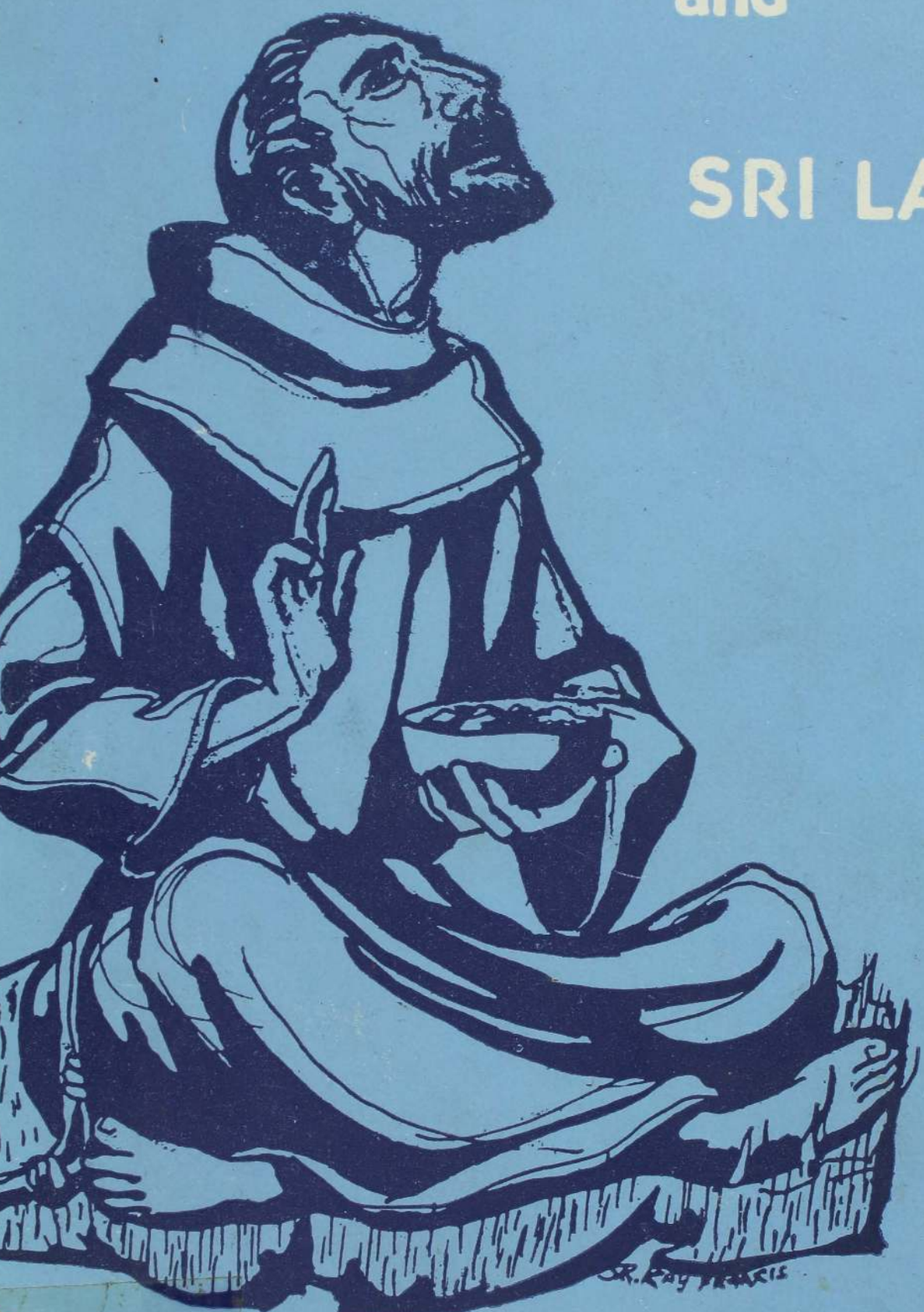
FRANCISCANS

and

SRI LANKA



Edited by

W. L. A. DON PETER

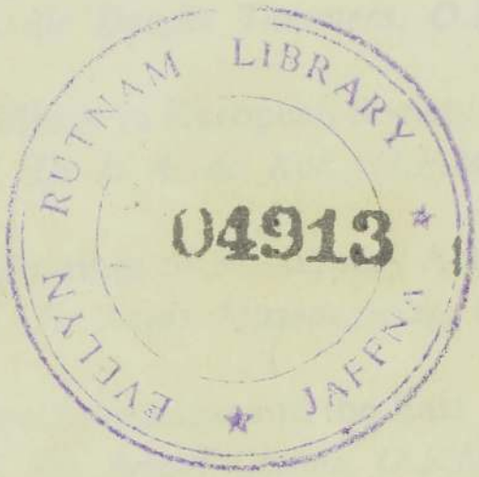
IN THE WAKE of Portugal's political dealings with Sri Lanka, Franciscans brought the Catholic faith into the country about the middle of the sixteenth century. For sixty years they were the only missionaries in the island, and even when other orders (Jesuits, Dominicans, Augustinians) joined them, they continued to be the most numerous and had charge of the greater part of the country. The Franciscans can therefore be rightly called the founders of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka. The present book, published to commemorate the eighth centenary of the birth of St Francis of Assisi, founder of the Order, is a study of the labours of Franciscans in Sri Lanka set against the historical background of the life and work of the founder, the beginnings of the Order, its work in Europe, its missionary activities in Africa, its missions to the Mongolian Empire, and its work on the neighbouring subcontinent of India. This is a work of a team of scholars, Sri Lankan and foreign.

