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EDITORIAL

FRANCISCANS AND THE HOLY LAND CUSTODY

The Holy Land Custody will be celebrating its Custodial Chapter in Jerusalem between 5th and 15th July 2010. The Chapter will be presided by br. Francesco Bravi ofm, Minister Provincial of Milan. The Minister General is also expected to attend the sessions and address the capitulars. The Chapter will lay the programme for the Custody for the period 2010-2013. The mandate of the Custos, br. Pierbattista Pizzaballa ofm, which began in 2004 and expired this year, has been extended for a further three years after the Minister General confirmed br. Pizzaballa in his role as Custos as a result of consultations with the friars present in the Holy Land.

The reflections during the Chapter are expected to concentrate upon the missionary vocation of the Franciscans in the Holy Land. This brings us to a very important point upon which we would like to comment. The Order has for centuries considered the Holy Land as its prime mission, the “pearl” of its missions. Since 1342 the Franciscans have been the official custodians of the Holy Places in the name of the Catholic Church. Their witness has been a splendid example of heroism, coupled with resourcefulness and spiritual strength in remaining faithful to their presence and to their mission, even to the point of receiving martyrdom.

Nowadays the situation in the Holy Land is changing fast. Not only is the political situation ever fluctuating, with borders between countries where the Franciscans are present becoming virtually sealed because of regional conflicts, but also with an ever-increasing presence of the local Church and of other religious who have established themselves in the Holy Land ever since the mid-19th century.

Although the Franciscans are no longer alone in the Holy Land, their mission remains unique. The Order has the responsibility to continue supporting the brothers in the Holy Land to live up to their commitment on the spiritual, pastoral, social and academic levels. Unfortunately there are still many friars and many provinces where the knowledge about the Holy Land Custody is next to nil. Yet the Order continues to declare its willingness to become more international, to enter into inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, to live up to its vocation in the world. Nowhere is this commitment more urgent than in the Holy Land. The Order has forgotten that its 800 years of experience in the Holy Land is enough to continue on its mission without the need to look for alternative sources of inspiration.

The Holy Land Custody needs friars. It needs them badly. And it needs good and qualified friars. In other words, it needs friars who love Franciscan life in the Holy Land with all it entails, and who remain precisely because they know and love the Holy Land. The general government of the Order might do more to help this come true. In a time when our manpower is dwindling, it is high time we concentrate on essentials before embarking upon new ventures that are time and energy consuming. Friars need to feel confident that, in the Holy Land, they will never go to find a paradise, but to search for the true meaning of being Franciscans living in an international fraternity that is a great challenge and a great opportunity to belong not just to a limited provincial apparatus that is jeopardy in so many regions, but to a religious Order that has the privilege of being at the front line of Christian evangelisation and presence where it really matters.

Noel Muscat ofm

ST. FRANCIS AND LAKE TRASIMENO

Noel Muscat ofm

Lake Trasimeno is the largest lake in the Italian peninsula south of the river Po, with a surface area of 128 square kilometers. Geologically the lake is not volcanic, as is the case in other Italian lakes, such as the Lake of Albano, and neither is it a lake formed in mountain valleys by the melting glaciers of the last ice-age, as is the case of the Lakes in the alpine valleys of northern Italy (Lake Maggiore, Lake of Como, Lake of Garda). It is rather a depression formed by geological fractures among the hills of central Italy, between Umbria and the Tuscan Chiana district, and could very well be the result of a much larger area of fresh water that was already present in this area about 3 million years ago. The lake is not very deep (4 metres on average) and its level fluctuates according to the amount of rainfall, since no major rivers flow into it. Sometimes it has been known in history as the Lake of Perugia, since it might have extended to this Umbrian town in prehistoric times.

Historically the lake is famous for the Battle of Trasimeno in 217 BC during the Second Punic War. The area around the lake was inhabited by the Etruscans, and later on by the Romans, who built some settlements along its shores, of which Castiglione del Lago is a remnant with some Roman ruins. Between 1139 and 1174 the inhabitants of the island placed themselves under the protection of Perugia. Nowadays Lake Trasimeno is surrounded by hills and lush vegetation, and has some small towns and castles on its shores, particularly Passignano sul Trasimeno and Castiglione del Lago.

There are three tiny islands on the lake. The largest island is Isola Polvese (almost 1 square kilometer). The second largest is called Isola Maggiore, and is nowadays inhabited. The tiny and uninhabited Isola Minore lies just some metres away from it. In the middle ages this tiny island was inhabited, with a monastery of Olivetan monks and a castle, whose remains can still be seen. For us Isola Maggiore is particularly interesting, since

it is closely linked to one of the episodes of the life of Saint Francis recounted in the *Actus Beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, chapter 6 and in the *Fioretti*, chapter 7.

We shall now quote the episode presented by the *Fioretti*, chapter 7, namely how Saint Francis made a Lent on the Isola Maggiore, and fasted for forty days and forty nights in order to follow the example of Jesus' fast in the desert. According to Luke Wadding (*Annales Minorum* I, ad. an. 1211, 1), the episode occurred in 1211.

The Fioretti account of the Lent of St. Francis on Lake Trasimeno

"The true servant of Christ, Saint Francis, was in certain things like another Christ given to the world for the people's salvation. So God the Father willed to make him in many of his actions conformed and similar to His Son, Jesus Christ. This is shown to us in the venerable company of the twelve companions and in the wondrous mystery of the sacred Stigmata and in the unbroken fast of the holy Lent which he made in the following way.

Once Saint Francis was alongside the Lake of Perugia on the day of Carnival, at the house of a man devoted to him, where he was lodged for the night. He was inspired by God to go to make that Lent on an island in the lake. So Saint Francis asked this devout man that, for the love of Christ, he carry him with his little boat to an island of the lake where no one lived, and that he do this on the night of the Day of the Ashes, so that no one would notice. And this man, out of love – from the great devotion he had for Saint Francis – promptly fulfilled his request and carried him to that island. And Saint Francis took nothing with him except two small loaves of bread. Arriving at the island, as his friend was departing to return home, Saint



Islands on Lake Trasimeno

Francis asked him kindly not to reveal to anyone that he was there, and that he should not come for him until Holy Thursday. And so that man departed, and Saint Francis remained alone.

Since there was no dwelling in which he could take shelter, he went into some very thick brush that was formed like a little den or a little hut by many bushes and saplings. And in this place he put himself in prayer and contemplation of heavenly things. And there he stayed the whole of Lent without eating or drinking, except for half of one of those little loaves, as his devoted friend found on Holy Thursday when he returned for him; for of the two loaves he found one whole one and a half; the other half, it is supposed, Saint Francis ate, out of reverence for the fast of the blessed Christ, who fasted for forty days and forty nights without taking any material food. And thus, with that half of a loaf he drove away from himself vainglory, and after the example of Christ he fasted forty days and forty nights.

Later in that place where Saint Francis had done such marvelous abstinence, God did many miracles through his merits. For this reason the

people began to build houses and live there, and in a short time a good, large village was built there, and there was a place of the brothers called the Place of the Island, and the men and women of that village still have great reverence and devotion for that place where Saint Francis made that Lent” (FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Early Documents*, III, *Francis the Prophet*, 578-579).

Other references to Saint Francis on Isola Maggiore

Thomas of Celano also mentions the period of Lent that Francis spent on Isola Maggiore in 1211. In his *Life of Saint Francis* 60, speaking about Francis’ love for creatures, Celano states: “Something similar happened with another little rabbit, a wild one, when he was on the island in the Lake of Perugia” (FAED I, 235). The same episode is recounted by Julian of Speyer in his *Life of Saint Francis* 39 (FAED I, 397), and by the same Thomas of Celano in his *Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis* 30 (FAED II, 414). In his *Major*

Legend of Saint Francis, 8,8 Saint Bonaventure writes: “In the same way, on the island in the Lake of Perugia, a little rabbit was caught and offered to the man of God. Although it fled from everyone else, it entrusted itself to his hands and his heart as if to natural security” (FAED II, 592).

We have mentioned that it was Luke Wadding that indicated the year 1211 as the date when Francis went to spend the period of Lent on Isola Maggiore in the Lake of Trasimeno. The following is the account given by the Franciscan historian:

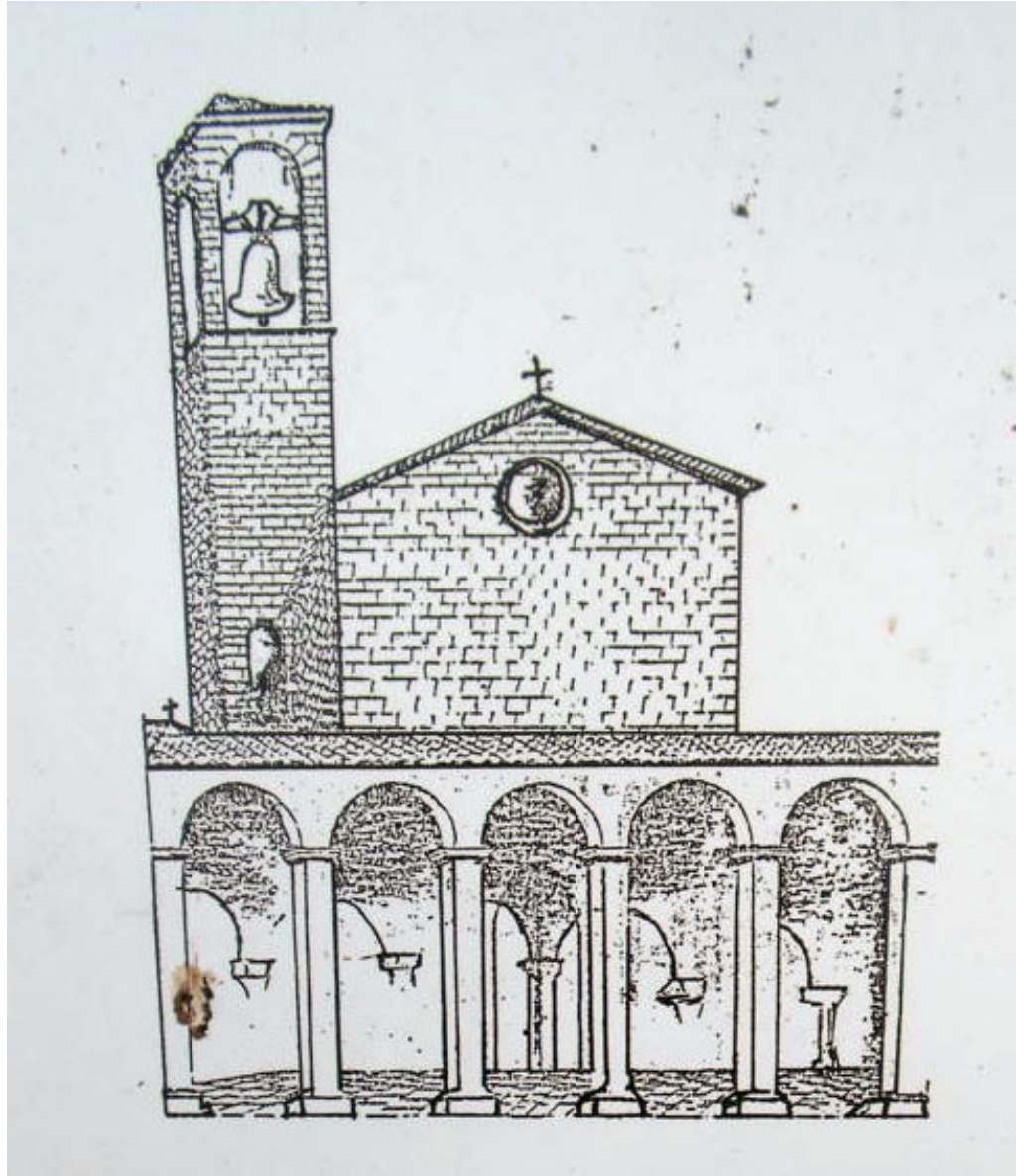
“When Lent approached, and after he had spent two months in heavenly spiritual exercises, [Francis] left that small dwelling [Celle di Cortona] under the care of brother Sylvester, and he told the friars that he wanted to go by himself to another more remote place. Therefore he went to a certain devout man, who lived not far away from that place, close to Lake Trasimeno, or the Lake of Perugia. On Carnival Tuesday he begged that man to take ferry him across the lake to a tiny and uninhabited island. That man prepared his boat, and before daybreak on Ash Wednesday the holy Father crossed over to the place where he desired

to go, taking with him two loaves of bread. The holy man begged that man not to inform anybody as to his whereabouts, and not to come to look for him before Wednesday of Holy Week. That man considered this action as very harsh, since he was ferrying Francis to a deserted place where nobody dwelt, and he knew that Francis had hardly taken any food with him, and he was afraid for his life. But since he nurtured great devotion and reverence to the sanctity of the man of God, he promised to do exactly as he was told. When his friend returned Francis found shelter in a place where there was brush and undergrowth that covered him as if he were staying in a hut, and thus he could defend himself from the elements. Of the bread that he took with him, Francis ate hardly half a loaf, out of devotion for the forty days that Christ gave an example by fasting in the wilderness. When that devout man returned on the pre-arranged date, in order to ferry Francis back from the island, while he was thanking God and bringing him back, a storm broke over the lake. Francis calmed down the storm with the sign of the cross, and then he returned to Celle where he celebrated the last supper

Isola Maggiore



*The Franciscan Church,
an old print*



and the resurrection of the Lord together with the brothers. When the people living close by the lake came to know of the fast that Francis had practiced in that place, many persons crossed over to the island every day, in order to see with their own eyes the place where the holy man spent that Lent and the hut where he prayed. Through the merits of the holy man many great miracles occurred, and out of devotion towards him people began to dwell on that island, and to build small dwellings there, so that in a short time they built a small village. After the holy Father died, the citizens of Perugia built there a Convent in his honour in the year 1328, as we have been told. Close by the Convent there is the spring from which for 40 days the holy Father used to drink. The spring was named after Saint Francis, and with its salutary water many sick persons regained a perfect state of health” (LUKE WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, I, ad. an. 1211, 12, pp. 122-123).

