized Joseph of Leonessa and Fidelis of Sigmaringen, the first martyr of *Propaganda Fide*.

The crisis during the period of Enlightenment and after the French Revolution²⁰

The vast numerical increase of the Franciscan families of the First Order during the 18th century was bound to make them all enter into a period of crisis. The increasingly secular governments of Europe, as a result of rationalistic philosophy and the Enlightenment, began to consider the religious as a social scourge. The overpopulation of the religious Orders was soon to bring the Mendicants into deep disfavour in the eyes of large sectors of society.

As far as outside agencies were concerned, the friars became the main target for all the anti-Catholic forces of the age: the Encyclopedists of the Enlightenment, Jansenists, regalists and freemasons. In fact the Mendicant Orders, however decadent, continued to be the strongest support of papal authority and the temporal power of the Church, the two values threatened by heterodox laicism. Unfortunately the internal life of religious institutions provided the enemy with a strong weapon: the mocking satires launched against them, though impious, were not always untrue, nor were the economic arguments or the attacks of "reformers" altogether unjustified. The enormous popularity of the Franciscans in earlier times was in sharp decline, not with the common people, but with the new educated class.

In 1763 the Commissary General of the Cismontane Observants, Pasquale Frosoni, addressed a circular letter to the friars under his jurisdiction in which he said

²⁰ This section is taken from L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History*, 375-389.

that the Order was heading for disaster if its laxity and failure to observe the Rule grew any worse. It was to be his fate, as Minister General from 1768, to be a helpless witness to the fulfilment of these prophecies. Descriptions of the internal situation by generals of the Capuchin Order were no more optimistic. The main evils that beset the provinces included: disagreements arising from nationality, the spirit of faction, ambition, and envy; the avarice of superiors who used the rule of poverty as an excuse for denying their subordinates the bare necessities; neglect in the training of the young; and the prevalence of a worldly political atmosphere.

In a circular letter dated October 4, 1762, the General Minister of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, Pedro Ibáñez de Molina, the first member of the Discalced to be elected as General at the Chapter of 1750 and re-elected in 1762, told the Order that the term “observance” in the sense of fidelity to the Rule had come to mean the mechanical practice of petty “observances”; these naturally fell on the shoulders of novices, newly professed friars, and lay brothers, while the ever-increasing number of those enjoying privileges and exemptions did their utmost to be free of them. The same message was contained in the circular sent to the Cismontane family on March 3, 1763, by the Commissary General Pasquale Frosconi of Varese, from the Riformati family, appointed “apostolic visitor and reformer” by Clement XIII. It may be significant that during these critical years the Order had a member of the Discalced and then one of the Riformati as its leader. Pedro Ibáñez was in fact succeeded as General in 1768 by Pasquale Frosconi, who was confirmed in office by Pius VI until 1791, when he died. He suppressed the general chapter on the grounds of the separatist attitude of the Spanish provinces. Eighty-eight years (1768-1856) were to elapse before the general chapter met again.

Pablo de Colindres, General of the Capuchins (1761-1766), exhorted the friars to observe the Rule and Constitutions. Under his successor Aimé de Lamballe (1768-1773) general ordinances were promulgated in 1769. The next General, Erhard of Radkersburg, who was exceptionally kept in office for 17 years (1773-1789) by successive confirmations of the general chapter, sent out a remarkable circular in 1775 describing the internal situation in the gloomiest of terms, and suggesting remedies. He was succeeded by Angelico of Sassuolo (1789-1796), who was followed by Nicolás de Bustillo, appointed by Pius VI in 1796 without a meeting of the chapter. In 1798 he went away to Spain because of the political situation, and Angelico of Porto di Fermo was left to govern the Order as Commissary General. There was to be no meeting of the general chapter for another fifty years.

In the Capuchin Order, too, a significant phenomenon was to be observed: contrary to the whole earlier tradition of electing Italian generals, for 35 years (1754-1789) the office was in the hands of non-Italians: a Bohemian (Seraphin of Ziegenhals), a Spaniard (Pablo de Colindres), a Frenchman (Aimé de Lamballe), an Austrian (Erhard of Radkersburg), and after the six-year generalate of an Italian, the Pope again appointed a Spaniard (Nicolás de Bustillo). There was a real difference of opinion between the Italian (Cismontane) and Ultramontane capitular voters concerning the situation of the Order: the former did not share the latter’s pessimism; more confident in the power of outward observances, they maintained that the Capuchin Order was in no need of renewal.