Rs 45/-

Saint Francis of Assisi

Detail of a fresco by Cimabue (died c. 1302)
in the Lower Church of St Francis at Assisi

FRANCISCANS AND SRI LANKA



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W. L. A. DON PETER

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PREFACE

THIS BOOK was born of a friendship—between a Dutch Franciscan, Arnulf Camps, and myself, a Sri Lankan diocesan priest. Thirty years ago, as young priests, both of us were engaged in postgraduate research—Fr Arnulf in the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, for his doctorate in Theology, and myself in the University of London, England, for the M.A. and Ph.D. in Education.

Fr Arnulf had come to London one summer to collect material for his thesis, *Jerome Xavier S.J. and the Muslims of the Mogul Empire*,[1] when he met me, for the first time. That meeting was the beginning of a friendship that has lasted all these years. Subsequently I visited him in Fribourg and had a most delightful Christmas (December 1953) in the Franciscan monastery there.

Several years later, when Fr Arnulf was Professor at the Regional Seminary in Karachi, Pakistan, he came to Sri Lanka and stayed a couple of months in the country. He has been visiting Sri Lanka after that too. He has collected information and written about the only Franciscan known to have been in Sri Lanka since the early Franciscans of the Portuguese period were banished from the country by the Dutch in 1658—Fr Felice Zoppi da Cannobio, who was a missionary in Kandy from 1853 to 1857.[2]

When I first noticed, way back in 1978, that the eighth centenary of the birth of St Francis of Assisi would occur in 1982, I felt that we in Sri Lanka, who owe so much to the Franciscans as the founders of the Catholic Church in this country, should celebrate the occasion in some way.

It struck me that it would be a good idea to bring out a book for the occasion, a book that would provide information to both Catholics and those of other faiths in this country, not only about the work of Franciscans in Sri Lanka but also about St Francis himself and the order he founded and the activities of its members in Europe and elsewhere, so that their work in Sri Lanka could be viewed against the historical background of the entire Franciscan movement.

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[1] Published in 1957. St Paul's Press, Fribourg, Switzerland.

[2] "Father Felice Zoppi da Cannobio, OFM, in Sri Lanka: 1853-1857. Pioneer of Catholic Education in Kandy," *Don Peter Felicitation Volume*, Colombo, 1983, pp. 11-17.

It dawned on me, moreover, that it would enhance the value of the book if it is the work of a team of writers, each taking an aspect of the Franciscan story according to his specialization.

I had of course to depend on local writers for the part of the book that would deal with the work of Franciscans in Sri Lanka, but hoped very much to have the collaboration of scholars from abroad to write the earlier chapters.

Then there was the question of funds for the publication of the book.

In December 1978 I wrote to Fr Arnulf about my plans and the problems. I sought his assistance especially to obtain the co-operation of foreign scholars and to find a source of financial help to meet the cost of printing.

Fr Arnulf heartily welcomed my plans, offered to write one of the chapters himself, and suggested to me names of Franciscans, well known as authorities in their respective fields, who could be invited to contribute the introductory chapters I had in mind. When later I contacted them, everyone readily agreed to help, in spite of all of them being busy men—which was no small encouragement to me. I wish to say how very grateful I am to them for their collaboration in this project.

It did not take long for them to send me their contributions, but there was delay in getting the chapters that were to be written by local writers ready. In the meantime there occurred two events, one joyful, the other sad, in relation to the foreign contributors.

Early last year Prof. Dr J. A. de Kok, Professor of Church History in the Catholic Theological Faculty of the University of Utrecht, Holland, was appointed Bishop Auxiliary to Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, Archbishop of Utrecht. Although the appointment may be a loss to historical research and scholarship, we are happy indeed that Prof. de Kok has been raised to episcopal rank and given the opportunity to serve the Church in Holland on a higher plane.

We have to record also the sad event of the passing away of one of our contributors—Dr Achilles Meersman. He had been a missionary for many years in Brazil, Pakistan and India and was a keen researcher and prolific writer on Franciscan history. He was in fact regarded as the greatest authority on the history of the Franciscans in India and South-East Asia. He collaborated with

Bishop Edmund Peiris in bringing out an English translation of the chapters relating to Sri Lanka in Paulo da Trindade's *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*—which translation was published in 1972 as *Early Christianity in Ceylon: a 17th Century Narrative*. More recently, in addition to the chapter he wrote for this book, he contributed a learned article to a volume published to felicitate the present writer.[3] We deeply regret his death.