Isola Maggiore

Isola Maggiore, as we have seen, is one of three islands on the Lake of Trasimeno. It has a surface area of 24 hectares and a perimeter of 2 kilometres. It is just a small hillock rising from the lake, covered with lush vegetation of pines, cypress trees, poplars, and olive trees. It has a small village of about 35 inhabitants, with one main street, named after the Guglielmi noble family that acquired the property of the Franciscan monastery in the 19th century. The founding of the friary goes back to 1328, and after that date the island became an inhabited centre, peaking to 600 inhabitants in 1578. In 1803 the island passed under the jurisdiction of Castiglione del Lago, under the influence of Pope Pius VII. In 1875 the islanders, who were about 200, chose to pass under the jurisdiction of

the Comune of Tuoro sul Trasimeno. The Marquis Giacinto Guglielmi of Civitavecchia acquired the property of the Franciscan monastery in 1887, and the noble family held on to the property until 1975.

The church and friary of Saint Francis on Isola Maggiore

The earliest documents that mention a Franciscan friary on the Isola Maggiore of Lake Trasimeno go back to the last years of the 13th century. The account in the *Actus Beati Francisci*, dates from the period 1328-1337. That of the *Fiorretti* comes even later during the same century.

The first church dedicated to Saint Francis on the Isola Maggiore was built in 1328 with the expenses of the Comune of Perugia. Thus the account in the *Actus*, stating that “in a short period of time a large village and a house for the brothers were established” (FAED III, 448), is fairly correct. The church was built in gothic style and had just one aisle, on the model of the basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi. There were frescoes on the walls,

but some of them were destroyed to give place to side altars, and particularly when the apse was enlarged during the 16th century. In the old apse there was a fresco depicting Saint Francis who miraculously calmed down a storm that blew on the lake. The façade of the church was simple, with a rose window under the roof, and a portico in renaissance style. On the left hand side there was a small chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. The church also had a bell tower that collapsed in 1816 and destroyed part of the roof of the church.

The Franciscan friars remained in this place until 1862, when the friary was suppressed during the unification of Italy. The property was then sold to the family of the Marquess Giacinto Guglielmi of Civitavecchia (1887-1819). The new proprietors renovated the whole structure in a neo-gothic style, in the form of a castle, as it appears to be today, and also restored the church obliterating the old frescoes and placing new furnishings. The neo-gothic style castle was named “Villa Isabella”.

The Senator Giacinto and his son Giorgio transformed the friary into a grand noble residence, with a collection of paintings, ancient coins, fossils, and many other archaeological remains found

Villa Isabella, the old Franciscan Convent



in the region of the Lake of Trasimeno. The family also possessed a small fleet of boats that ferried passengers to and from the island, which became also a popular tourist attraction. They continued, however, to celebrate the feast of Saint Francis on 4th October, with a solemn procession to the shore of the Lake. The tiny community of about 200 poor fishermen, who had lived for centuries on the island, gradually became more prosperous with the arrival of the tourists and the activity in the “Villa Isabella” that was gradually enlarged to include the entire friary and Franciscan church.

This period of prosperity came to an abrupt end during the mid-20th century, when Lake Trasimeno was impoverished of fish since parts of it became marshland. The Guglielmi family abandoned the island and the castle, and many inhabitants moved to more prosperous centres away from the lakeshore. Nowadays, however, Isola Maggiore has become a popular centre for tourists and day-trippers on the lake, and many of its historical buildings have been restored, chief among which is the *pieve*, or rural parish church, of San Michele, standing on the top of the hill in the centre of the island. The church has precious mediaeval frescoes. Other historical buildings, including the “Villa Isabella” and the Franciscan church, are also being restored.

The church of San Michele is documented already in 1136, and so it was already built by the time Saint Francis dwelt on the island. Its modern-day form goes back to the 13th century. It consists of a single aisle with vaulted roof and, as we have already said, is famous for its 13th and 14th century frescoes. Among them are noteworthy a *Madonna with Child* (1280-1290), the *Assumption of the Virgin with four angels* (c. 1290), a *Maestà* (c. 1305). Many of the frescoes bear resemblance to the fresco cycles of Giotto and Cimabue in Assisi. A *Deposizione* dated 1446 is the work of the Maestro dei Trittico di Camerino and the frescoes in the apse, dated 1460, could well belong the school, or at least to the style, of the Beato Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli. The apse represents *Christ with the apostles, the Evangelists, Annunciation, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Catherine of Alexandria*. A large painted Crucifix (c. 1460-1465) is the work of Bartolomeo Corporali.

Other mediaeval churches on the island include the church of San Leonardo (1421), the *Chiesa del Buon Gesù* (1483) and the *Oratorio della Buona Morte*.

The *Chiesa del Buon Gesù* is found in via Guglielmi close to the small harbour. It was built

as an Oratory of the Compagnia del Buon Gesù during the 15th century. In 1728, with the decree of Marco Antonio Ansidei, bishop of Perugia, it was joined to the cathedral of San Lorenzo of Perugia. The façade and interior of the church were transformed during the end of the 17th century, in order to assume the baroque style that the church has today. The side columns are an imitation of the famous *baldacchino* by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. In the church are conserved two paintings, representing the Assumption of the Virgin, and on the main altar the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, a painting executed in 1736 by Anton Maria Garbi, an artist from Tuoro, who painted many works of art in the area around Lake Trasimeno.

The Franciscan friary of Isola Maggiore used to belong to the Reformed Seraphic Province of Assisi. It has since been abandoned by the friars, and after falling into disrepair when the Guglielmi family also left the “Villa Isabella” in 1975, it is now being restored, and will be hopefully open to receive tourists and visitors in the future. ●

THE ATTITUDE OF THE FRANCISCANS TOWARDS ISLAM AT THE END OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Noel Muscat ofm

Giuseppe Buffon ofm, professor of Church history at the *Pontificia Universitas Antonianum* of Rome, has published a paper in the quarterly review *Antonianum*, vol. 85 (2010) 19-44, regarding the relations between the Franciscans of the Holy Land Custody and the civil authorities of the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the 19th century. During this period, the Islamic influence in the Middle East, although still predominant, changed its attitude towards Christianity, and became more tolerant. At the same time, Christianity in Europe was going through a hard time, because of the secular governments in what used to be staunchly Catholic countries (France, Spain, Italy), and the Franciscan missionaries in the Holy Land report that Christians were now receiving more respect from Islamic authorities in the Middle East than from Christian governments in Europe.

The paper has the aim of showing how the Franciscans of the Holy Land Custody adopted a style that guaranteed their permanent status in spite of many trials and hardships endured during the Ottoman domination (1517-1917). This style basically regarded their ability to live in peace among the Islamic population, avoiding proselitism, and concentrating their efforts mainly upon the pastoral and charitable care of the local Christians, as well as of the Muslim population that regarded the Franciscans as its benefactors. This attitude saved the Franciscan presence in difficult times.

During the 19th century the Ottoman Empire grew weaker and became more tolerant towards Christian presence in the Holy Land. As a result it became easier for Catholic religious congregations to enter the Holy Land and establish themselves there permanently. The restoration of the Latin Patriarchate in 1847 was a step in this direction. So was the political manoeuvre of France in front of the Ottoman authorities in order to exercise its influence upon Christian presence in the Holy Land, to the detriment of the Franciscans of the Holy Land Custody, who were considered to be an "Italian" institution. Yet, until that time, the only

Catholic religious who remained steadfast to their mission and presence in the Holy Land had been the Franciscans, who were officially the Custodians of the Holy Places ever since 1342.

Buffon explains how the Franciscans survived the ordeal during 4 centuries by being faithful to what he calls their "mission of being simply present" in the Holy Land. "The official position of the Custody of the Holy Land in relation to Islam at the end of the Ottoman Empire, seems to have been supported by expressions not only of clarity but also of coherence of judgment. In many of the reports published by the authorities of the Custody during the second half of the 19th century, we find a strong defence of a strategy which advocated a complete absence of any kind of missionary activity in the midst of the followers of the Islamic religion." The Franciscans defended this position in front of the Holy See, since they drew the Church's attention to the danger of losing the Holy Places were they to anger the Muslim authorities through efforts at converting the adherents of Islam to Christianity. France was contrary to this position, as were the Christian newcomers to the Holy Land, who wanted to "free the land of Judah from the remnants that are known as the Order of Friars Minor." Indeed, figures referring to friars who died between 1768 and 1856 show that whereas 6 friars had been killed by the Greek Orthodox, only 4 had been killed by Muslims, and that out of a total of 3297 conversions to the Catholic faith, only 137 had been conversions of "Gentiles and other Infidels", an expression that would have included Muslims.

The new situation on the political sphere was favourable to the spread of Christianity in the Holy Land, but the Franciscans knew better than to irritate the sensibilities of the Muslim majority in Palestine. Instead, the first Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Giuseppe Valerga, tried to convince the French Consul in Jerusalem to try and acquire permission for the Society of Jesus to found a house in Jerusalem, with the explicit aim of embarking

upon a mission of evangelisation *ad gentes*. The Congregation of *Propaganda Fide*, however, was well aware that the experience of the Franciscans showed that prudence was paramount in order not to lose the *status quo* acquired in the Holy Places by the Catholic Church with so much sacrifice. The Franciscans always insisted that their mission in the Holy Land was different from the mission in Africa or India or China, where mass conversions to Christianity were seen as a sign of success. Instead, the Franciscans expressed their belief that the simple presence among the Muslims, and particularly the knowledge of Arabic, was instrumental in securing the sympathy of the Islamic leaders towards the Catholic Church, without the need to indulge in explicit efforts at converting Muslims to the Christian faith.

A splendid example of the success of the Franciscan position was shown in the case of the Christians in Alexandria and in other parts of Egypt, where Christians were deeply respected by civil authorities. An example is that of Fr. Venanzio da S. Venanzio, a missionary in Egypt, who was deeply respected by Ismail Pascià for his untiring work in favour of the entire population, both Christian (Coptic and Latin) and Muslim, and particularly since he exercised his profession as a medical doctor. The schools run by the Franciscans of the Holy Land Custody in Egypt and elsewhere were open to students from all faiths, including Catholics, Orthodox, Jews and Muslims. The Protestants also adopted similar methods of education, but their system was based on aggressive attempts to convert the Muslims, and thus they had little success, and often were the cause of misunderstandings between the Muslims and the Christians.

Giuseppe Buffon also speaks about a report sent by Fr. Serafino Milani, Custos of the Holy Land, on 9th August 1863, to the director of the review *Cronaca delle missioni francescane*, Fr. Marcellino da Civezza. In this long report the Custos explains the situation of the Franciscans in Jerusalem, where the Muslim population showed great respect for the work of the *frati della corda* (the friars of the cord). With a sense of justice to their untiring work, the Custos remarks: "During five centuries they (Franciscans) remained in their place, and could never be moved away from the Crib, from Calvary, and from the Holy Tomb, always faithful to their mission of hosting and protecting pilgrims" as well as educators and protectors of the local Latin population in the midst of an Islamic environment. During his tenure of of-

fice Fr. Milani had the opportunity to experience the respect of the civil Islamic authorities towards Catholic religious present in Jerusalem.

An outstanding example of such respect was reserved for Fr. Pietro Bettini da Villabartolomea (Verona), born in 1823, and who came to the Holy Land as a missionary in 1866. He was an expert medical doctor who worked untiringly for the benefit of the entire population of Jerusalem, even in favour of the Governor of the city. Indeed, when he fell sick with typhus, the *muezzin* invited his fellow Muslims to go to the mosque and pray for the *Abu el Hableb*, that is, the friar of the cord.

Fr. Pietro Bettini, affectionately known as *Abuna Butros* by the locals, exercised his profession in the friary of Saint Saviour. Every morning he would wake up at 3 am in order to pray and then proceed to the pharmacy of the friary, and work all day long with the help of an interpreter, where one hundred persons on average would converge daily. They came from all walks of life, and were Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, or Muslims.

One last interesting note in Buffon's paper regards the missionary activity of the Franciscans in Armenia, Syria, Anatolia and Cilicia during the 19th century, particularly during the reign of Sultan Abdul-Megid (1839-1861). Unfortunately the good work done by the Franciscans was soon to be hampered by the pan-Islamic politics of the Ottoman Empire with regards to the Armenian population, which was overwhelmingly Christian. Although the reports of the Franciscan missionaries betray the mentality of the times, that regarded the Muslim religion as an obstacle to progress in the Arab culture, one cannot help noticing the truthfulness of their analysis, particularly within the context of what occurred later during the Armenian genocide.