The Conventuals had a moment of euphoria when Clement XIV, himself a Conventual, incorporated the French Observants: 287 friaries with 2300 friars. Institutionally it was a great success. That same year new constitutions were promulgated in accordance with the government's nationalization plan. We have no information as to the Order's internal situation or the standards according to which renewal was effected during the crucial years. General chapters were discontinued from 1789 to 1824, and from 1866 to 1891.

The persecution against religious Orders during the last half of the 18th century soon engulfed the Franciscan families of the First Order. Religious Orders were to become victims of rationalist hatred and royalist interference, with the more or less overt support of the episcopate. Even the Holy See admitted that there was an element of truth in the general outcry against the excessive number of religious and agreed to take steps to reduce it. The motives of governments were basically financial: their plan was to increase public funds and stimulate the economy by taking property out of "dead hands"; "disamortizzazione" was the order of the day in the Bourbon courts and the Holy Roman Empire. In fact it was also an attempt to weaken the Church by means of "royal prerogative." In this way governments were gradually working toward the isolation of dioceses from the Papacy and the establishment of national Churches under royal control.

The first and boldest step was taken against the Society of Jesus, which was expelled first from Portugal (1759-1761), then from France (1764), Spain (1767), the kingdom of the two Sicilies (1768), and Parma (1768), until it was finally suppressed by Clement XIV in 1773.

For the other religious Orders the Catholic courts devised the procedure of the Reform Commissions, a hypocritical title which concealed the members' real intentions.

The first to be established was the *Commission des Réguliers* in France (1765). The Commission did its work so skilfully that by 1784 it had disbanded 426 religious houses. It forbid each institution to have more than one house in each town; the age of admission was raised to twenty-one, and the number of novices was limited.

In Spain the *Reform Commission* was established in 1769 after the finance minister Campomanes in 1765 had published his *Tratado de la regia de amortización*. The same measures were taken as in the case of France.

In furtherance of the nationalization plan, in 1804 a Bulla *Inter graviores* was issued by Pius VII by which the regulars in Spain and their property would henceforth be under completely independent national control; the general, who would continue to be elected, would be a Spaniard or a member of some other nation alternately; when he was a non-Spaniard, Spain would be governed by an independent vicar general; when the reverse was the case, the rest of the Order would have a vicar general. This national system was to last in the Capuchin Order until 1885 and in the Franciscan Order (OFM) until 1932, as we shall see in our last lesson.

Under the policy of strangulation pursued by "enlightened" regalism, the religious Orders were on their way to inglorious extinction. The radical suppressions inspired by the French Revolution left a large number of martyrs in their wake.

On February 13, 1790, the Constituent Assembly ordered the suppression of all religious Orders. Moreover, the excommunicated religious had to choose between taking an oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and suffering exile or death. As was to be feared, many of them eagerly accepted the invitation to abandon their habit

with the aid of the pension allocated to them. A small but heroic group gave their lives for the rights of the Church, including over 200 sons of Saint Francis. Many others emigrated or were forcibly deported.

Soon afterward the various nations to which Napoleon's armies took the ideas of the French Revolution were one by one subjected to the same treatment. In Belgium, in 1796, all convents were suppressed. In 1802 all the religious in Piedmont and Savoy were expelled, and in 1803 the same happened in the German countries of the Rhine. In 1809 Murat ordered the suppression of all convents in his Neapolitan dominions, and the same year Joseph Bonaparte did the same in Spain. In 1810 the suppression was extended to the whole of Italy. Switzerland and Tyrol, too, suffered the consequences, while in Bavaria royalist tendencies pursued their course, bringing about the occupation of convents and the secularization of huge numbers of communities. In Austria the situation of the regulars improved slightly under Francis I. Finally, on October 30, 1810, King Frederick William of Prussia signed an edict suppressing all convents; this law particularly affected Silesia, the part of Poland annexed by Prussia.