The local writers too lent me their support very willingly. For the main chapter on the work of Franciscans in Sri Lanka I had to turn to Dr Edmund Peiris, Bishop Emeritus of Chilaw. In spite of other commitments he very graciously came to my help. The chapter on the follow-up of the work of Franciscans by others who came after them was written by Fr Claude Lawrence, a former seminary professor of Church History whose pupil I once was. The only layman who has contributed to this volume, Mr O. M. da Silva Cosme, a keen student of history, especially of the Portuguese period, has written the chapter that provides the historical background to the first arrival of Franciscans in Sri Lanka. My thanks to all of them for their kind cooperation.

With regard to the question of funds for the printing of the book, Fr Arnulf suggested that I approach the Provincial of the Franciscans in Holland, who at the time was Fr Th. Simons. When I wrote to him on the subject in June 1980, he responded very readily and generously. He sent me a substantial donation, adding half-jokingly, "We the Dutch would like to make up in some way for the damage our forefathers inflicted on the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka." We are very much indebted to Fr Simons for his magnanimous gesture which made the publication of this book possible.

Finally I cannot thank Fr Arnulf enough for the assistance he has so cordially and interestedly given me to make a dream come true.

I hope this book, the fruit of the joint efforts of many persons, Sri Lankan and foreign, Franciscan and non-Franciscan, clerical

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[3] "Non-Portuguese Franciscans in the Padroado Mission of Sri Lanka," *Don Peter Felicitation Volume*, pp. 181-188.

and lay, will be, even in a small way, a worthy Sri Lankan memorial of the eighth centenary of the birth of the great Saint of Assisi whose sons planted the Catholic faith in this country.

W. L. A. Don Peter

Aquinas College,
Colombo-8, Sri Lanka.
29 June 1983.

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CHAPTER I

FRANCIS OF ASSISI, THE MAN AND HIS IDEALS

By Prof. Dr Deodat Tummers, O.F.M.

When he died in 1226, "a simple and illiterate man" as he called himself, he had left his mark on the world and on the Church of his day: his influence would be felt for centuries to come. We feel it up to the present time, but we have still not really found the reason why. Or have we? Enthusiastic followers and devotees have given him a variety of names, and there is perhaps no Saint about whom so many articles and books have been written as about him. It would seem almost presumptuous to attempt yet another description, however short and unpretentious this attempt may be.

"What was passing from the world was a person," says Chesterton, "a poet, an outlook on life like a light that was never after on sea or on land; a thing not to be replaced or repeated while the earth endures....We can say with almost as deep a certainty, that the stars that passed above that gaunt and wasted corpse, stark upon the rocky floor, had for once in all their shining circles around the world of labouring humanity, looked down upon a happy man."

Had not Celano, the first biographer, said about Francis that he went to meet death singing?

He had indeed found the secret of happiness, and all the world is in search of that same secret, in the very same way as it is in search of and crying out for peace. Happiness and peace are very close and akin to each other and in reality they always come from the same source: sacrifice.

Even the gentle and joyful Francis could say and do frightening things sometimes. Listen to one of his Admonitions: "What have you to be proud of? If you were so clever and learned that you knew everything and could speak every language so that the things of heaven were an open book to you, still you could not boast of that. Any of the devils knew more about the things of heaven, and knows more about the things of earth, than any human being, even one who might have received a special revelation of the highest wisdom. If you were the most handsome and the richest

man in the world, and could work wonders and drive out devils, all that would be something extrinsic to you; it would not belong to you and you could not boast about it. But there is one thing of which we can all boast: we can boast of our humiliations and of taking up daily the holy cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ." It is this Admonition which Francis worked out and dramatized in his Dialogue—with Brother Leo—about Perfect Joy.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Pietro Bernardone, Francis' father, had made a little fortune as a cloth-merchant in the town of Assisi in Italy. He had made it because he was a hard worker and a shrewd businessman. Now he had more money than many of the nobility of Assisi. During one of his business trips—in 1181 or 82—which took him all the way to France, a son was born to him. The boy's mother—Donna Pica—promptly had him baptized and named him Giovanni. When his father returned from France, he re-baptized the little fellow and called him "little Frenchman": Francesco.

When the time arrived Francis was sent to the school of the Canons of San Giorgio where he learned to read and write, a bit of arithmetic and some Latin for the understanding of the Liturgy of the Church. Writing did not come easy to him, and his Latin is interspersed with Umbrian words and expressions, which were much more alive to him. His father's house was near the municipal square, which was the hub of town life, the market-place and gathering place, the place also where troubadours would halt once in a while and jugglers would enthrall the children with their songs and their antics. Francis was there for sure when such a thing happened, and afterwards he too would prefer to sing in French, the language of the troubadours.