THE SPECULUM PERFECTIONS AN ALTERNATIVE TO BONAVENTURE (1)

Felice Accrocca

[Frate Francesco. *Rivista di Cultura Franciscana*, 76 (April 2010), 243-280]

The contents of the *Speculum Perfectionis* have been substantially known since 1504, ¹the year in which the *Speculum vitae beati Francisci*² was published for the first time, presenting many of the episodes transmitted by the Sources. Later on, during the second half of the 18th century, the *Speculum* was individuated and described as an autonomous source by Ireneo Affò; lastly in 1895, in a detailed and documented study on the *Laudes creaturarum*, Ildebrando Della Giovanna examined also the text of the *Canticle of Brother Sun* as it has been handed down by the *Speculum*, and indicated to scholars the codex 1743 of the Bibliothèque Mazarine of Paris.³

In spite of all this, one could say that the *Speculum perfectionis* was truly valued as an autonomous source only after the edition of Paul Sabatier in 1898. In order to understand the value that the French scholar gave to this work, it is necessary to keep in mind the whole background regarding the formation of the various biographies of Saint Francis of Assisi.

The great contribution of Paul Sabatier

Sabatier had also included to his famous *Vie de saint François* an *Introduction à l'étude des sources*, in which he presented a systematic statistic of the biographical sources of Saint Francis, evaluating the various grades of historical trustworthiness. According to his vision, the non official sources that go back to the witness of the companions of Francis, and in a special

way to brother Leo, acquire a preferential value in relation to the writings of Thomas of Celano and of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. Sabatier also was of the opinion that the *Legenda trium sociorum* arrived to us in a mutilated state, that is, in the form in which we know it today, and that it contains only a part of the *florilegium* sent by the companions of Francis to Crescenzo da Jesi in 1246, since their letter foretold that they would send their documentation corresponding to what they had written in this text that accompanied it.⁴ Since Sabatier – as also Affò more than a century before him – had found in the *Speculum vitae* a considerable number of episodes that he retained as having come from the famous *florilegium*, when after some time he discovered and published the *Speculum perfectionis*, he was immediately convinced that he had fallen upon a most precious source in order to reconstruct the ‘true’ story of Francis of Assisi.

Basing himself upon the date indicated in the Mazarino codex 1743, Paul Sabatier placed the redaction of the *Speculum perfectionis* on 11th May 1227,⁵ therefore considering it anterior not only to the edition of the *Vita beati Francisci* by Thomas of Celano, but to the same canonisation of Francis. The title of the work did not leave him with any doubts regarding the date and the author: *Speculum perfectionis seu S. Francisci Assisiensis legenda antiquissima autore fratre Leone*.⁶ Brother Leo thus assumed the role of custodian of an unblemished memory, blessed with the privilege of a long period of common life in the company of Saint Francis. Sabatier, therefore, attached to Leo’s witness an importance nearly equal to that he attached to the writings of Francis.⁷

The French scholar knew very well the

witness of those brothers – like Pierre Jean Olivi, Ubertino da Casale or Angelo Clareno – who between the 13th and 14th centuries had repeatedly invoked the testimony of brother Leo, referring to his written memoirs, those famous *rotuli* that Ubertino asserted that he had seen and that, up to a certain degree, he declared that he had even been in possession of them.⁸ Thus, when Sabatier found a source like the *Speculum perfectionis*, he was convinced that he had found a definite confirmation of his own intuitions. The edition, and above all, the thesis regarding the paternity and date of composition of the manuscript were the beginning of a heated debate – as one could have foreseen – which was also favoured by the fame and authority of the author. The discussion that ensued – that was rich, but also bitter at times – is history known to us, even though we have to reconstruct in an analytical way the positions of those who contradicted Sabatier, often more known than studied. This is the case, for example, of Michele Faloci Pulignani, whose animosity «did not hinder him from saying sensible things»,⁹ or of Salvatore Minocchi, who was the first to evaluate the Florentine codex of the Ognissanti friary, and who formulated propositions that are still valid.

The contribution of Salvatore Minocchi

Salvatore Minocchi began to take interest in Franciscan studies in 1898. At the beginning of that year, in fact, he found himself in the midst of the storm because of a review regarding the Italian translation of the *Vie de saint François* of Sabatier, published in the *Rivista Bibliografica Italiana*, of which he was the director, and which was judged to be too soft on the French historian.

Minocchi entered more directly into the complex and delicate problems of Franciscan hagiography in the spring of 1899. At the end of that year he published – in the pages of the *Archivio storico italiano* – the first part of his research that he concluded the following year. It is, on the whole, a very detailed study on the sources, that impresses us even today for the clarity of some intuitions, even more if we keep in mind that Minocchi was a Scripture scholar, and it was the first time that he was venturing into the complex labyrinth of Franciscan hagiography.¹⁰

The pages which he dedicated to the study of the *Speculum perfectionis* show a very

clear vision on his part. In a correct manner Minocchi held the opinion that the letter of the three companions, which all manuscripts placed at the beginning of the so-called *Legenda trium sociorum*, had nothing to do with that writing, and according to him the legend was the work of the notary Giovanni. Against the opinion of Sabatier, he then judged the *Legenda* as a text that was complete in itself, and basing himself upon the manuscript conserved in the Florentine friary of Ognissanti, that he considered as a better testimony than the manuscripts cited by Sabatier,¹¹ he decisively refused the date 1227, and proposed, with good and well-founded arguments, that the definitive redaction of the *Speculum* had to be fixed in 1318.

Minocchi held that much of the material included in the *Speculum* was posterior not only to the canonisation of Francis and to the request advanced by Crescenzo da Jesi (1244), but that many episodes had been written down “later on and perhaps already far from the times of brother Leo.” He did not believe, however, that the entire *Speculum* was to be considered as having been composed late, but “rather formed, in many parts, of the true *Legenda trium sociorum* written by brother Leo in 1246.” He therefore underlined the link between this part of the *Speculum* and the work of Celano, affirming in a decisive manner: “The fact that such a relationship consists principally in the dependence of the *Vita secunda* upon the *Speculum*, as if it were a most authoritative historical source, is one of the certain axioms of Franciscan historical criticism.” This affirmation, however, did not impede Minocchi from revealing the complex character of such a relationship, underlining that in various points the two sources present “a redaction which is equal, except for the inevitable variants, the result of the variety of manuscripts.” He asserted that these chapters “appear as being exclusively the work of Thomas of Celano.” “The style is a sure and decisive criterion to conclude in favour of the priority of the *Vita secunda*.” Lastly, he proposed a double list of the “chapters added to the *Speculum perfectionis* in its definitive edition of 1318” and of the “chapters of the *Speculum perfectionis* in its primitive redaction of 1246.”

It is important to underline the fact that Minocchi did not yet know of the existence of the *Compilatio Assisiensis*, published later on, in 1922, by Ferdinand Delorme with the name *Legenda antiqua sancti Francisci*. If we keep in mind the composite nature of this last source and the fact that

the *Speculum* re-elaborates the same documentary material, we can in fact note that Minocchi ended up anticipating some of the principal conclusions that Delorme then made twenty years later.

Today we know that the *Compilatio* is a faithful copy of much of the material that served for a great number of episodes in the *Memoriale in desiderio animae*. The author of the *Speculum perfectionis*, on his part – as Raoul Manselli states in a famous volume that he published – acted on those same texts in a less massive way than had done Thomas of Celano, by working some minor adjustments, “which are very slight on the whole.”¹² When, however, Minocchi asserts that the *Speculum* is – in many episodes – the source utilised by Celano, he is affirming a false fact, but at the same time, a fact that is not far from the truth. He is then undoubtedly right when he holds that Thomas, - in a good number of episodes – is the source of the *Speculum*; he is likewise correct when he fixes the definite edition of the work in the year 1318 and the place where it was written as the Portiuncula; lastly he is also right when he links the author with the world of the Spirituals. Regarding this last fact, Minocchi writes:

“Pope John XXII, with the Bulla *Gloriosam Ecclesiam* of 23rd January 1318, condemned whoever professed the doctrines of the Spirituals regarding the value of the Franciscan Rule and poverty. A great number of the friars Minor obeyed the decree. Many Spirituals, instead, especially in Tuscany and in France, preferred torments and death, and some of them sealed with their own blood the sanctity of the Rule, which they exalted as if it were equal to the Gospel. Some months after the Bulla had been published, that is, on 11th May, the *Speculum perfectionis* came to light at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. Was this a protest by the pen, to accompany the protest by blood? This is what seems to us to have happened.”¹³

From the edition of Sabatier to the edition of Solvi

The debate against scholars heated up and, in spite of the valid arguments of the ones who contradicted him, Sabatier maintained up till the very end – although with different degrees of insistence – his first position, as is seen in the definite edition of the *Speculum* that he progressively continued to develop in the years following the first edition, and for which he utilised

the new manuscripts that he had discovered in the meantime: *Le Speculum Perfectionis ou Mémoires de frère Léon sur la seconde partie de la vie de saint François d'Assise*.

After the disappearance of the generation that had dominated the scene between the end of the 19th and the first thirty years of the 20th century, the *Legenda antiqua* had by now appeared, and the *Speculum perfectionis* ended up relegated to the margins of Franciscan studies, which also underwent a period of arrest during the mid-20th century. The revival of studies during the last thirty years of the last century also did not manage to take out the *Speculum* from the shadows into which it had fallen.¹⁴

We have to recognise the merits of Daniele Solvi, who had already presented the question of the sources of the *Speculum* and prepared the *prolegomena* to the new edition.¹⁵ It was he who brought to completion the immense editorial work of finally restoring to us the critical text. This was a necessary work, since we have to keep in mind that the editions of Sabatier – without doubt we do not want to underestimate the fundamental merits of the French scholar – were subject to the lack of observance of the modern principles of textual criticism, and therefore were exposed to solutions dictated by an arbitrary interpretation of the writer-editor. In the pages dedicated to the “original source”, Solvi concludes not only that “the direct source of the *Speculum perfectionis* is an older manuscript of the *Compilatio Assisiensis* which is not signed” by some omissions that one meets in the two sources, but he also affirms that, “between the other compilations having an analogous content, the *Compilatio Uppsalensis* and the older manuscript of the *Compilatio Assisiensis* descend from the same archetype, whereas *Speculum perfectionis minus [Lemmens]* pertains to an older branch of the tradition.”

Solvi in this way proclaims with extraordinary clarity some fundamental points which regard the reconstruction of the text, to which he remains coherently faithful. We can deduce that the direct source of the *Speculum* is an older manuscript of the *Compilatio Assisiensis*. Therefore Solvi’s decision to recur to the *Compilatio* is opportune, and whoever has the patience to examine the critical apparatus can become aware of the determining influence of this source in the reconstruction of the text.

In the final analysis, the edition of Solvi reveals itself to be more trustworthy with respect to the other two editions of Sabatier, and this for

three reasons: the discovery of new manuscripts, especially ms. 1/63 of the Library of Saint Isidore's College in Rome; the exclusion of contaminated manuscripts; the recourse to the source (*Compilatio Assisiensis*). This last element, in a special way, has been favoured by the progress made by studies in the last 35 years, and has made Solvi's edition as the third one and in a position to conclude the *recensio*.¹⁶

Portiuncula 1318: the inventio of an anonymous redactor

Contemporary historiography is now in full agreement that the *Speculum perfectionis* was edited during the first quarter of the 14th century, since the date 1227 is the fruit of an error of transcription; in fact, a copyist, placing an "X" instead of a "C" (MCCXXVIII instead of MCCCXVIII) had given origin to a whole family of manuscripts that in their *colophon* ended up making the *Speculum perfectionis* look as if it were the oldest work regarding the life of Francis. In particular, the first to mention this writing as an autonomous work was Giacomo da Tresanti: in the only codex that is known of his sermons (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, Conventi Soppressi, G. 1. 861A), at the fol. 183r he makes a reference to "the libel that is entitled *speculum perfectionis fratris minoris*"; regarding Giacomo we find references in documents ever since October 1320: therefore one thinks that he died some time later, but we are here on the terrain of hypothesis.¹⁷

Except for some isolated voices, nobody today attributes the paternity of the *Speculum perfectionis* to brother Leo, even though – undoubtedly – brother Leo was among those who produced the sources which were at the origins of this work. The editor, in fact, makes use of those same documentary materials which form the *Compilatio Assisiensis*;¹⁸ of the 125 episodes that make up the *Speculum* 115 are in fact to be found in the *Compilatio*: part of the remaining ones were surely present in that same documentary material to which the copyist of this last work refers,¹⁹ whereas another two episodes (*Spec* 84, 120) are poetic compositions (the second is the famous *Canticle of brother Sun*) inserted by the redactor in the body of the narration.

The author is generally faithful to his sources. Although he makes ample use of the same documentary material, he intervenes upon

it in a manner that is less strong than the way in which Celano had made use of it. In spite of this, in a different way from the one who compiled and copied the manuscript of Perugia, he shows that he has a precise redactional plan, a picture in which he inserts the different pieces of his mosaic: he tried hard to maintain in the form and in order the documentary material as he found it, but without having scruples, whenever he felt the need, to recompose the material, to present episodes in pairs, to polish them, letting himself be guided by his own project as well as by needs of clarity and linearity.