With the restoration following the Congress of Vienna (1815), a partial reorganization of the provinces of Italy and Spain was achieved, but there was nothing to be done with France. It is not difficult to imagine the internal situation when convent communities were reassembled after their ideas had been thrown into such confusion; there were large numbers of both Francophiles and die-hard reactionaries, including guerrilla friars who had incited the people to revolt against the invader. There was also a feeling of insecurity and anxiety for the future, for, though Napoleon had been defeated, ideas of freedom and progress had not and were in fact marching rapidly forward.

After the end of the French Revolution, the restored absolutist governments were no less royalist than their predecessors. Many of those who returned to the convents did so under compulsion from the congregation which had been established in Rome for the reform of the regulars. Furthermore, there were few candidates for admission, and the Order was in danger of filling the void left by desertions too hastily by indiscriminate recruitment, for now that the convents had been recovered, they had to be occupied. There remained the third great ordeal, liberalism, which was to complete the process of stripping the religious orders naked; for the Franciscan families it turned out to be a salutary cleansing process, from which they emerged reconciled, albeit out of necessity, with the poverty they professed.

About the middle of the 19th century it looked as if the Order's internal life was beginning to resume its normal pattern. The Capuchins were able to hold a general chapter in 1847 and another in 1853. In 1856 the Observants were also able to hold a chapter presided over by Pius IX. The Conventuals had been holding chapters since 1824. When it looked as though it might be possible to begin reorganizing the provinces and the regular life, liberal suppressions occurred in the Italian peninsula.

In 1855 the government of Piedmont ordered the suppression of the religious Orders. In 1866 the same law was extended to the whole of united Italy, though it was not applied everywhere with the same harshness. By 1873 the law had been put into effect throughout the peninsula.

It was at this moment that the Franciscan Order began to go through a period of "restoration" and renewal, which was not without difficulties, and which in the case of the largest among the families, that of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, was

the cause of great progress and also of great suffering, in the slow process of union of all the inner reforms born during the preceding centuries into the one Order of Friars Minor (1897).

Further Reading

IRIARTE Lazaro, *Franciscan History. The Three Orders of St. Francis*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1983, pages 189-193; 219-225; 375-389.

Chapter 13

THE REVIVAL OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDERS IN THE LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURIES

In this lecture we shall be giving a brief presentation of the complex developments in the three families of the First Franciscan Order, from the time of the restoration of religious Orders in the second half of the 19th century to Vatican Council II. We shall not consider their more recent history. Our analysis will take into special consideration the events related to the Union of the Order of Friars Minor. Unfortunately we cannot delve into the rich history of Franciscan missions, apostolates, and foundations during this period. These would merit a special presentation. This is especially true in the case of the largest among the Franciscan families, namely the Order of Friars Minor.

The Leonine Union of the Friars Minor (1897)

The second half of the 19th century was a critical period in the history of the Order of Friars Minor. Like all the other religious Orders in the Catholic Church, the Franciscan Order had suffered from a great numerical loss after the period of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Many friaries and institutions were suppressed in Italy, France, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Spain and Portugal. The mid-19th century witnessed the loss of the Papal States and the upsurge of Marxism and political regimes based on the principle of secularism. The religious Orders, being bulwarks of defence of Catholicism on a supra-nationalistic level, were obviously the targets of attack by secular governments who wanted to control the Church and confiscate its property.

The Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance had been the largest Franciscan family ever since 1517, but it had never truly been a centralized and compact Order. Reforms had been born within its own ranks, namely the Friars Minor Riformati, Discalced, and Recollects, and one particular reform, that of the Capuchins, had separated itself from the main Order to develop as the third great Franciscan family in the period 1525-1619.