Pietro Bernardone put all his stakes on his eldest son. Another boy was born after Francis, but when he grew up he never showed as much promise as his elder brother. He missed the zest, the insight and the intuition of Francis.

Francis was the hope and the future of Bernardone's fortune. The father had always been a good provider, but he had never learned to be a good spender. Because he wanted to show that he could afford it easily enough, he was very lavish in providing Francis with pocket-money. Francis allowed that money to slip

through his fingers, and with a group of friends he formed the jet-set of the town. He himself was the leader, the charming prince, attracting many also of the impoverished nobility, whose pockets were usually empty. It was easy for Francis to picture himself as a great man, as a knight, and often he dreamed about it.

Francis was not particularly "religious" in his early days, but most probably he carried more "nobility" than many of the "noble" youngsters who sponged on him. Valour, courtesy, gallantry and fine manners were things that came natural to him. Yet, officially he was not part of the "big people", he had no blue blood, and this duality has been with him all his life. For the time being knighthood remained a dream: perhaps one day it would become a reality. He would prove himself and make himself worthy of it.

KNIGHTHOOD OR BEYOND ?

He was a merchant's son and when he was big enough to help his father, he did not do too badly at all in the profession. His heart, however, was mostly elsewhere. In the year 1200, at the age of eighteen, he took part in the storming of the Rocca, the German stronghold that sat as a symbol of oppression on top of Assisi. Two years later he was engaged with all the other able men of his hometown in a war against Perugia, the neighbouring town, that perched, like Assisi itself, on its own mountain top. The battle was not very successful for Assisi, and with many others, Francis was made a prisoner of war. Prison life made him sick, but he was soon released, perhaps because his rich father was able to pay the ransom. But something had happened to him in prison, and more was to happen during the long period of convalescence. It had started a process of reflection and it made him see the futility of the life which he had led up till then.

He tries to brush it off and starts off on a new venture by joining an army on its way to southern Italy. Hardly out of his hometown, in Spoleto, he is laid up with a fever, and in his dream he hears a voice calling him: "Francis, what is more honourable, to follow the master or the servant?" It never took long for him to make a decision, so he went back straight to Assisi. Not a very glorious homecoming! It was a decision that asked for a lot of courage in a young man like him.

Again his search is pursued with more determination than ever before. He would wander off, outside the town, to be all by himself, to think, to pray. "He took counsel with God alone," says Celano, "and he prayed devoutly that the eternal and true God would direct his way and teach him to do his will." Here is indeed a period in Francis' life about which we know very little. Francis had a companion, who went along with him to a certain cave near Assisi....but in the cave, where he tried to find God, Francis wanted to be alone. He did not as much as confide in his friend about the real purpose of those visits. Saint Bonaventure is more explicit about those early experiences of Francis: "Then Jesus Christ appeared to him....and he realized immediately that the words of the Gospel were addressed to him: If you have a mind to come my way, renounce yourself, take up your cross and follow me." The fact remains that this obscure period in Francis' life was one of true and intense religious experience, even though, notwithstanding Bonaventure's report, it did not show him the way. Not as yet.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

Then there came a day that brought him a bit closer to the solution of his dilemma. Or so he thought. Whilst praying in the church of San Damiano, on the slope outside Assisi, he heard a voice from the crucifix: "Francis, don't you see that my house is going to fall into ruins? Do something about it and repair it." Again he did not give himself much time to think: he just looked around. Indeed, the church was in a miserable state—he would do something about it. He became a stone-mason.

Don't go so hard on Pietro Bernardone when they tell you that he got mad about the latest craze of his son. To become a mason was bad enough, but to go begging in the streets for stones was just about the limit. And as if all that was not enough, one day Francis loaded some bales of cloth from his father's shop on a horse, and rode to Foligno, where he sold everything: cloth and horse. The money he wanted to give to the priest at San Damiano's....Was this respectable merchant's son going to be talked about as a wastrel and a thief?

It was actually an act of despair with his renegade son when Bernardone had him summoned before the Bishop of Assisi.... First he had tried the civil authority, but Francis claimed to be dedicated to the Church and to the service of God, and refused to appear before the judge: only the bishop would be his judge.

The outcome of the trial was as unexpected as it was tragic for both the parties involved. In a spontaneous gesture, Francis took off all his clothes, and gave back to his father whatever he had received from him: "Up till now, Pietro Bernardone was my father; from now on I can truly say: Our Father in heaven."