Often, these same needs pushed the editor to ask, to explain and to clarify what in his sources was only implicit or could generate easy confusion. It is interesting, in this regard, to observe some of the "original episodes" with which the redactor integrated his sources. For example, in episode 80 he makes use of the texts present in *Compilatio* 42-43, and which had been drawn from the *Memoriale* of Celano:²⁰ the text describes the qualities that, according to Francis, had to be found in the person of the minister general. In the *Speculum* we find many 'original' notes which, besides showing particular emphases on the part of the redactor, place in light also those that were his own preoccupations or preoccupations of friars who supported his position. I shall underline the principal ones (or, at least, those that I regard as being so).

The minister should not also cultivate virtues, as is described in the source, but he should also practice them continually, encouraging at the same time others more by his example than by his words. The source exhorted to use mercy towards those who abandoned the Order, in the knowledge that great temptations might have pushed them to take such a decision. The redactor admonishes the minister, however, by telling him that if the Lord would have permitted him to have the same temptations, he would certainly also have fallen into an even deeper precipice. Moreover, the minister – and this is a highly significant recommendation – should consider very attentively all kinds of accusations against the brothers, until the truth would certainly come out through questioning; he should not listen to those who indulge in idle talking, but should rather be suspicious towards them. His companions also should show themselves understanding with the *delinquents*, revealing an equal affection towards all. It is evident how the redactor was a member of a faction that was feeling besieged, as could have

felt the Spirituals in 1318, after the offensive on the part of John XXII.

The 'original texts' of the *Speculum* 80, adding upon what *Compilatio* 42-43 had declared, give evidence to proper accentuations of the redactor, in continuity with the thoughts of the Spirituals. These last, for example, were rather critics of an urbanised Franciscan way of life, and according to their way of seeing things, these Franciscans in the towns had chosen a way of life that was excessively worldly. The *Speculum perfectionis* appear to be in agreement with such an interpretative method, as is shown by a significant example: episode 103 of the *Compilatio* contained a praise of those friars who lived in the hermitages, "in remote and deserted places."

Episode 72 contains both the praise for those friars who live in the hermitages as well as the comment on the famous text of the sterile woman who gives birth. It is interesting to note, however, in what way the redactor intervened on his source: first of all, he eliminated the clarification by which, in the *Compilatio* it is said that the attitude of Francis was not motivated by a lack of respect towards sacred sciences, since the Saint – as he had asserted in his *Testament* – venerated the learned.²¹ The redactor then introduces some original texts, the most consistent of which is situated between the praise of the brothers who live in hermitages and the exegesis of the biblical text quoted above. In this text the merits of the simple friars are praised, assuring us that their fatigues would be compensated, while those who only care to accumulate learning and to show to others the way of salvation, without working in any way in favour of their own souls, will be found to be naked and empty in front of Christ's judgment seat. In this way the truth of holy humility and simplicity, and of holy prayer and poverty, is magnified and glorified. These virtues are considered to be the soul of the vocation of the friars Minor.²²

NOTES

1 L. PELLEGRINI, in *Fontes Franciscani*, a cura di E. Menestò e S. Brufani e di G. Cremascoli, E. Paoli, L. Pellegrini, Stanislaò da Campagnola. Apparati di G.M. Boccali (Medioevo francescano. Testi 2), S. Maria degli Angeli – Assisi 1995, 1829-1847; F. URIBE, *Introduzione alle agiografie di san Francesco e santa Chiara d'Assisi (secc. XIII-XIV)* (Medioevo Franciscano. Saggi 7), S. Maria degli Angeli – Assisi 2002, 337-365. For the quotations from the *Speculum perfectionis status fratris Minoris*. Edizione critica e studio storico-letterario a cura di D. Solvi (Edizione nazionale dei testi mediolatini 16), Firenze 2006 (= *Speculum*). For the comodity of the readers the author offers also in parenthesis the reference to the pages of the *Fontes franciscani* (= Ff), as well as the reference

to the Italian edition: *Fonti francescane. Nuova edizione. Scritti e biografie di san Francesco d'Assisi. Cronache e altre testimonianze del primo secolo francescano. Scritti e biografie di santa Chiara d'Assisi. Testi normativi dell'Ordine Franciscano Secolare*, a cura di E. Caroli, Padova 2004 (= FF), followed by the marginal number. He adopts the following abbreviations: *CAss* = *Compilatio Assisiensis*; *LegM* = *SANCTI BONAVENTURAE Legenda maior*; *Mem* = *THOMAE DE CELANO Memoriale in desiderio animae*; *Spec* = *Speculum perfectionis*. We have translated sections of this study, and we have chosen some of the relevant notes.

2 The work was first published in Venice in 1504, but was subsequently published several times (Metz, 1509; Antwerp, 1620; COLOGNE, 1623; Győr, 1752). P. SABATIER, *Le Speculum vitae*, in *Opuscles de Critique Historique* I, Paris 1903, 299-357 (ed. 1504 and 1509); J. GOYENS, *Les éditions du Speculum vitae B. Francisci parue en 1620 et 1623*, in *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 20 (1927) 116-131; M. BIHL, *L'édition du Speculum vitae B. Francisci parue à Győr en 1752 et l'origine hongroise du Speculum Vitae*, ibidem, 132-153.

3 L. PELLEGRINI, *Introduzione a Speculum Perfectionis*, in *Fontes franciscani*, 1829-1834.

4 P. SABATIER, *Vie de S. François d'Assise*, Paris 1894 (even though it was already published in November 1893). For an overall picture of the polemic that this biography aroused: Paul Sabatier e gli studi francescani. Atti del XXX Convegno internazionale in occasione del centenario della fondazione della Società internazionale di studi francescani (1902-2002) (Assisi, 10-12 ottobre 2002), Spoleto 2003; F. ACCROCCA, «Buono scrittore di parole». Salvatore Minocchi, Giovanni Mercati e una recensione di Giuseppe Maria Zampini alla Vita di san Francesco di Paul Sabatier, in *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae* XV (Studi e testi 453), Città del Vaticano 2008, 7-48.

5 At the end of the manuscript, in fact, Sabatier could read: «Actum in sacrosancto loco Sancte Marie de Portiuncula et completo Vº idus maii anno Domini MCCXXVIII».

6 *Speculum perfectionis seu S. Francisci Assisiensis Legenda antiquissima auctore fratre Leone*, nunc primum edidit P. Sabatier (Collection de documents pour l'histoire religieuse et littéraire du Moyen Âge 1), Paris 1898. In his *Vie* Sabatier affirmed: «Les écrits de saint François sont assurément la meilleure source à consulter pour arriver à la connaître, et on ne peut que s'étonner de le voir si négligés par la plupart de ses biographes. Il est vrai qu'ils donnent peu de renseignements sur sa vie, et ne fournissent ni dates, ni faits; mais ils font mieux que cela: ils marquent les étapes de sa pensée et de son développement spirituel. [...] montrent son âme même; chaque phrase a été non seulement pensée, mais vécue, et nous apporte encore palpitantes les émotions du Poverello» SABATIER, *Vie de S. François d'Assise*, XXXVI-XXXVII. Such affirmations are often recorded and quoted entirely by recent historiography: for example, Mariano D'Alatri in his *Introduzione a SAN FRANCESCO D'ASSISI, Gli scritti*, a cura di M. D'Alatri, Roma 1982, 7; G. MICCOLI, *Gli scritti di Francesco*, in *Francesco d'Assisi e il primo secolo di storia francescana* (Biblioteca Einaudi 1), Torino 1997, 56.

7 Sabatier redimensioned his methodological position of 1893, and ended up stating that the writings of the Saint and the witness of brother Leo constitute a «double source, qui n'en est pour ainsi dire qu'une»: SABATIER, *Vie de S. François d'Assisi*. Édition définitive, Paris 1931 (a posthumous publication by A. Goffin), XXXVIII: «Ce qui importe le plus c'est de pouvoir pénétrer dans l'intimité de la conscience de saint François, de devenir les témoins sympathiques de l'éclosion de sa pensée, d'en trouver les racines et d'en pouvoir contempler le développement. Or tout cela, nous

le connaissons. Nous sommes amplement renseignés à ce sujet, soit par saint François lui-même, soit par les récrits de frère Léon d'Assise, le confident fidèle de sa pensée, qui lui survécut pendant une quarantaine d'années, et se consacra à maintenir vivante la figure historique de son maître. Ce qui ressort de cette double source, qui n'en est pour ainsi dire qu'une, tant le disciple s'était nourri de la pensée de celui auquel il avait donné son admiration et sa foi...» ibidem.

8 F. ACCROCCA, *Insistenze ed oblii. Gli «Opuscula» negli scritti degli Spirituali*, in idem, *Un ribelle tranquillo. Angelo Clareno e gli Spirituali francescani fra Due e Trecento* (Collana Viator 8), S. Maria degli Angeli – Assisi 2009, 229-248.

9 A. BARTOLI LANGELI, *Gli autografi di frate Francesco e di frate Leone* (Autographa Medii Aevi 5), Turnout 2000, 20. The author refers to the polemic of 1895-1898 regarding the autograph letter of Francis to brother Leo, which is today conserved in the cathedral of Spoleto, but I think that it can be extended to the totality of the work of this priest from Foligno. Regarding Leo's role regarding the Franciscan question, and particularly regarding what Sabatier says regarding this subject, see STANISLAO DA CAMPAGNOLA, *Gli storici umbri e la «questione francescana» dal Sabatier ad oggi*. Atti del I Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 18-20 ottobre 1973), Assisi 1974, 119-169; 126-157. Regarding the great opponent of Sabatier, François van Ortroy, cfr. G. PHILIPPART, *Le Bollandiste François Van Ortroy et la Legenda trium sociorum*, ivi, 171-197.

10 S. MINOCCHI, *La «Legenda trium sociorum»*. Nuovi studi sulle fonti biografiche di s. Francesco d'Assisi, in *Archivio storico italiano*, s. V, 24 (1899) 249-326; 26 (1900) 81-134,

11 Daniele Solvi holds that the manuscript that is today conserved in the Provincial Archives of the Friars Minor in Florence (that used to be conserved in the library of the friary of Ognissanti, F 19), and that was valued by Minocchi, results in its wholeness a «fairly correct witness, maybe from the point of view of the text, the least far away, among the remaining witnesses, from the original version» (*Speculum*, CCXXI).

12 R. MANSELLI, «*Nos qui cum eo fuimus*». Contributo alla questione francescana (Bibliotheca seraphico-capuccina 28), Roma 1980, 32.

13 MINOCCHI, *La «Legenda trium sociorum»*, 321.

14 Among the studies regarding the *Speculum*, we mention the following: R. INFANTINO, *Lo «Speculum perfectionis» nella «questione francescana»*, in *Analecta TOR* 19 (1987) 410-458; M. CAUSSE, *Paul Sabatier et la Question Franciscaine*, in *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* 67 (1987) 113-135; idem, *Question Franciscaine (2 article). Du Speculum Perfectionis aux «rotuli» de Frère Léon*, ivi 69 (1989) 285-307; idem, *Le problème du «Speculum Perfectionis»*, in *Editori di Quaracchi 100 anni dopo. Bilancio e prospettive*. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale (Roma 29-30 maggio 1995), a cura di A. Cacciotti e B. Faes de Mottoni (Medioevo 3), Scuola Superiore di Studi Medievali e Francescani, Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum, Roma 1997, 293-298. The positions of Causse have been punctually discussed – and refuted – by D. SOLVI, *Lo «Speculum perfectionis» e i rotoli di frate Leone*, in *Studi medievali* 34 (1993) 595-651.

15 D. SOLVI, *Lo «Speculum Perfectionis» e le sue fonti*, in *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 88 (1995) 377-471; idem, *Prolegomeni ad una nuova edizione: lo «Speculum perfectionis»*, in *Editori di Quaracchi 100 anni dopo*, 279-291.

16 F. ACCROCCA, *Oltre Sabatier. La nuova edizione dello Speculum perfectionis*, in *Miscellanea francescana* 106-107 (2006-2007) 504-528.

17 C. CENCI, *Notarelle su Fr. Giacomo da Tresanti, lettore*

predicatore, in *Archivum franciscanum historicum* 86 (1993) 119-128; at page 122 note 20 we find the reference to the *Speculum perfectionis*.

18 Regarding the *Compilatio Assisiensis* and its sources, see F. ACCROCCA, *La Compilatio Assisiensis, ovvero la voce dei compagni*, in *Frate Francesco* 75/2 (2009) 485-519.

19 *Spec* 6, 47, 48, 78, 79, 83, 85 (FF 1858-1859, 1919, 1919-1920, 1976, 1976-1977, 1986-1987, 1989-1990; FF 1686, 1735, 1736, 1773, 1774, 1780, 1782). A source of the episodes 6, 47, 48, 78 is the *Memoriale* of Celano; the episodes 79 and 85 are based on the so-called *Verba beati Francisci*; episode 83 refers to the *Vita beati Francisci* of Thomas of Celano. The episode 71bis, which Solvi restores in the text, is based on the *Verba fratris Conradi*. Cfr. SOLVI, *Lo «Speculum perfectionis» e le sue fonti*, 387-395. For a summary picture see *Tavola I*, that lists the “sources known by the *Speculum perfectionis* (ibidem 460-463); also, *Speculum*, CCLXXXV-CCLXXXVI.