It became practically impossible to convoke General Chapters after 1860, because of political turmoil in Italy and the loss of the Papal States. In 1869 Pope Pius IX appointed brother Bernardino dal Vago da Portogruaro (Porto Romantino) as Minister General of the Friars Minor. Bernardino was a member of the Province of Friars Minor Riformati in the Veneto region of Italy. He was Minister General from 1869 until 1889. During this long generalate of twenty years Bernardino showed himself to be one of the most dynamic Ministers during the Order's history. He worked tirelessly to reform the Order during that difficult period. In order to boost communication among the friars he began publishing the *Acta Ordinis Minorum*, which from 1882 became the official organ of communication in the Order, and continues to be so to this very day, having changed its name to *Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*. In the midst of great difficulties Bernardino undertook the construction of the basilica and international college of Sant'Antonio in

Via Merulana, Rome, and promoted the academic formation and missionary preparation of the friars. The Collegio Sant'Antonio became the General curia of the Order, after the Italian government had taken over the friary of Aracoeli. Cardinal Parocchi laid the foundation stone of the new college on November 16, 1883. The basilica and curia were inaugurated in 1887. Bernardino also founded the Collegio San Bonaventura at Quaracchi, outside Florence, as a centre of scientific research on ancient Franciscan documents, particularly those of the Franciscan masters in the medieval universities. After the river Arno burst its banks in 1966 and flooded the entire College, this institution with its famous library was transferred to the Grottaferrata, on the hills outside Rome, and has recently been taken to the Irish College of Saint Isidore in Rome. In this centre for scientific research Franciscan scholars of universal renown published the critical edition of the *Opera omnia* of Saint Bonaventure. Bernardino finally favoured the Third Franciscan Secular Order as well as numerous congregations of Franciscan sisters of the Third Order Regular, who were born during that period. He was particularly fond of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, founded by Blessed Mary of the Passion, and affiliated to the Order of Friars Minor in 1885. Finally, in 1889 Bernardino asked Pope Leo XIII to relieve him from office. The Pope consecrated him titular bishop of Sardica, and Bernardino retired to Quaracchi, where he died on May 7, 1896.

During the General Chapter of 1889, celebrated at the Collegio S. Antonio, in Rome, Luigi da Parma (1889-1897) was elected Minister General. The Spanish provinces were represented by their Vice Apostolic Commissary Francisco Sáenz. One should remember that, geographically, the Order was still divided into the Ultramontane and Cismontane families. The Ultramontane group comprised the Spanish provinces and those entities under Spanish domination. In this period the Cismontane family had 17000 friars in 55 Observant provinces, 38 Reformed provinces, 7 Recollect provinces, and 4 Alcantarine (Discalced) provinces. The Ultramontane family had 1200 friars in the Observant provinces of Santiago, Andalusia, Cartagena, Valencia, Cataluña, Cantabria, Morocco, and the Alcantarine province of the Philippines. The Ultramontane family maintained its right to have a Vice Apostolic Commissary, who resided in the friary of S. Francisco el Grande, in Madrid, and a Procurator General who resided in the friary of Santi Quaranta in Rome. The Riformati also had their Procurator General, and there was another Procurator General for the Recollects and Alcantarines. This is the general picture to have in mind in order to understand the great difficulties which lay in the plans for an eventual Union of the Order of Friars Minor²¹.

Luigi da Parma, together with Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) were the protagonists of the efforts aimed at uniting the Friars Minor under one denomination. It was not an easy task, and its effects on the Order are still object of discussion and varying opinions. We shall limit ourselves to a brief account of what happened, following Carmody's doctoral dissertation.

The Riformati greatly opposed Union, notably through their two General Definitors, Accursio da Monte Santa Sabina (Tuscany) and Gaudentius Guggenbichler

²¹ For a detailed and accurate account of historical facts and personages related to the Leonine Union of the Friars Minor, cfr. M. CARMODY, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor 1897*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, New York, 1994. We shall be following this publication in this lecture.

(Tyrol). Other problems lay in the way of Union, namely the controversy regarding the Custody of the Holy Land, which was staunchly Observant; the serious financial crisis of the Order, following the building of the Collegio and basilica of San Antonio in Rome; the separatist character of the Ultramontane family.