It was the conclusion of a period of struggle and of doubt, the result of a long and painful process. Tragic in many ways, also for Francis, it was also the happy beginning of something great and something beautiful, the fulfilment of a dream. Can dreams be that painful? In their outcome, in their fulfilment? For sheer drama this episode of Francis' life stands out among all the stories of his conversion. It has caused him no end of pain, of heartbreak—so much so, that he enlisted the services of an old beggar, whenever he had to pass through the town. If by chance his father happened to meet him and utter a curse, the old beggar had to pronounce a blessing. Bernardone had built his world—a fortune, acquired by hard work and skilful dealing with people. It was his wealth and it was his pride. Francis had gradually moved into another world—where money and wealth were of little value. He had always been easy in spending it. Now he just did not want it any longer. He had exchanged the friends of his youth for another set of friends, which took him still further away from his father's home....he found them in the leprosarium near Assisi.

THE GRACE OF BEGINNING TO DO PENANCE

When at the end of his life Francis remembers his conversion and the way God led him, he never refers back to the painful episode with his father in front of the Bishop. He does not recall any of the dreams or visions which we have mentioned, but he does recall his encounter with the lepers. It looks as if in his own mind that was the definite turning-point in his life: "This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance."

We do not know in what year that first crucial encounter with the lepers took place, but it stands out most vividly in Francis' own mind as the beginning of his life with God. It tells us also that for Francis conversion to God was the same as conversion to the least of Christ's brethren. He says in his Testament: "This is how God inspired me, Brother Francis, to embark upon a life of penance. When I was in sin, the sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure; but then God himself led me into their company, and I had pity on them. When I had once become acquainted with them, what had previously nauseated me became a source of spiritual and physical consolation for me. After that I did not wait long before leaving the world."

His biographers tell the story of a meeting with a leper on the road outside Assisi. Francis' first reaction was to run....to get away from contagion, from what was considered unclean. But somehow the grace of God got hold of him, and he turned back, got off his horse, and embraced the poor outcast. From then on, he became a frequent visitor to the leprosarium, and with his own hands he washed and bandaged their wounds, helped them with alms and cared for them as best he could. From those whom God wants for his work, he will first ask that they forget themselves and overcome the natural aversion for what is hard and difficult, specially when a brother is in need. Learn to consider everyone, even the most abject of creatures, as your brother and sister. It is one of the paradoxes of the Gospel that in doing so one can find true joy and happiness. Francis testifies to that kind of happiness.

THAT IS WHAT I WANT TO DO

Repairing dilapidated churches, nursing the lepers. Was that to be his way of life? After San Damiano, Francis had restored another chapel in the town, and now he was about to finish his third one: the chapel of Our Lady of the Angels in the forest that covered the plain of Assisi. The chapel really belonged to the Benedictines and it had been built on a small portion of land, from which it got the name Portiuncula. When that chapel was ready again for use, repaired and cleaned out, Francis asked a priest to come and say Mass there.

It happened to be the feast of Saint Mathias, apostle, and the priest mumbled the words in Latin, also the gospel. Francis had

learned enough Latin to understand, and the holy text hit him as if it were meant for him alone:

> "As you go, proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. You received without charge, give without charge. Provide yourself with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purse, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the workman deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and stay with him till you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, let your peace descend upon it; if it does not, let your peace come back to you." (Math. 10: 7 ff).

That was it. Francis felt that these words had somehow an echo in his innermost being, and that the purpose of his life was really becoming clearer to him. To go and preach. Announce peace to the world. He would travel light as is becoming for an apostle of Jesus Christ. He would travel light as is convenient and more practical for any pilgrim.

Not trusting as yet his own judgement, he asked for an explanation from the priest. The man confirmed what Francis had understood: that was it indeed, that was what Christ asked from a true follower. With his usual impetuosity Francis kicked off his sandals, whilst he was already fumbling with the buckle of his leather belt. For sometime now he had been wearing a kind of hermits' dress, which had been given him by a friend in Gubbio. Away now with all that was not absolutely necessary. A rough tunic, held together by a piece of rope, should suffice for his clothing, and off he went to bring the Good News.

He gave up his job as restorer of churches for another more difficult job: to restore the Church of God, by bringing it back to the observance of the Gospel.

To convert the world, one has to be in the midst of it, and Francis went off on the roads and into the fields, into the squares of the towns and wherever people would gather, and with his melodious voice he spoke to them about God's love and man's ingratitude, of the need therefore to be converted. It became a singing rather than speaking, and people listened, and they heard him say that the way to happiness and peace is the way of the Gospel, of conversion

to God and towards one's fellowmen. He spoke from the heart and from the experience of his own life; and every sermon started with a wish: May the Lord give you peace. "God revealed that form of greeting to me," we read in his Testament.

WHEN GOD GAVE ME BROTHERS

Francis did not ask others to join him in his way of life; he never asked for followers for himself, but for Christ only. His way of life, however, and his preaching started making a deep impression, at least on a few. The first one to be attracted to the same kind of life was a gentle merchant: Bernard of Quintavalle. Being a businessman, he did not straightaway jump at the idea, but he made it a point first to get to know Francis a bit better, specially in his changed way of life.