20 *CAss* 42,1-4 (Ff 1514-1515; FF 1567/20) adopts *Mem* 184,1-4 (Ff 604; FF 771); *CAss* 42,5-12 (Ff 1515; FF 1567/20) adopts *Mem* 185,1-8 (Ff 605; FF 771); *CAss* 43,1-5 (Ff 1516; FF 1567/21) adopts *Mem* 185,9-13 (Ff 605-606; FF 771); *CAss* 43,6-14 (Ff 1516-1517; FF 1567/21) adopts *Mem* 186,1-9 (Ff 606; FF 772). *Spec* 80 (Ff 1977-1980; FF 1775-1776) unites all episodes in one, and includes numerous additions (cfr. vv. 1, 11, 18, 20, 23-24, 27, 28-29, 30).

21 *CAss* 103,4-5 (Ff 1641-1642; FF 1646): “Non ut contemneret et despiceret sanctam scientiam immo eos qui erant sapientes in Religione, et omnes sapientes nimio venerabatur affectu, quemadmodum ipse testatur in Testamento suo dicens: ‘Omnes theologos et qui ministrant verba divina, debemus honorare et venerari tamquam qui ministrant nobis spiritum et vitam.’”

22 *Spec* 72,23-26: “Tunc veritas sanctae humilitatis et simplicitatis, sanctaeque orationis et paupertatis, quae est vocatio nostra, exaltabitur, glorificabitur et magnificabitur; cui veritati ipsi, inflati vento scientiae, detraxerunt vita et vanis sermonibus sapientiae suae, dicentes ipsam veritatem esse falsitatem, et tanquam caeci, eos qui ambulaverunt in veritate crudeliter persequentes. Tunc error et falsitas opinionum suarum per quas ambulaverunt, quas veritatem esse praedicaverunt, per quas in caecitatis foveam multos praecipitaverunt, in dolore, confusione et verecundia terminabitur, et ipsi cum suis tenebrosis opinionibus in tenebras exteriores cum tenebrarum spiritibus demergentur” (Ff 1971; FF 1766).

PAUL SABATIER

«LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI»

*Translated into English by Louise Seymour Houghton,
(Hodder and Stoughton), London 1908.*

Chapter XII

THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF 1217

[198] After Whitsunday of 1217 chronological notes of Francis's life are numerous enough to make error almost [199] impossible. Unhappily, this is not the case for the eighteen months which precede it (autumn of 1215-Whitsunday, 1217). For this period we are reduced to conjecture, or little better.

As Francis at that time undertook no foreign mission, he doubtless employed his time in evangelizing Central Italy and in consolidating the foundations of his institution. His presence at Rome during the Lateran Council (November 11-30, 1215) is possible, but it has left no trace in the earliest biographies. The Council certainly took the new Order into consideration, but it was to re-[120]new the invitation made to it five years before by the supreme pontiff, to choose one of the Rules already approved by the Church. St. Dominic, who was then at Rome to beg for the confirmation of his institute, received the same counsel and immediately conformed to it. The Holy See would willingly have conceded special constitutions to the Brothers Minor, if they had adopted for a base the Rule of St. Benedict; thus the Clarisses, except those of St. Damian, while preserving their name and a certain number of their customs, were obliged to profess the Benedictine rule.

In spite of all solicitations, Francis insisted upon retaining his own Rule. One is led to believe that it was to confer upon these questions that we find him at Perugia in July, 1216, when Innocent III died.

However this may be, about this epoch the chapters took on a great importance. The Church, which had looked on at the foundation of the Order with somewhat mixed feelings, could no longer rest content with being the mere spectator of so profound a movement; it saw the need of utilizing it.

Ugolini was marvellously well prepared for such a task. Giovanni di San Paolo, Bishop of the Sabine, charged by Innocent III to look after the Brothers, died in 1216, and Ugolini was not slow to offer his protection [201] to Francis, who accepted it with gratitude. This extraordinary offer is recounted at length by the Three Companions. It must certainly be fixed in the summer of 1216 immediately after the death of Giovanni di San Paolo.

It is very possible that the first chapter held in the presence of this cardinal took place on May 29, 1216. By an error very common in history, most of the Franciscan writers have referred to a single date all the scattered incidents concerning the first solemn assizes of the Order, and have called this typical assembly the *Chapter of the Mats*. In reality for long years all the gatherings of the Brothers Minor deserved this name.

Coming together at the season of the greatest heat, they slept in the open air or sheltered themselves under booths of reeds. We need not pity them. There is nothing like the glorious transparency of the summer night in Umbria; sometimes in Provence one may enjoy a foretaste of it, but if at Baux, upon the rock of Doms, or at St. [202] Baume, the sight is equally solemn and grandiose, it still wants the caressing sweetness, the effluence of life which in Umbria give the night a bewitching charm.

The inhabitants of the neighboring towns

and villages flocked to these meetings in crowds, at once to see the ceremonies, to be present when their relatives or friends assumed the habit, to listen to the appeals of the Saint and to furnish to the friars the provisions of which they might have need. All this is not without some analogy with the camp-meeting so dear to Americans. As to the figures of several thousands of attendants given in the legends, and furnishing even to a Franciscan, Father Papini, the occasion for pleasantries of doubtful taste, it is perhaps not so surprising as might be supposed.

These first meetings, to which all the Brothers eagerly hastened, held in the open air in the presence of crowds come together from distant places, have then nothing in common with the subsequent chapters-general, which were veritable conclaves attended by a small number of delegates, and the majority of the work of which, done in secret, was concerned only with the affairs of the Order.

During Francis's lifetime the purpose of these assemblies was essentially religious. Men attended them not [203] to talk business, or proceed to the nomination of the minister-general, but in mutual communion to gain new strength from the joys, the example, and the sufferings of the other brethren.

The four years which followed the Whitsunday of 1216 form a stage in the evolution of the Umbrian movement; that during which Francis was battling for autonomy. We find here pretty delicate shades of distinction, which have been misunderstood by Church writers as much as by their adversaries, for if Francis was particular not to put himself in the attitude of revolt, he would not compromise his independence, and he felt with an exquisite divination, that all the privileges which the court of Rome could heap upon him were worth nothing in comparison with liberty. Alas, he was soon forced to resign himself to these gilded bonds, against which he never ceased to protest, even to his last sigh; but to shut one's eyes to the moral violence which the papacy did him in this matter is to condemn oneself to an entire misapprehension of his work.

A glance over the collection of bulls addressed to the Franciscans suffices to show with what ardor he struggled against favors so eagerly sought by the monastic orders.

[204] A great number of legendary anecdotes put Francis's disdain of privileges in the clearest light. Even his dearest friends did not always understand his scruples.

"Do you not see," they said to him one day, "that often the bishops do not permit us to preach, and make us remain several days without doing

anything before we are permitted to proclaim the word of God? It would be better worth while to obtain for this end a privilege from the pope, and it would be for the good of souls."

"I would first convert the prelates by humility and respect," he replied quickly; "for when they have seen us humble and respectful toward them, they themselves will beg us to preach and convert the people. As for me, I ask of God no privilege unless it be that I may have none, to be full of respect for all men, and to convert them, as our Rule ordains, more by our example than by our speech."

The question whether Francis was right or wrong in his antipathy to the privileges of the curia does not come within the domain of history; it is evident that this attitude could not long continue; the Church knows only the faithful and rebels. But the noblest hearts often make a stand at compromises of this kind; they desire that the future should grow out of the past without convulsion and without a crisis.

The chapter of 1217 was notable for the definitive organization of the Franciscan missions. Italy and the other countries were divided off into a certain number of *provinces*, having each its provincial minister. Imme-[205]diately upon his accession Honorius III had sought to revive the popular zeal for the crusades. He had not stopped at preaching it, but appealed to prophecies which had proclaimed that under his pontificate the Holy Land would be reconquered. The renewal of fervor which ensued, and of which the rebound was felt as far as Germany, had a profound influence on the Brothers Minor. This time Francis, perhaps from humility, did not put himself at the head of the friars charged with a mission to Syria; for leader he gave them the famous Elias, formerly at Florence, where he had had opportunity to show his high qualities.

This Brother, who from this time appears in the foreground of this history, came from the most humble ranks of society; the date and the circumstances of his entrance into the Order are unknown, and hence conjecture has come to see in him that friend of the grotto who had been Francis's confidant shortly before his decisive conversion. However this may be, in his youth he had earned his living in Assisi, making mattresses and teaching a few children to read; then he had spent some time in Bologna as *scriptor*; then suddenly we find him among the Brothers Minor, charged with the most difficult missions.

His adversaries vie with one another in asserting that he was the finest mind of his century, but unhappily it is very difficult, in the existing state of the documents, to pronounce as to his ac-

tions; learned and energetic, eager to play the leading part in the work of the reformation of religion, and having made his plan beforehand as to the proper mode of realizing it, he made straight for his goal, half political, half religious. Full of admiration for Francis and gratitude toward him, he desired to regulate and consolidate the movement for renovation. In the inner Franciscan circle, where Leo, Ginepro, Egidio, and many others represent the spirit of liberty, the religion of the humble and the simple, Elias represents the scientific and ecclesiastical spirit, prudence and reason.

He had great success in Syria and received into the Order one of the disciples most dear to Francis, Caesar of Speyer, who later on was to make the conquest of all Southern Germany in less than two years (1221-1222), and who in the end sealed with his blood his fidelity to the strict observance, which he defended against the attacks of Brother Elias himself.

Caesar of Speyer offers a brilliant example of those suffering souls athirst for the ideal, so numerous in the thirteenth century, who everywhere went up and down, seeking first in learning, then in the religious life, that which should assuage the mysterious thirst which tortured them. Disciple of the scholastic Conrad, he had felt himself overpowered with the desire to reform the Church; while still a layman he had preached his ideas, not without some success, since a certain number of ladies of Speyer had begun to lead a new life; but their husbands disapproving, he was obliged to escape their vengeance by taking refuge at Paris, and thence he went to the East, where in the preaching of the Brothers Minor he found again his hopes and his dreams. This instance shows how general was the waiting condition of [207] souls when the Franciscan gospel blazed forth, and how its way had been everywhere prepared.

But it is time to return to the chapter of 1217: the friars who went to Germany under conduct of Giovanni di Penna were far from having the success of Elias and his companions; they were completely ignorant of the language of the country which they had undertaken to evangelize. Perhaps Francis had not taken into account the fact that though Italian might, in case of need, suffice in all the countries bathed by the Mediterranean, this could not be the case in Central Europe.

The lot of the party going to Hungary was not more happy. Very often it came to pass that the missionaries were fain to give up their very garments in the effort to appease the peasants and shepherds who maltreated them. But no less incapable of understanding what was said to them than of making themselves understood, they were soon obliged to think of returning to Italy. We may

thank the Franciscan authors for preserving for us the memory of these checks, and not attempting to picture the friars as suddenly knowing all languages by a divine inspiration, as later on was so often related.

Those who had been sent to Spain had also to undergo persecutions. This country, like the south of France, was ravaged by heresy; but already at that time it was vigorously repressed. The Franciscans, suspected of being false Catholics and therefore eagerly hunted out, found a refuge with Queen Urraca of Portugal, who permitted them to establish themselves at Coimbra, Guimaraens, Alenquero, and Lisbon.

[208] Francis himself made preparations for going to France. This country had a peculiar charm for him because of his fervent love of the Holy Sacrament. Perhaps also he was unwittingly drawn toward this country to which he owed his name, the chivalrous dreams of his youth, all of poetry, song, music, delicious dream that had come into his life.

Something of the emotion that thrilled through him on undertaking this new mission has passed into the story of his biographers; one feels there the thrill at once sweet and agonizing, the heart-throb of the brave knight who goes forth all harnessed in the early dawn to scan the horizon, dreading the unknown and yet overflowing with joy, for he knows that the day will be consecrated to love and to the right.

The Italian poet has given the one name of "pilgrimages of love" to the farings forth of chivalry and the journeys undertaken by dreamers, artists, or saints to those parts of the earth which forever mirror themselves before their imagination and remain their chosen father-land. Such a pilgrimage as this was Francis's undertaking.

"Set forth," said he to the Brothers who accompanied him, "and walk two and two, humble and gentle, keeping silence until after tierce, praying to God in your hearts, carefully avoiding every vain or useless word. Meditate as much while on this journey as if you were shut up in a hermitage or in your cell, for wherever we are, wherever we go, we carry our cell with us; Brother body is our cell, and the soul is the hermit who dwells in it, there to pray to the Lord and to meditate."

Arrived at Florence he found there Cardinal Ugolini, sent by the pope as legate to Tuscany to preach the crusade and take all needful measures for assuring the [209] success. Francis was surely far from expecting the reception which the prelate gave him. Instead of encouraging him, the cardinal urged him to give up his project.

"I am not willing, my brother, that you should cross the mountains; there are many prel-

ates who ask nothing better than to stir up difficulties for you with the court of Rome. But I and the other cardinals who love your Order desire to protect and aid you, on the condition, however, that you do not quit this province.”

“But, monsignor, it would be a great disgrace for me to send my brethren far away while I remained idly here, sharing none of the tribulations which they must undergo.”

“Wherefore, then, have you sent your brethren so far away, exposing them thus to starvation and all sorts of perils?”