A General Chapter was summoned by Leo XIII at Santa Maria degli Angeli, in Assisi, on May 16, 1896. The Pope nominated the Dominican Cardinal Angelo Mauri, archbishop of Ferrara, to preside over the Chapter. Mauri told the capitulars that Leo XIII was of the opinion that it was in the best interests of the Franciscan Order that the families present strive for true and full Union. This did not compromise the particular statutes of the various groups, as long as these did not go against the General Constitutions. The response was not a surprise. The Observants wanted Union, the Riformati and Alcantarines were against it, the Recollects were prone to accept it, although they were aware of the difficulties. 77 votes were in favour of the Union and 31 against. So Cardinal Mauri met the capitulars personally to try to convince them of the Pope's ardent wish. A second ballot was held, with a result of 100 votes for the Union and 8 against. The Minister General Luigi da Parma nominated a commission to draw up new Constitutions for the Order, under the leadership of Aloysius Lauer.

The commission met at St. Isidore's College in Rome to draft the new Constitutions in December 1896. In an audience given to the General Definitorium on 15th February 1896, Pope Leo XIII had again stressed upon the importance of Union among Friars Minor. Luigi da Parma asked the provinces of the Order to air their views regarding the new Constitutions and the issue of Union. In 1896 a total of 65 out of 95 provinces answered. 34 provinces were in favour of the Union (21 Observants, 6 Riformati, 6 Recollects, Custody of the Holy Land), 30 provinces were against (1 Observant, 27 Riformati, 2 Alcantarines), and 1 province answered in an inconclusive way. The provinces which abstained from voting were notified in advance that their silence would mean a vote pro-Union. Thus the final result was 65 provinces for the Union and 30 against.

On April 19, 1896 the commission for the new General Constitutions finished its work. Various protests were aired at the efforts for Union. It was a time of controversy. The other Franciscan Orders, that is, the Conventuals and Capuchins, were not happy with the Pope's intention to order the abolition of the adjective *de Regularis Observantia* from the name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, since they reasoned that the name belonged to all the families of the First Order.

On April 12, 1897 the Congregation for Bishops informed Luigi da Parma that Leo XIII had decided to go ahead with the declaration of Union of the Order. The new Constitutions were approved on May 15, 1897. On October 1, 1897 Luigi da Parma was summoned by Leo XIII together with Aloysius Lauer. The Pope informed Luigi that he had chosen Aloysius as next Minister General after the Union. Lauer, together with David Fleming, both Recollects, had been presented as candidates by Luigi da Parma.

On the feastday of St. Francis, October 4, 1897, Leo XIII published the Bull *Felicitate quadam*. From that day the families of the Observants, Riformati, Alcantarines and Recollects were officially to unite into one family, known simply by the name ***Ordo Fratrum Minorum***, Order of the Friars Minor. On October 5 Luigi da Parma passed the seal of the Order to Aloysius Lauer, the new Minister General (1897-1901). The Spanish

friars, however, deserted the ceremony. The future problems at implementing the Union were already evident.

The aftershocks of the “Leonine Union” of the Friars Minor

The Ultramontane family was subject to Spanish hegemony and political manoeuvring, and did not accept the Union of the Order as planned by Leo XIII. The Spaniards were subject to the Apostolic Vice-Commissary Serafin Linares, who resided in Madrid.

The political events in 1898, when Spain lost its colonies of Cuba and the Philippines, prompted the Minister General Aloysius Lauer to request the abolition of the office of Apostolic Vice-Commissary. Later on, during the reign of Alfonso XIII, Pope Pius X, in the “*motu proprio*” *Singularis regiminis* (June 29, 1904) abolished the office of Apostolic Vice-Commissary and ordered the Spanish provinces to fall directly under the obedience of the new Minister General Dionysius Schüler (1903-1911). But the Ultramontane family still retained a Vicar General.

This state of affairs ended on December 14, 1932, when the Minister General Bonaventura Marrani (1927-1933) wrote to the Cardinal Protector of the Order, Bonaventura Cerretti, and requested that the *Singularis regiminis* be revoked. On December 22, 1932 Cardinal Lepicier, Prefect of the Congregation for Religious, informed the Minister General that Pope Pius XI had revoked the “*motu proprio*” and that, henceforth, the Spanish friars fell directly under the obedience of the Minister General and had to abide by the Constitutions of the Order. On March 21, 1933 Germán Rubio, the last Vicar General for the Spanish friars, resigned from his office. The Ultramontane family ceased to exist.