Once convinced of Francis' sincerity and of his special mission from God, he asked to become his first companion: "Francis, if someone had in his possession many goods, which actually belonged to his master, and after enjoying them for many years he did not want them any longer, what should he do?"

"Give them back to the master to whom they belonged."

"That is why I want to give all my earthly goods to the poor, for the love of God who has given them to me. I want to distribute them as it seems best to you, because I have decided for myself to leave the world and follow you in everything you say."

Francis was happy with the decision, but on the other hand he was a bit frightened. "In everything you say..?" Who was he to tell others how to live as he did?

He had never asked for followers: God just gave them to him. "When the Lord gave me brothers," he would write afterwards.

Again the Gospel of the Lord had to bring a solution: "Bernardo, what you ask is such a big thing that we have to ask advice from our Lord Jesus Christ himself. We'll go to the bishop's house and after Mass we pray till the hour of Tierce, and we ask God.... whilst opening the Missal....to show us what kind of life we should choose."

Somewhere on the way a third man joined them, and when they opened the Gospel-book at random, three times, this is what they read:

"If you want to be perfect, go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor—then come and follow me."
"Take nothing for your journey."
"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself."

Again, the Gospel texts found an immediate echo in Francis' own heart: "Brothers, this is our life and our rule, and of all those who want to join us: let us go and do what we have heard."

The three of them now set out on what Celano calls: the mission of peace. Soon afterwards Giles asked to be admitted, and Philip, and several others, till their number had grown to about a dozen. There was nothing big and nothing official yet about the group, but all were eager to take up with Francis "the mission of peace." "Let us go brothers, two and two as the Gospel says, and announce peace to the world." To preach the Gospel and to announce peace was for him one and the same thing.

They did not limit themselves any longer to Assisi and its immediate surroundings, but gradually ventured further away. The year 1208 finds them in Poggio Bustone in the valley of Rieti. It is there that Francis, praying high up on the mountain, is assured that "all his sins had been forgiven." It was as if a chapter was closed and something new was about to begin. Celano says it very briefly: "Renewed in the spirit, he seemed changed into another man." With a renewed confidence he dared to look at the future of the little band that had gathered around him: "I have seen the roads filled with their great numbers....from almost every nation. Frenchmen are coming, Spaniards are hastening. Germans and Englishmen are running and a very great multitude of others, speaking various tongues, are hurrying....wanting to live with us in the habit of our way of life and under the rule of our blessed religion."

God had given him brothers, and God himself had written the opening words of a new chapter in Francis' life. He had made him the leader of that strange and as yet untried band of apostles, who surprised everyone with a wish that sounded like a prayer: "The Lord give you peace."

Perhaps Francis himself did not feel as yet like being the "head" of a new religious group, but he felt a new confidence that he could make it together with them, just by being a brother to them.

"You are all brothers," he told them with another Gospel word, and the brothers soon had no other name for him than THE BROTHER.

THE LORD POPE CONFIRMED IT FOR ME

The first Rule of the Friars consisted of just a few Gospel texts, with as a central part perhaps the three texts which we have seen before. It is a pity that we do not have the exact wording of it any longer; it would have given us a still better insight into what Francis meant when he made the Gospel the heart of the rule. He would call the rule "the marrow of the Gospel" and in his Testament he said: "After the Lord gave me some brothers, there was nobody to show me what to do; but the Most High himself revealed to me that we should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. I had it written down simply and briefly and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me."

Once he had something on paper, however scanty and sketchy, Francis made it a point to have the Pope's blessing over it: not because he was concerned about any legal implications, but simply because the Pope is the father of Christendom, he wanted him to see what he and his brothers were: this is the way we live, is that all right with you?—very much the same as when he sought refuge with Bishop Guido in Assisi at a time when he stood all alone with his venture.

It was Pope Innocent III, says Celano, who was at that time at the head of the Church, a famous man, greatly learned, renowned in discourse, burning with zeal for justice in the things that the cause of the Christian faith demanded. He was not exactly keen on receiving yet another group of laymen who wanted to return to the evangelical life, and sought permission to preach. Francis, however, found an advocate in the Bishop of Assisi, who happened to be in Rome, and in Cardinal John of Saint Paul. We are told also that the great Pope, after first having refused, saw in a dream how the church of Saint John in the Lateran was on the point of crumbling down, and how a little man in the robe of a penitent, placed his shoulder against it, and prevented it from falling.

Perhaps also it was the candour and transparency of Francis, who always carried his heart in his hands, that convinced the Pope that there was no harm in that small band, but the hope rather of

something good and beautiful. "Go with the Lord, brothers," he told them, "and as the Lord will deign to inspire you, preach penance to all. Then when the almighty Lord shall give you increase in number and in grace, return to me with joy, and I will add many more things to these and entrust greater things to you with greater confidence." The year was 1209 or 1210.