“Do you think,” replied Francis warmly, and as if moved by prophetic inspiration, “that God raised up the Brothers for the sake of this country alone? Verily, I say unto you, God has raised them up for the awakening and the salvation of all men, and they shall win souls not only in the countries of those who believe, but also in the very midst of the infidels.”

The surprise and admiration which these words awoke in Ugolini were not enough to make him change his mind. He insisted so strongly that Francis turned back to Portiuncula, the inspiration of his work not even shaken. Who knows whether the joy which he would have felt in seeing France did not confirm him in the idea that he ought to renounce his plan? Souls athirst with the longing for sacrifice often have scruples such as these; they refuse the most lawful joys that they may offer them to God.

[210] We cannot tell whether it was immediately after this interview or not till the following year that Francis put Brother Pacifico at the head of the missionaries sent into France.

Pacifico, who was a poet of talent, had before his conversion been surnamed Prince of Poesy and crowned at the capital by the emperor. One day while visiting a relative who was a nun at San Severino in the March of Ancona, Francis also arrived at the monastery, and preached with such a holy impetuosity that the poet felt himself pierced with the sword of which the Bible speaks, which penetrates between the very joints and marrow, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. On the morrow he assumed the habit and received his symbolical surname.

He was accompanied to France by Brother Agnello di Pisa, who was destined to be put at the head of the first mission to England in 1224.

Francis, on sending them forth, was far from dreaming that from this country, which exerted such a fascination over him, was to come forth the influence which was to compromise his dream – that Paris would be the destruction of Assisi; and yet the time was not very far distant; [211] a few

years more and the Poverello would see a part of his spiritual family forgetting the humility of their name, their origin, and their aspirations, to run after the ephemeral laurels of learning.

We have already seen that the habit of the Franciscans of this time was to make their abode within easy reach of great cities; Pacifico and his companions established themselves at St. Denis. We have no particulars of their work; it was singularly fruitful, since it permitted them a few years later to attack England with full success.

Francis passed the following year (1218) in evangelizing tours in Italy. It is naturally impossible to follow him in these travels, the itinerary of which was fixed by his daily inspirations, or by indications as fanciful as the one which had formerly determined his going to Sienna, Bologna, the Verna, the valley of Rieti, the Sacro-Speco of St. Benedict at Subiaco, Gaeta; San Michele on Mount Gargano perhaps received him at this time, but the notes [212] of his presence in these places are too sparse and vague to permit their being included in any scheme of history.

It is very possible that he also paid a visit to Rome during this time; his communications with Ugolini were much more frequent than is generally supposed. We must not permit the stories of biographers to deceive us in this matter; it is a natural tendency to refer all that we know of a man to three or four especially striking dates. We forget entire years of the life of those whom we have known the best and loved the most and group our memories of them around a few salient events which shine all the more brilliantly and deeper we make the surrounding obscurity. The words of Jesus spoken on a hundred different occasions came at last to be formed into a single discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. It is in such cases that criticism needs to be delicate, to mingle a little divination with the heavy artillery of scientific argument.

The texts are sacred, but we must not make fetiches of them; notwithstanding St. Matthew, no one to-day dreams of representing Jesus as uttering the Sermon on the Mount all at one time. In the same way, in the narratives concerning the relations between St. Francis and Ugolini, we find ourselves every moment shut up in no-thoroughfares, coming up against contradictory indications, just as long as we try to refer everything to two or three meetings, as we are at first led to do.

With a simple act of analysis these difficulties disappear and we find each of the different narratives bringing us fragments which, being pieced together, furnish an organic story, living, psychologically true.

From the moment at which we have now ar-

rived, we must make a much larger place for Ugolini than in the past; the struggle has definitively opened between the Franciscan ideal – chimerical, perhaps, but sublime – and [213] the ecclesiastical policy, to go on until the day when, half in humility, half in discouragement, Francis, heartsick, abdicates the direction of his spiritual family.

Ugolini returned to Rome at the end of 1217. During the following winter his countersign is found at the bottom of the most important bulls; he devoted this time to the special study of the question of the new orders, and summoned Francis before him. We have seen with what frankness he had declared to him at Florence that many of the prelates would do anything to discredit him with the pope. It is evident the success of the Order, its methods, which in spite of all protestations to the contrary seemed to savor of heresy, the independence of Francis, who had scattered his friars in all the four corners of the globe without trying to gain a confirmation of the verbal and entirely provisional authorization accorded to him by Innocent III – all these things were calculated to startle the clergy.

Ugolini, who better than any one else knew Umbria, Tuscany, Emilia, the March of Ancona, all those regions where the Franciscan preaching had been most successful, was able by himself to judge of the power of the new movement and the imperious necessity of directing it; he felt that the best way to allay the prejudices which the pope and the sacred college might have against Francis was to present him before the curia.

Francis was at first much abashed at the thought of preaching before the Vicar of Jesus Christ, but upon the entreaties of his protector he consented, and for greater security he learned by heart what he had to say.

[214] Ugolini himself was not entirely at ease as to the result of this step; Thomas of Celano pictures him as devoured with anxiety; he was troubled about Francis, whose artless eloquence ran many a risk in the halls of the Lateran Palace; he was also not without some more personal anxieties, for the failure of his *protégé* might be most damaging to himself. He was in all the greater anxiety when, on arriving at the feet of the pontiff, Francis forgot all he had intended to say; but he frankly avowed it, and seeking a new discourse from the inspiration of the moment, spoke with so much warmth and simplicity that the assembly was won.

The biographers are mute as to the practical result of this audience. We are not to be surprised at this, for they write with the sole purpose of edification. They wrote after the apotheosis of

their master, and would with very bad grace have dwelt upon the difficulties which he met during the early years.

The Holy See must have been greatly perplexed by this [215] strange man, whose faith and humility were evident, but whom it was impossible to teach ecclesiastical obedience.

St. Dominic happened to be in Rome at the same time, and was overwhelmed with favors by the pope. It is a matter of history that Innocent III, having asked him to choose one of the Rules already approved by the Church, he had returned to his friars at Notre Dame de Prouille, and after conferring with them had adopted that of St. Augustine; Honorius therefore was not sparing of privileges for him. It is hardly possible that Ugolini did not try to use the influence of his example with St. Francis.

The curia saw clearly that Dominic, whose Order barely comprised a few dozen members, was not one of the moral powers of the time, but its sentiments toward him were by no means so mixed as those it experienced with regard to Francis.

To unite the two Orders, to throw over the shoulders of the Dominicans the brown cassock of the Poor Men of Assisi, and thus make a little of the popularity of the Brothers Minor to be reflected upon them, to leave to the latter their name, their habit, and even a semblance of their Rule, only completing it with that of St. Augustine, such a project would have been singularly pleasing to Ugolini, and with Francis's humility would seem to have some chance of success.

One day Dominic by dint of pious insistence induced Francis to give him his cord, and immediately girded himself with it. "Brother," said he, "I earnestly long that your Order and mine might unite to form one sole and same institute in the Church." But the Brother [216] Minor wished to remain as he was, and declined the proposition. So truly was he inspired with the needs of his time and of the Church that less than three years after this Dominic was drawn by an irresistible influence to transform his Order of Canons of St. Augustine into an order of mendicant monks, whose constitutions were outlined upon those of the Franciscans.

A few years later the Dominicans took, so to speak, their revenge, and obliged the Brother Minor to give learning a large place in their work. Thus, while hardly come to youth's estate, the two religious families rivalled one another, impressed, influenced one another, yet never so much so as to lose all traces of their origin – summed up for the one in poverty and lay preaching, for the other in

learning and the preaching of the clergy.

Chapter XIII

SAINT DOMINIC AND SAINT FRANCIS

(*The Egyptian Mission.*
Summer 1218 – Autumn 1220)

[217] Art and poetry have done well in inseparably associating St. Dominic and St. Francis; the glory of the first is only the reflection of that of the second, and it is in placing them side by side that we succeed best in understanding the genius of the Poverello. If Francis is the man of inspiration, Dominic is that of obedience to orders; one may say that his life was passed on the road to Rome, whither he continually went to ask for instructions. His legend was therefore very slow to be formed, although nothing forbade it to blossom freely; but neither the zeal of Gregory IX for his memory nor the learning of his disciples were able to do for the *Hammer of heretics* that which the love of the people did for the *Father of the poor*. His legend has the two defects which so soon weary the readers of hagiographical writings, when the question is of the saints whose worship the Church has commanded. It is encumbered with a spurious super-[218]naturalism, and with incidents borrowed right and left from earlier legends. The Italian people, who hailed in Francis the angel of all their hopes, and who showed themselves so greedy for his relics, did not so much as dream of taking up the corpse of the founder of the Order of Preaching Friars, and allowed him to wait twelve years for the glories of canonization.

We have already seen the efforts of Cardinal Ugolini to unite the two Orders, and the reasons he had for this course. He went to the Whitsunday chapter-general which met at Portiuncula (June 3, 1218), to which came also St. Dominic with several of his disciples. The ceremonial of these solemnities appears to have been always about the same since 1216; the Brothers Minor went in procession to meet the cardinal, who immediately dismounted from his horse and lavished expressions of affection upon them. An altar was set up in the open air, at which he said mass, Francis performing the functions of deacon.

It is easy to imagine the emotions which overcame those present when in its beautiful setting of the Umbrian landscape burst forth that part of the Pentecostal service, that most exciting, the most apocalyptic of the whole Catholic liturgy, the anthem *Alleluia, Alleluia, Emitte Spiritum tuum et*

creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terrae. Alleluia, does not this include the whole Franciscan dream?

But what especially amazed Dominic was the absence of material cares. Francis had advised his brethren not to disquiet themselves in any respect about food and [219] drink; he knew by experience that they might fearlessly trust all that to the love of the neighboring population. This want of carefulness had greatly surprised Dominic, who thought it exaggerated; he was able to reassure himself, when meal-time arrived, by seeing the inhabitants of the district hastening in crowds to bring far larger supplies of provisions than were needed for the several thousands of friars, and holding it an honor to wait upon them.

The joy of the Franciscans, the sympathy of the populace with them, the poverty of the huts of Portiuncula, all this impressed him deeply; so much was he moved by it that in a burst of enthusiasm he announced his resolution to embrace gospel poverty.

Ugolini, though also moved, even to tears, did not forget his former anxieties; the Order was too numerous not to include a group of malcontents; a few friars who before their conversion had studied in the universities began to condemn the extreme simplicity laid upon them as a duty. To men no longer sustained by enthusiasm the short precepts of the Rule appeared a charter all too insufficient for a vast association; they turned with envy toward the monumental abbeys of the Benedictines, the regular Canons, the Cistercians, and toward the ancient monastic legislations. They had no difficulty in perceiving in Ugolini a powerful ally, nor in confiding their observations to him.

The latter deemed the propitious moment arrived, and in a private conversation with Francis made a few [220] suggestions: Ought he not give to his disciples, especially to the educated among them, a greater share of the burdens? Consult them, gain inspiration from their views? Was there not room to profit by the experience of the older orders? Though all this was said casually and with the greatest possible fact, Francis felt himself wounded to the quick, and without answering he drew the cardinal to the very midst of the chapter.

"My brothers," said he with fire, "the Lord has called me into the ways of simplicity and humility. In them he has shown me the truth for myself and for those who desire to believe and follow me; do not, then, come speaking to me of the Rule of St. Benedict, of St. Augustine, of St. Bernard, or of any other, but solely of that which God in his mercy has seen fit to show to me, and of which he has told me that he would, by its means, make a new covenant with the world, and he does not will that we should have any other. But by your learning and your wisdom God will bring you to confu-

sion. For I am persuaded that God will chastise you; whether you will or no you will be forced to come to repentance, and nothing will remain for you but confusion.”

This warmth in defending and affirming his ideas profoundly astonished Ugolini, who added not a word. As to Dominic, what he had just seen at Portiuncula was to him a revelation. He felt, indeed, that his zeal for the Church could not be greater, but he also perceived that he could serve her with more success by certain changes in his weapons.

Ugolini no doubt only encouraged him in this view, and Dominic, beset with new anxieties, set out a few months later for Spain. The intensity of the crisis through which he passed has not been sufficiently noticed; the religious writers recount at length his sojourn in the grotto of Segovia, but they see only the ascetic practices, the prayers, the genuflexions, and do not think of looking for the cause of all this. From this epoch it might be said that he was unceasingly occupied in copying Francis, if the word had not a somewhat displeasing sense. Arrived at Segovia he follows the example of the Brothers Minor, founds a hermitage in the outskirts of the city, hidden among the rocks which overlook the town, and thence he descends from time to time to preach to the people. The transformation in his mode of life was so evident that several of his companions rebelled and refused to follow him in the new way.

Popular sentiment has at times its intuitions; a legend grew up around this grotto of Segovia, and it was said that St. Dominic there received the stigmata. Is there not here an unconscious effort to translate into an image within the comprehension of all, that which actually took place in this cave of the Sierra da Guaderrama?