In Italy there were other problems as well. The Alcantarine province of Naples rejected the Union. But Lauer reacted strongly and made it obligatory to all the friars to accept the *Felicitate quadam*. But the greatest problem lay with the ex-Riformati provinces of Italy. The friars were against fusion of the provinces, which were Observant or Riformati. In 1903 the Minister Provincial of Venice wrote to Aloysius Lauer complaining that the fusion was being detrimental to the quality of religious life. But Lauer remained intransigent, and so the case was presented in front of the General Chapter. A personal interest was shown in this issue by Pacifico Monza, member of the Venice province, who had been Procurator General of the Riformati. This friar began lobbying with Cardinal Agliardi, Protector of the Capuchins, Cardinal Ferrata, Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, and Giuseppe Sarto, who was Patriarch of Venice, and who became Pope Pius X during the same year. The Minister General, Dionysius Schüler, protested with the Pope, and insisted that a new division of the province of Venice was not possible, because it would mean that other provinces in Italy would ask for a division as well. The Pope at first supported the Minister General’s view, but later on gave way due to pressure from Italian circles. In October 1910 the Roman province was again divided into an Observant entity and a Reformed entity.

To complicate matters, Cardinal Vives y Tuto, a Capuchin, and Prefect of the Congregation for Religious, was of no help at all to Schüler. He even went so far as to resuscitate the protests of the Conventuals and Capuchins in 1897, regarding the name

Order of Friars Minor. The result was shocking. On October 4, 1909 Pius X published an Apostolic Letter, *Septima iam*, in which he ordered that the name of the Order be changed to “Friars Minor of the Leonine Union”! This name was never used neither by the Holy See, nor by the Order. It seemed that part of the protests against the Order was the result of the publication of Herbert Holzzapfel’s *Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*. The Pope was even asked to place the book in the index of prohibited writings!

Schüler felt demoralised and humiliated at the turn of events. Pius X demanded absolute silence regarding his decisions. In January 1911 Schüler had an audience with the Pope, and asked him to relieve him of the office of Minister General. During a visitation to the provinces of Italy, Belgium, France and Holland, Schüler received a letter from Bonaventura Marrani, Procurator General of the Order, telling him that Pope Pius X wanted the Order to have a new government. The Minister General was to return to Rome quickly, because Pacifico Monza was to be installed as Minister General, and Schüler was to be consecrated titular archbishop of Nazianzen the following Sunday.

On Thursday October 26, 1911, at 4 in the afternoon, Schüler was summoned in the basilica of San Antonio in Rome. When he went down from the General Curia in the Collegio, he found many friars from the Antonianum, the Curia and Aracoeli. The Franciscan bishop Bernard Doebbing read the motu proprio *Quo magis* (October 23, 1911) and announced that the new Minister General would be Pacifico Monza, and that Schüler would be consecrated titular archbishop. The consecration took place on November 5. On November 11, 1911, after an audience with Pius X, Schüler left Rome and retired to Germany. The plan of Cardinal Vives y Tuto and the group of “ex-Riformati” had worked.

The division of the Italian provinces lasted until 1946. On December 27, Pius XII addressed the Apostolic Letter *Quae paterna* to the Minister General Valentine Schaaf of the Cincinnati province, in which he ordered the Italian provinces to regroup themselves in such a way that, in every region, there would be only one province. The division between Observants and Riformati in Italy became a thing of the past.

The Order of Friars Minor during the 20th Century until the end of the Second Vatican Council

During the generalate of Pacifico Monza (1911-1915), Pius X on April 11, 1909 declared the basilica of St. Mary of the Angels as *caput et mater* of the Order of Friars Minor, with the privilege of Patriarchal Basilica and Papal Chapel.

The next Generals were Serafino Cimino da Capri (1915-1921), Bernardino Klumper (1921-1927). In 1926 the Order celebrated the 700th anniversary of the death of St. Francis, and Pope Pius XI published the encyclical letter *Rite Expiatis*. On May 26, 1927 the monument of St. Francis in front of the Lateran basilica was inaugurated. The Order also had continued its missionary activity, especially in China, where a group of Franciscan bishops, sisters and tertiaries died as martyrs during the Boxer revolution in 1900. In 1927 Klumper also inaugurated the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem.