Thus begins for Francis and his brothers a wonderful and beautiful time, which we might call the springtime of the Order and the honeymoon of the first friars with Lady Poverty. There was nothing formal about their group. There was nothing formal about their preaching either. They would join any gathering of people in the market-place or in the fields or just along the roadside and they would speak to them about God and his love. They would roll up their sleeves and give a helping hand wherever there was work to be done, and in the evenings carry home in kind the reward for their labour, to be shared with all the members of the brotherhood. They would parcel out the cramped space of a hut in Rivo Torto, by writing the names of each one on the low-lying beams, and they would have just enough place to stretch out and sleep soundly, after a tiring day of work. If they were hungry, they would be hungry together; if they had food to eat they would share it and enjoy it in thanksgiving to God and with a special prayer for their benefactors. If things became too bad indeed, they would have recourse to the 'table of the Lord', begging alms from door to door, provided they would never as much as touch a coin or money.

They would sing the praises of the Lord, and the prayer that was loved most and heard most of all was the *Our Father*: it would close the day, and it would open a new one, and off they would be again on their mission of peace. When a church was around in any place, even though it could be seen only from a distance, they would prostrate themselves upon the ground in its direction and say: "We adore thee Christ, here and in all thy churches," as Francis had taught them to do.

When the hut of Rivo Torto was invaded by a man with his donkey, the brothers moved on to Portiuncula: a shelter of light wood and rushes became their new home. They had no such thing as a house or a monastery, but only "places", which prevented them from settling down: "they should occupy these places

as strangers and pilgrims," and, "we were only too glad to find shelter in abandoned churches."

Francis was like a magnet who drew men from all walks of life into the brotherhood: farmers and merchants, lawyers and knights. Even priests wanted to be guided by him, and donned the habit of the friars.

Whilst at first the brothers simply called themselves "penitents from Assisi," rather soon Francis settled on a name that expressed much better the ideal which he and his brothers professed. He gave them the name of "Friars Minor" or "Lesser Brothers." Brothers first of all: since they had no house to stay and no home, they should be a "home" for each other. In the company of the other brothers, everyone should feel secure and accepted, and he should be able to be himself: "they should feel confident to make their needs known to each other; for if a mother loves the child that is born to her, how much more should not each one love his spiritual brother."

They were also to be Lesser Brothers, Friars Minor—nothing big about them and nothing imposing, nothing uppish and nothing of aloofness, but "plain people and at everybody's service."

THE LADY CLARE

Then came Clare with her request to join the movement which Francis had brought into the Church: a new challenge, not only for Clare, but for Francis too. What do you do with a fine lady like Clare, who asks to be part of a venture that has barely begun, and that is still looked upon with a certain amount of suspicion by many members of the established Church?

Her family had been exiled from Assisi to Perugia, with many others of the nobility, but now they were back in their fortified palace close to San Rufino. The ladies of the house were seldom absent from Francis' sermons: mother and three daughters. That Francis had been invited to preach the Lenten sermons in the Rufino in 1212 was a sign that the esteem for the brothers was growing.

Clare, the eldest daughter, had inherited from her father the capacity to fight, and from her mother a deep-rooted piety. She knew a little Latin, that Latin of the Mass, and she read the lives of the Saints of the Church. She had learned to make beautiful things with her hands: stitching and embroidery, as was customary

for the noble ladies of those days. Especially Clare was an eager listener when Francis preached. When in her home or in the circle of friends the question of marriage was discussed, she would just smile, and utter a non-committal "We'll see." She wanted to talk to Francis, and when she met him begged him to guide her steps. The little merchant-son felt embarrassed: who was he to tell this noble lady what she should do? Yet he did tell her, or perhaps they just found out together, for both still needed clarity and both needed conviction. However, there and then Clare made up her mind, and once her mind was made up, there was nothing that could shake it anymore.

On Palm Sunday 1212 Clare was accepted as the first woman-member of the Franciscan family, the mother of the Poor Clares. But that is a name which came into use much later. It is characteristic of Francis that from the very beginning he had a very special name for Clare and her sisters. He could have called them, in keeping with the name he gave the brothers: Lesser Sisters or Poor Sisters, or given them some similar name. He did not, and to my mind this is indicative of his attitude to Clare and his relationship with her. He rather chose a name that characterises him as the gallant knight he always was, with respect and reverence for "womanhood," as it was imperative on true knighthood.

Clare and her sisters were called by him: *Le Povere Dame—Pauperes Dominae* in Latin—the Poor Ladies. For Francis, Clare was not just his sister—she was a lady, whom he should respect and revere, whom he should serve if need be, like the knights in the Middle Ages were supposed to do.

Francis has never felt the need to put into words what Clare had meant to him. It was obvious during his lifetime, it is obvious even now. Biographers have built all kinds of stories on their relationship. For some it is just another love story begun already when Francis was still at home. A love story indeed it is, but on a level that goes beyond what is usually understood by it. Clare was young and beautiful and Francis knew beauty when he saw it; yet, as the courteous and gallant knight he was, he knew Clare to be beyond his reach.