Thus St. Dominic also arrived at the poverty of the gospel, but the road by which he reached it was different indeed from that which St. Francis had followed; while the latter had soared to it as on wings, had seen in it the final emancipation from all anxieties which debase this life, St. Dominic considered it only as a means; it was for him one more weapon in the arsenal of the host charged with the defence of the Church. We must not see in this a mere vulgar calculation; his admiration for him whom he thus imitated and followed afar off was sincere and profound, but genius is not to be copied. This sacred malady was not his; he has transmitted to his sons a sound and robust blood, thanks to which they have known nothing of those paroxysms of hot fever, [222] those lofty flights, those sudden returns which make the story of the Franciscans the story of the most tempest-tossed society which the world has ever known, in which glorious chapters are mingled with pages trivial

and grotesque, sometimes even coarse.

At the chapter of 1218 Francis had other causes for sadness than the murmurs of a group of malcontents; the missionaries sent out the year before to Germany and Hungary had returned completely discouraged. The account of the sufferings they had endured produced so great an effect that from that time many of the friars added to their prayers the formula: “Lord preserve us from the heresy of the Lombards and the ferocity of the Germans.”

This explains how Ugolini at last succeeded in convincing Francis of his duty to take the necessary measures no longer to expose the friars to be hunted down as heretics. It was decided that at the end of the next chapter the missionaries should be armed with a papal brief, which should serve them as ecclesiastical passport. Here is the translation of this document:

“Honorius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to the archbishops, bishops, abbots, deacons, archdeacons, and other ecclesiastical superiors, salutation and the apostolic blessing.

Our dear son, brother Francis, and his companions of the life and the Order of the Brothers Minor, having renounced the vanities of this world to choose a mode of life which has merited the approval of the Roman Church, and to go out after the example of the Apostles to cast in various regions the seed of the word of God, we pray and exhort you by these apostolic letters to receive as good Catholics the friars of the above mentioned society, bearers of these presents, warning you to be favorable to them and treat them with kindness for the honor of God and out of consideration for us.

Given (at Rieti) this third day of the ides of June (June 11, 1219), in the third year of our pontificate.”

[223] It is evident that this bull was calculated to avoid awakening Francis’s susceptibilities. To understand precisely in what it differs from the first letters usually accredited to new Orders it is necessary to compare it with them; that which had instituted the Dominicans had been, like the others, a veritable privilege; here there is nothing of the kind.

The assembly which was opened at Whitsunday of 1219 (May 26) was of extreme importance. It closed the series of those primitive chapters in which the inspiration and fancy of Francis were given free course. Those which followed, presided over by the vicars, have neither the same cheerfulness nor the same charm; the crude glare of full day has driven away the hues of dawn and the indescribable ardors of nature at its awakening.

The summer of 1219 was the epoch fixed by Honorius III for making a new effort in the East,

and directing upon Egypt all the forces of the Crusaders. Francis thought the moment arrived for realizing the project which he had not been able to execute in 1212. Strangely enough, Ugolini who, two years before had hindered his going to France, now left him in entire liberty to carry out this new expedition. Several authors have deemed that Francis, having found in him a true protector, felt [224] himself reassured as to the future of the Order; he might indeed have thought thus, but the history of the troubles which burst out immediately after his departure, the astounding story of the kind reception given by the court of Rome to some meddlers who took the opportunity of his absence to imperil his Order, would suffice to show how much the Church was embarrassed by him, and with what ardor she longed for the transformation of his work. We shall find later on the detailed account of these facts.

It appears that a Romagnol brother Christopher was at this same chapter nominated provincial of Gascony; he lived there after the customs of the early Franciscans, working with his hands, living in a narrow cell made of the boughs of trees and potter's earth.

Egidio set out for Tunis with a few friars, but a great disappointment awaited them there; the Christians of this country, in the fear of being compromised by their missionary zeal, hurried them into a boat and constrained them to recross the sea.

If the date of 1219 for these two missions has little other basis than conjecture, the same is not the case as to the departure of the friars who went to Spain and Morocco. The discovery has recently been made of the account of their last preachings and of their tragic death, made by an eye-witness. This document is all the more [225] precious because it confirms the general lines of the much longer account given by Mark of Lisbon. It would be out of place to give a summary of it here, because it but very indirectly concerns the life of St. Francis, but we must note that these *acta* have beyond their historic value a truly remarkable psychological – one must almost say pathological – significance; never was the mania for martyrdom better characterized than in these long pages, where we see the friars forcing the Mahometans to pursue them and make them win the heavenly palm. The forbearance which Miramolin as well as his fellow religionists at first show gives an idea of the civilization and the good qualities of these infidels, all the higher that very different sentiments would be natural in the vanquished ones on the plains of Tolosa.

It is impossible to call by the name of sermons the collections of rude apostrophes which the missionaries addressed to those whom they wished to convert; at this paroxysm the thirst

for martyrdom becomes the madness of suicide. Is this to say that friars Bernard, Pietro Adjutus, Accurso, and Otho have no right to the admiration and worship with which they have been surrounded? Who would dare say so? Is not devotion always blind? That a furrow should be fecund it must have blood, it must have tears, such as tears as St. Augustine has called the blood of the soul. Ah, it is a great mistake to immolate oneself, for the blood of a single man will not save the world nor even a nation; but it is a still greater mistake not to immolate oneself, for then one lets others be lost, and is oneself lost first of all.

I greet you, therefore, Martyrs of Morocco; you do not regret your madness, I am sure, and if ever some righteous pedant gone astray in the groves of paradise undertakes to demonstrate to you that it would have been better worth while to remain in your own country, [226] and found a worthy family of virtuous laborers, I fancy that Miramolin, there become your best friend, will take the trouble to refute him.

You were mad, but I envy such madness, for you felt that the essential thing in this world is not to serve this ideal or that one, but with all one's soul to serve the ideal which one has chosen.

When, a few months after, the story of their glorious end arrived at Assisi, Francis discerned a feeling of pride among his companions and reproached them in lively terms; he who would so have envied the lot of the martyrs felt himself humbled because God had not judged him worthy to share it. As the story was mingled with some words of eulogy of the founder of the Order, he forbade the further reading of it.

Immediately after the chapter he had himself undertaken a mission of the same kind as he had confided to the Brothers of Morocco, but he had proceeded in it in an entirely different manner: his was not the blind zeal which courts death in a sort of frenzy and forgets all the rest; perhaps he already felt that the persistent effort after the better, the continual immolation of self for truth, is the martyrdom of the strong.

This expedition, which lasted more than a year, is mentioned by the biographers in a few lines. Happily we have a number of other papers regarding it; but their silence suffices to prove the sincerity of the primitive Franciscan authors; if they had wanted to amplify the deeds of their subject, where could they have found an easier opportunity or a more marvellous theme? Francis quitted Portiuncula in the middle of June and went to [227] Ancona, whence the Crusaders were to set sail for Egypt on St. John's Day (June 24th).

Many friars joined him – a fact which was not without its inconveniences for a journey by sea, where they were obliged to depend upon the

charity of the owners of the boats, or of their fellow-travellers.

We can understand Francis's embarrassment on arriving at Ancona and finding himself obliged to leave behind a number of those who so earnestly longed to go with him. The Conformities relate here an incident for which we might desire an earlier authority, but which is certainly very like Francis; he led all his friends to the port and explained to them his perplexities. "The people of the boat," he told them, "refuse to take us all, and I have not the courage to make choice among you; you might think that I do not love you all alike; let us then try to learn the will of God." And he called a child who was playing close by, and the little one, charmed to take the part of Providence put upon him, pointed out with his finger the eleven friars who were to set sail.

We do not know what itinerary they followed. A single incident of the journey has come down to us: that of the chastisement inflicted in the isle of Cyprus on Brother Barbaro, who had been guilty of the fault which the master detested above all others – evil-speaking. He was implacable with regard to the looseness of language so customary among pious folk, and which often made a hell of religious houses apparently the most peaceful. The offence this time appeared to him the more grave for having been uttered in the presence of a stranger, a knight of that district. The latter was stupefied on hearing Francis command the guilty one to eat a lump of ass's dung with lay there, adding: "The [228] mouth which has distilled the venom of hatred against my brother must eat this excrement." Such indignation, no less than the obedience of the unhappy offender, filled him with admiration.

It is very probable, as Wadding has supposed, that the missionaries debarked at St. Jean d'Acre. They arrived there about the middle of July. In the environs of this city, doubtless, Brother Elias had been established for one or two years. Francis there told off a few of his companions, whom he sent to preach in divers directions, and a few days afterward he himself set out for Egypt, where all the effort of the Crusaders were concentrated upon Damietta.

From the first he was heart-broken with the moral condition of the Christian army. Notwithstanding the presence of numerous prelates and of the apostolic legate, it was disorganized for want of discipline. He was so affected by this that when there was talk of battle he felt it his duty to advise against it, predicting that the Christians would infallibly be beaten. No one heeded him, and on August 29th the Crusaders, having attacked the Saracens, were terribly routed.

His predictions won him a marvellous suc-

cess. It must be owned that the ground was better prepared than any other to receive the new seed; not surely that piety was alive there, but in this mass of men come together from every corner of Europe, the troubled, the seers, the enlightened ones, those who thirsted for righteousness and truth, were elbowed by rascals, adventurers, [22] those who were greedy for gold and plunder, capable of much good or much evil, the sport of fleeting impulses, loosed from the bonds of the family, of property, of the habits which usually twine themselves about a man's will, and only by exception permit a complete change in his manner of life; those among them who were sincere and had come there with generous purposes were, so to speak, predestined to enter the peaceful army of the Brothers Minor. Francis was to win in this mission fellow-laborers who would assure the success of his work in the countries of northern Europe.

Jacques de Vitry, in a letter to friends written a few days later, thus describes the impression produced on him by Francis:

"I announce to you that Master Reynier, Prior of St. Michael, has entered the Order of the Brothers Minor, an Order which is multiplying rapidly on all sides, because it imitates the primitive Church and follows the life of the Apostles in everything. The master of these Brothers is named Brother Francis: he is so lovable that he is venerated by everyone. Having come into our army, he has not been afraid, in his zeal for the faith, to go to that of our enemies. For days together he announced the word of God to the Saracens, but with little success; then the sultan, King of Egypt, asked him in secret to entreat God to reveal to him, by some miracle, which is the best religion. Colin, the Englishman, our clerk, has entered the same Order, as also two others of our companions, Michael and Dom Matthew, to whom I had given the rectorship of the Sainte Chapelle. Cantor and Henry have done the same, and still others whose names I have forgotten."

The long and enthusiastic chapter which the same author gives to the Brothers Minor in his great work on the Occident is too diffuse to find a place here. It is a living and accurate picture of the early times of the Order; in it Francis's sermon before the sultan is again related. It was written at a period when the friars had still neither [230] monasteries nor churches, and when the chapters were held once or twice a year; this gives us a date anterior to 1223, and probably even before 1221. We have here, therefore, a verification of the narratives of Thomas of Celano and the Three Companions, and they find in it their perfect confirmation.

As to the interviews between Francis and the sultan, it is prudent to keep to the narratives of Jacques de Vitry and William of Tyre. Although

the latter wrote at a comparatively late date (between 1275 and 1295), he followed a truly historic method, and founded his work on authentic documents; we see that he knows no more than Jacques de Vitry of the proposal said to have been made by Francis to pass through a fire if the priests of Mahomet would do as much, intending so to establish the superiority of Christianity.

We know how little such an appeal to signs is characteristic of St. Francis. Perhaps the story, which comes from Bonaventura, is born of a misconception. The sultan, like a new Pharaoh, may have laid it upon the strange preacher to prove his mission by miracles. However this may be, Francis and his companions were treated with great consideration, a fact the more meritorious that hostilities were then at their height.

Returned to the Crusading camp, they remained there until after the taking of Damietta (November 5, 1219). This time the Christians were victorious, but perhaps the heart of the *gospel man* bled more for this victory than for the defeat of August 29th. The shocking condition of the city, which the victors found piled with heaps of dead bodies, the quarrels over the sharing of booty, the sale of the wretched creatures who had not succumbed to the pestilence, all these scenes of terror, cruelty, greed, caused him profound horror. The "human beast" was let loose, the apostle's voice could no more make itself heard in the midst of the savage clamor than that of a live-saver over a raging ocean.

He set out for Syria and the Holy Places. How gladly would we follow him in this pilgrimage, accompany him in thought through Judea and Galilee, to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, to Gethsemane! What was said to him by the stable where the Son of Mary was born, the work-shop where he toiled, the olive-trees where he accepted the bitter cup? Alas! the documents here suddenly fail us. Setting out from Damietta very shortly after the siege (November 5, 1219) he may easily have been at Bethlehem by Christmas. But we know nothing, absolutely nothing, except that his sojourn was more prolonged than had been expected.

Some of the Brothers who were present at Portiuncula at the chapter-general of 1220 (Whitsunday, May 17th) had time enough to go to Syria and still find Francis there; they could hardly have arrived much earlier than the end of June. What had he been doing those eight months? Why had he not gone home to preside at the chapter? Had he been ill? Had he been belated by some mission? Our information is too slight to permit us even to venture upon conjecture.

Angelo Clareno relates that the Sultan of Egypt, [232] touched by his preaching, gave command that he and all his friars should have free access to the Holy Sepulchre without the payment of any tribute.

Bartholomew of Pisa on his part says incidentally that Francis, having gone to preach in Antioch and its environs, the Benedictines of the Abbey of the Black Mountain, eight miles from that city, joined the Order in a body, and gave up all their property to the Patriarch.