The next Minister General was Bonaventura Marrani (1927-1933). In 1931 the Order celebrated 7th centenary of the death of St. Anthony of Padua. The Collegio San Antonio in Rome was enlarged, and the Scotistic Commission began its work for the critical edition of the writings of John Duns Scotus. During the generalate of Leonardo Bello (1933-1944) the Collegio San Antonio was declared an *Athenaeum Pontificium* (nowadays it is a Pontifical University), and the Scotistic Commission passed into the hands of Carlo Balic OFM. In 1943 the Order started the construction of the present General Curia on the Colle del Gelsomino in Rome.

The War of 1939-1945 was a period of difficulty for the apostolic activity of the Franciscans. There were acts of heroism, as well. Let it suffice to mention the heroic death of St. Maximilian Mary Kolbe (†August 14, 1941) of the Friars Minor Conventuals, in the Auschwitz prison camp.

Since no General Chapters were celebrated during the war, Pope Pius XII chose Valentine Schaaf as the next Minister General in 1945, but this General died on December 1, 1946. On January 16, 1946 Pius XII had declared St. Anthony of Padua doctor of the Church with the Bull *Exsulta Lusitania felix*. The next Minister General was Pacifico Perantoni (1947-1952). The Chapter of 1952 elected Agostino Sepinski (1952-1965; re-elected in 1957). During his generalate Ireneo Mazzotti OFM founded the secular institute “Piccola Famiglia Francescana”. In 1953 the Order celebrated the 700th anniversary of the death of St. Clare. In 1965 Paul VI nominated Sepinski as titular archbishop and apostolic delegate for Jerusalem and Palestine. Later on he also became apostolic nuncio for Uruguay. Sepinski was present at the Second Vatican Council, and died on December 31, 1978. The Order took part in the International Congress on Duns Scotus in Oxford and Edinburgh (1966).

Constantine Koser was elected Minister General (1969-1979; re-elected during the Chapter of Madrid in 1973). He was the first General after Vatican II. He published new Constitutions for the Order and summoned the provincials for an extraordinary General Chapter in Medellin, Colombia in 1973, and again in Assisi, in 1976.

The Friars Minor Conventuals²²

In 1861 there were twenty-one Conventual provinces, which by 1893 had increased to twenty-four. Since 1872, these included the Province of the United States of America, where the Conventuals of Bavaria had settled in 1852. In 1900 they began to spread through England and in 1904 returned to Spain after nearly four centuries of suppression.

In 1936 there were altogether twenty-seven provinces, and in 1950 they had increased to thirty-three, of which thirteen were in Italy, fifteen in the rest of Europe, four in North America and one in Japan. By that date the Italian Conventuals had spread into Argentina (1947), Uruguay (1947), and Brazil (1946), while the North American friars reached Costa Rica (1945) and Honduras (1948).

From 1872 to 1891 there was no general chapter because of the situation in Italy. In 1872 Pius IX appointed Antonio Maria Adragna da Trapani as Minister General, and in 1879 Leo XIII designated his successor Buenaventura Maria Soldatic de Cherso.

²² This section is taken from L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History*, 406-407.

When the general chapter finally met in 1891 it elected Lorenzo Caratelli da Segni, who governed the Order until 1904. In that year Dominic Reuter was elected as Minister General. For the first time the reins of the Order passed into the hands of a member of the American Province of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1823, at the request of the Minister General Giuseppe Maria de Bonis, Pius VII had confirmed the Constitutions of Urban VIII, with the modifications which changed times demanded, especially where the mitigation of penal laws was concerned. These constitutions were in force until 1932, when those approved by the General Chapter of 1930 and revised in accordance with the Code of Canon Law came into operation. The special General Chapter of 1969 gave its approval to a new text completely recast following guidelines laid down by Vatican II.

The Friars Minor Capuchins²³

The Capuchin Order managed to re-establish itself in France relatively early. The centre of expansion was the Province of Savoy, reorganized in 1817. Gradually a few communities made their appearance in Provence. As early as 1844 the one French province was founded, which in 1870 was split into three, Lyon, Paris, and Toulouse. After the First World War, the friaries of Alsace were grouped into the Province of Strasbourg (1920).

In 1857 the new province of Holland and Belgium was formed and divided in two in 1882.

Since 1852 there was at Bayonne a friary of Spanish Capuchins, who continued to live the regular life while waiting for the restoration in their own country. Decisive and legal restoration began in 1877 with the foundation of the convent at Antequera, authorized by king Alfonso XII at the request of Fr. Bernabé de Astorga. By that time the friars of the Bayonne community were already preaching in Spain under conditions of great freedom. In 1889 the Province of Spain was divided into three, Aragon, Castile, and Toledo. In 1898 the Province of Toledo was split into the provinces of Andalusia and Valencia. In 1900 the Province of Catalonia and Navarre-Cantabria-Aragon were formed from the territory of the Province of Aragon.

The Province of Bavaria was restored by 1836. Westphalia was dissolved in 1834 by a decree of Frederick William III, and thus it remained in 1848, when freedom of religion was proclaimed in Prussia. In 1860 the new Province of Rhine and Westphalia was established.

The Polish Capuchins suffered first the Russian persecution of 1830-31, and in 1864 total suppression. When Poland regained its independence, the Provinces of Warsaw and Cracow were established. In 1921 the Province of Illyria was created, and in 1967 it was split into two Commissariats, Croatia and Slovenia.

Religious freedom made it possible for the Irish Capuchins to reorganize themselves first as a Commissariat (1856) and then as a Province. In 1850 the restoration of the Order began in England, where an independent Province was established in 1873. In 1852 the Spanish Capuchins founded a friary in Guatemala; in 1865 another was established in El Salvador; in 1872 the members of these communities, which formed the

²³ This section is taken from L. IRIARTE, *Franciscan History*, 407-411.

Commissariat of Central America, were expelled by the Revolution; some of them established themselves in Ecuador three years later. The foundations in North America were more important. In 1858 the first friary in the United States was established; in 1860 a General Commissariat was formed, which in 1882 became a Province. In 1882 the Province of Pennsylvania was established.

The Chapter of 1884 elected at the helm of the Order a man providentially endowed for promoting and directing the desired revival, Bernard de Andrematt (1884-1908). He began with a thorough reorganization of the General Curia so as to create greater centralization. He brought about the abolition of the Apostolic Commission of Spain, thus restoring the unity of the Order. In 1884 he began monthly publication of the official organ *Analecta Ordinis*. He revised the ordinances of general chapters and promulgated the *Statutum pro missionibus*, and the Order's own special Breviary, Missal, Martyrology, and Ceremonial. He spent most of his time visiting the provinces personally. He strongly encouraged education, he gave impetus and direction to preaching. It was hardly surprising that the assembled capitulars re-elected him almost unanimously in 1895 to rule the Order for another twelve years.

The map of the Order continued to spread. In Brazil the following provinces were established: Rio Grande do Sul (1940), São Paulo (1953), Paraná-Santa Catarina (1968). In 1974 Chile, Argentina and Uruguay became Provinces. The Custody of Peru dates from 1948. The Commissariat of Ecuador and Colombia, established in 1876, was demoted to Custody in 1890; in 1895 the Capuchins were expelled from Ecuador; in 1907 the Commissariat was re-established, and in 1950 it was divided into two Custodies, Colombia and Ecuador. In 1931 the Custody of Bogotá in Colombia was formed. In 1900 the various foundations in Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama and Mexico became the Custody of Central America.

In North America, the provinces of New York (1952), New Jersey (1976), were established, together with the vice-province of California (1937), the province of Eastern Canada (1942) and the vice-province of Southern Canada (1938).

In 1909 the Order's constitutions were revised, but the traditional format was left intact. There was another revision in 1925 for the purpose of adapting them to the Code of Canon Law. In 1928 another revision of the ordinances of general chapters was made. As in other institutions, the constitutions were revised and modified in accordance with the rules laid down by Vatican II. They were approved by the Chapter of 1968, and again in that of 1970, and were confirmed in 1974.

Further Reading

CARMODY Maurice, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor 1897*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, New York, 1994.

IRIARTE Lazaro, *Franciscan History. The Three Orders of St. Francis*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1983, pages 403-411.