These indications are meagre and isolated indeed, and the second is to be accepted only with reserve. On the other hand, we have detailed information of what went on in Italy during Francis's absence. Brother Giordano's chronicle, recently discovered and published, throws all the light that could be desired upon a plot laid against Francis by the very persons whom he had commissioned to take his place at Portiuncula, and this, if not with the connivance of Rome and the cardinal protector, at least without their opposition. These events had indeed been narrated by Angelo Clareno, but the undisguised feeling which breathes through all his writings and their lack of accuracy had sufficed with careful critics to leave them in doubt. How could it be supposed that in the very lifetime of St. Francis the vicars whom he had instituted could take advantage of his absence to overthrow his work? How could it be that the pope, who during this period was sojourning at Rieti, how that Ugolini, who was still nearer, did not impose silence on these agitators?

Now that all the facts come anew to light, not in an [233] oratorical and impassioned account, but brief, precise, cutting, dated, with every appearance of notes taken day by day, we must perforce yield to evidence.

Does this give us reason clamorously to condemn Ugolino and the pope? I do not think so. They played a part which is not to their honor, but their intentions were evidently excellent. If the famous aphorism that the end justifies the means is criminal where one examines his own conduct, it becomes the first duty in judging that of others. Here are the facts:

On July 25th, about one month after Francis's departure for Syria, Ugolini, who was at Perugia, laid upon the Clarisses of Monticelli (Florence), Sienna, Perugia, and Lucca that which his friend had so obstinately refused for the friars, the Benedictine Rule.

At the same time, St. Dominic, returning from Spain full of new ardor after his retreat in the grotto of Segovia, and fully decided to adopt for his Order the rule of poverty, was strongly encouraged in this purpose and overwhelmed with favors. Honorius III saw in him the providential man of the time, the reformer of the monastic Orders; he showed him unusual attentions, going so far, for example, as to transfer to him a group of monks belonging to other Orders, whom he appointed to act as Dominic's lieutenants on the preaching tours which he believed it to be his duty to undertake, and to serve, under his direction, an apprenticeship in popular preaching.

That Ugolini was the inspiration of all this, the bulls [234] are here to witness. His ruling purpose at that time was so clearly to direct the two new Orders that he chose a domicile with this end in view, and we find him continually either at Perugia – that is to say, within three leagues of Portiuncula – or at Bologna, the stronghold of the Dominicans.

It now becomes manifest that just as the fraternity instituted by Francis was truly the fruit of his body, flesh of his flesh, so does the Order of the Preaching Friars emanate from the papacy, and St. Dominic is only its putative father. This character is expressed in one word by one of the most authoritative of contemporary annalists, Burchard of Ursperg (+1226). “The pope,” he says, “*instituted* and confirmed the Order of Preachers.”

Francis on his journey in the Orient had taken for special companion a friar whom we have not yet met, Pietro di Catana or *dei Cattani*. Was he a native of the town of Catana? There is no precise indication of it. It appears more probable that he belonged to the noble family *dei Cattani*, already known to Francis, and of which Orlando, Count of Chiusi in Casentino, who gave [235] him the Verna, was a member. However that may be, we must not confound him with the Brother Pietro who assumed the habit in 1209, at the same time with Bernardo of Quintavalle, and died shortly afterward. Tradition, in reducing these two men to a single personage, was influenced not merely by the similarity of the names, but also by the very natural desire to increase the prestige of one who in 1220-1221 was to play an important part in the direction of the Order.

At the time of his departure for the East Francis had left two vicars in his place, the Brothers Matteo of Narni and Gregorio of Naples. The former was especially charged to remain at Portiuncula to admit postulants; Gregorio of Naples, on the other hand, was to pass through Italy to console the Brothers.

The two vicars began at once to overturn everything. It is inexplicable how men still under the influence of their first fervor for a Rule which in the plenitude of their liberty they had promised to obey could have [236] dreamed of such innovations if they had not been urged on and upheld by those in high places. To alleviate the vow of poverty and to multiply observances were the two points toward which their efforts were bent.

In appearance it was a trifling matter, in reality it was much, for it was the first movement of the old spirit against the new. It was the effort of men who unconsciously, I am willing to think, made religion an affair of rite and observance, instead of seeing in it, like St. Francis, the conquest of the liberty which makes us free in all things, and leads each soul to obey that divine and mysterious power which the flowers of the fields adore, which the birds of the air bless, which the symphony of the stars praises, and

which Jesus of Nazareth called *Abba*, that is to say, Father.

The first Rule was excessively simple in the matter of facts. The friars were to abstain from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays; they might add Mondays and Saturdays, but only on Francis's special authorization. The vicars and their adherents complicated this rule in a surprising manner. At the chapter-general held in Francis's absence (May 17, 1220), they decided, first, that in times of feasting the friars were not to provide meat, but if it were offered to them spontaneously they were to eat it; second, that all should fast on Mondays as well as Wednesdays and Fridays; third, that on Mondays and Saturdays they should abstain from milk products unless by chance the adherents of the Order brought some to them.

These beginnings bear witness also to an effort to imitate the ancient Orders, not without the vague hope that they would be substituted for them. Brother Giordano has preserved to us only this decision of the chapter of 1220, but the expressions of which he makes use sufficiently prove that it was far from being the only one, and that the malcontents had desired, as in the chapters of Cîteaux and Monte Cassino, to put forth veritable constitutions.

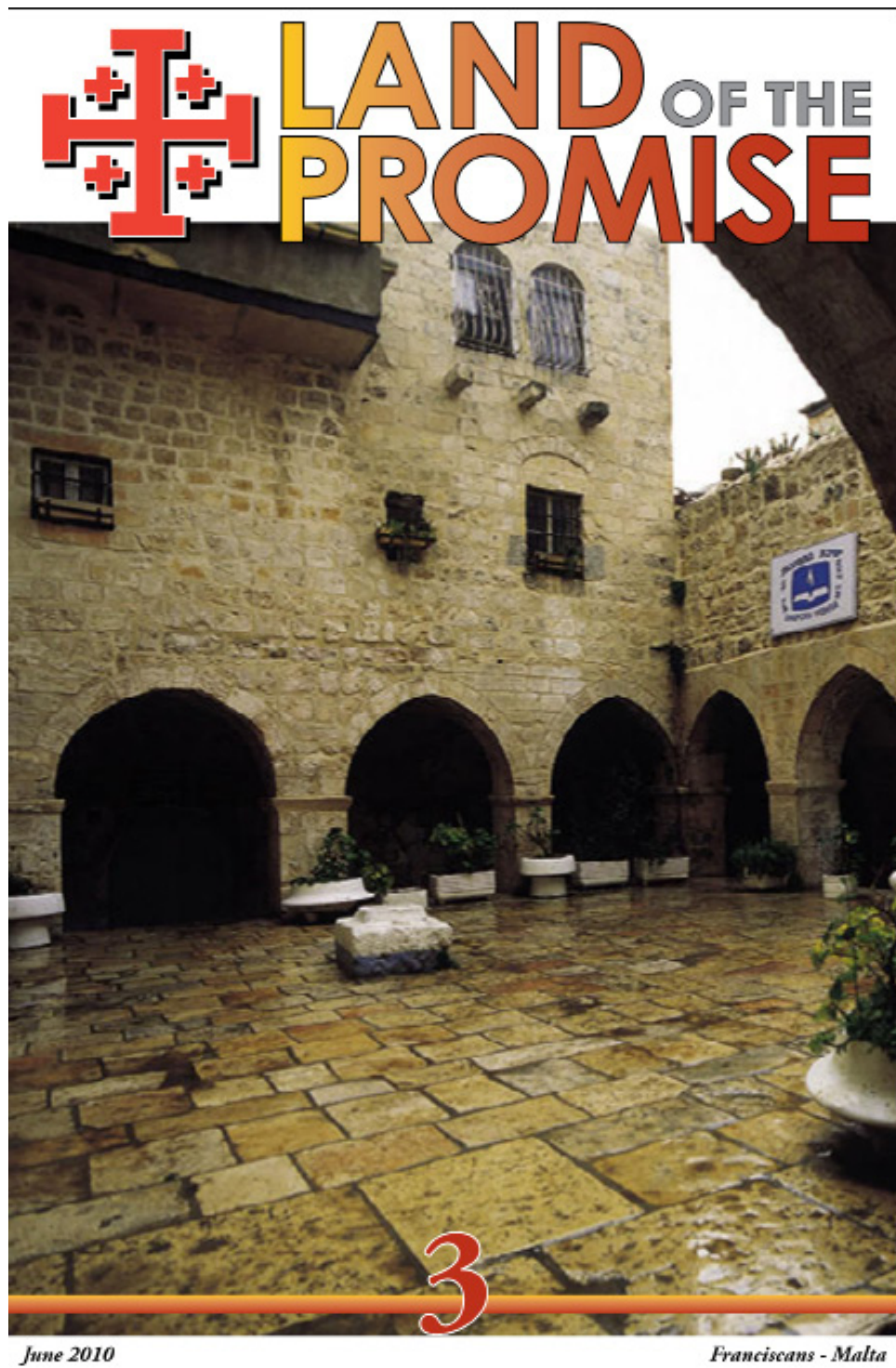
These modifications of the Rule did not pass, however, without arousing the indignation of a part of the chapter; a lay brother made himself their eager messenger, and set out for the East to entreat Francis to return without delay, to take the measures called for by the circumstances.

There were also other causes of disquiet. Brother Philip, a Zealot of the Clarisses, had made haste to secure for them from Ugolini the privileges which had already been under consideration.

A certain Brother Giovanni di Conpello had gathered together a great number of lepers of both sexes, and written a Rule, intending to form with them a new Order. He had afterward presented himself before the supreme pontiff with a train of these unfortunates to obtain his approbation.

Many other distressing symptoms, upon which Brother Giordano does not dwell, had manifested themselves. The report of Francis's death had even been spread abroad, so that the whole Order was disturbed, divided, and in the greatest peril. The dark presentiments which [238] Francis seems to have had were exceeded by the reality. The messenger who brought him the sad news found him in Syria, probably at St. Jean d'Acre. He at once embarked with Elias, Pietro di Catana, Ceasar of Speyer, and a few others, and returned to Italy in a vessel bound for Venice, where he might easily arrive toward the end of July.





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The Franciscan commitment towards the Holy Land...

“The friars are to have a special place in their hearts for the Land made holy by the earthly life of the Son of God and his poor Mother, Land venerated by St. Francis. There, in a special way, they are to be witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom of peace. The task of taking care of the Holy Land, committed to our Order by the Holy See, consists in the following: guarding the holy places, promoting divine worship within them, fostering the devotion of pilgrims, carrying out the task of evangelisation there, exercising pastoral activity in accordance with the spirituality of the Order, and establishing and conducting apostolic works. The Custody of the Holy Land is an international entity governed by the Custos or Guardian of Mount Sion. Elected by the General Definitory for six years, he rules the Custody with ordinary power in accordance with the General Constitutions and the Statutes. The international character of the Holy Land, as well as the work of inculturation, is to be fostered with every care, and each Province is always to seek to have one or another friar there. All the Provinces of the Order are to foster the activity of the Commissaries of the Holy Land in accordance with the General Statutes.”

General Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor

*The Holy Land
Articles 122-125*

Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones.
CantAudPov	Cantico Audite Poverelle.
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis.
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi.
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data.
EpAnt	Epistola ad sanctum Antonium.
EpCler I	Epistola ad Clericos (Redactio prior).
EpCler II	Epistola ad Clericos (Red. posterior).
EpCust I	Epistola ad Custodes I.
EpCust II	Epistola ad Custodes II.
EpFid I	Epistola ad Fideles I.
EpFid II	Epistola ad Fideles II.
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem.
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum.
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa.
EpRect	Epistola ad populorum rectores.
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei.
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster.
FormViv	Forma vivendi sanctae Clarae data.
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius RegulaeNB.
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas dicendae.
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini.
OrCruc	Oratio ante crucifixum.
RegB	Regula bullata.
RegNB	Regula non bullata.
RegEr	Regula pro eremitoriis data.
SalBMV	Salutatio beatae Mariae Virginis.
SalVirt	Salutatio virtutum.
Test	Testamentum.
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Clarae scripta.

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

1C	Tommaso da Celano, Vita Sancti Francisci.
LCh	Celano, Legenda ad usum chori.
2C	Celano, Memoriale in Desiderio Animae.
3C	Celano, Tractatus de Miraculis S. Francisci.
LJS	Julian of Speyer, Vita Sancti Francisci.
OR	Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci.
AP	Anonimo Perugino.
L3C	Leggenda dei Tre Compagni.
CA	Compilatio Assisiensis.
LMj	S. Bonaventura, Legenda Maior S. Francisci.
LMn	S. Bonaventura, Legenda minor S. Francisci.
SP	Speculum Perfectionis.
SC	Sacrum commercium S. Francisci.
ABF	Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius.
Fior	Fioretti di San Francesco.

Sources for the Life of St. Clare

BICl	Blessing of St. Clare.
1-4LAg	Letters to St. Agnes of Prague..
LCl	Legend of St. Clare.
PC	Acts of the Process of Canonization.
PrPov	Privilege of Poverty.
RegCl	Rule of St. Clare.
TestCl	Testament of St. Clare.

Spiritu u Hajja

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Front Cover: Boats on Lake Trasimeno