Clare has, from the beginning to the end, repeated several times what Francis meant to her. She calls herself "the little plant of Francis," and therewith she indicated the need she had for Francis.

Hers was the heart and the mind of a woman who had found support in Francis, and she liked to sing the praises of him who had helped her to find Jesus Christ. She as it were hides herself, in order that Francis may stand out in full light. Yet Clare has very much her own face, and above all she had strength of character and will, which Francis could admire, but never imitate.

For Francis, Clare has always been: The Lady Clare. He has loved her, as he perhaps loved no one else, but that love was always qualified by the very name he gave her: The Lady Clare. Is that a contradiction? I do not think so, at least not in the life of Francis. But it is not always an easy relationship in life.

THE GOSPEL LIVED AND SHARED

Even as Francis and his brothers, so also Clare and the companions whom God soon would give her, had a very simple rule: The Gospel of Jesus Christ. Or, as Francis says in the Rule of 1221: to follow the teaching and the footsteps of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In his search for God, Francis had found the God-made-Man, whose story he read in the Gospel. The most stunning proof of God's love for man was that God had walked as a human being with other human beings. He made himself poor for us in this world, he was born in poverty and laid in a manger; he walked the roads on our world doing good to others and telling them that the Kingdom of God was close at hand. Finally he died on a cross, but not before he had given to man the ultimate and lasting sign of his love: the Holy Eucharist.

When Francis made the Gospel of Christ his way of life, he did so with the simplicity and enthusiasm that characterises so many of his actions. He did not argue about what he read, but the Christ of history whom he saw so clearly before him in the words of the holy writers became for him a continual challenge and model. To walk in his footsteps was for him the natural thing to do.

Sometimes a doubt arose in him as to whether he should dedicate himself to prayer and contemplation, or whether he had to go out to preach. It was again the example of Jesus himself that made him decide to choose for himself the life of an itinerant preacher. He too would have no house and not even a stone where to rest his head, but like Jesus he would be on the move to announce the kingdom, or, what was the same for him, to announce peace to the world.

In order to preach to others, however, he knew that he would have to return time and again to the source of inspiration: to the God whom he had found in the manger, on the road to bring his Word and his blessing, on the cross where he gave his life for us, and in the Eucharist where he continues to give life even now. He used to say that you have to grow warm within first, if you want others to listen to your preaching, and the words he spoke were a direct outpouring of the ardour of his heart. He was not an orator in the normal sense of the word, he was not a great speaker. He would sing his message if need be; he would cry for a God who is not loved; or he would laugh and dance when he succeeded in bringing reconciliation and peace.

Whilst on the road the brothers would seek a refuge for the night where they happened to be when evening came. A stable would do wonderfully or an old barn or just a cave in the mountainside. By preference, however, they used to stay in old abandoned churches or chapels, of which there were many in the Italy of those days. There they would say prayers together and read the Word of God, and sing His praises with the psalms of the Bible. To remind themselves what they were, sons of the same Father and brothers, they would always conclude their prayers with the Our Father. It made them every time again aware of the One who cared for them and whose messengers they had become.

Even as Jesus, Francis too would withdraw often to the mountain-tops, where God's face comes down close enough to look into your eyes. Then, refreshed and refilled with His Spirit, he would go down again into the plain to carry the Good News.

BEYOND THE BEATEN TRACK

Little wonder that for Francis his hometown and the province of Umbria, and even the whole of Italy, were far too small for his zeal and enthusiasm. He wanted to share the message of peace with as many people as possible. He wanted to go to foreign countries too and carry the Gospel to people who had never heard of it. The brothers had not always fared too well when they ventured further from home, and Francis never felt at ease if he exposed the brothers to something which he had not experienced himself.

But, above all, how could he claim to be a true follower of Christ if he did not follow him all the way, even up to the shedding of his blood for the Gospel? This was certainly one of the leading motives for all his apostolic journeys, even though he never succeeded in becoming a martyr, however hard he tried. He made his first attempt to go to a far-away land, most probably in 1211 or 12. He boarded a ship that was destined to sail to Syria, but the old barge was thrown on the shores of Dalmatia, and the passengers were told that it was journey's end, at least for the time being. Francis made enquiries and was told that within a year there would be no possibility to reach his goal. There was nothing else to do but to go back to Italy.

If one road is blocked, you try another. About a year later Francis set out on his journey to Morocco, via Spain. The story says that on that trip he was always ahead of his brothers. Even though he felt sick, he could not be slowed down. Travelling through Spain he wanted to pay a visit to Saint James of Compostella. Sickness finally not only slowed him down, but urged him to turn back with one more disappointment in his heart, but also the firm determination that even this was not to be his last try.

At the Pentecost Chapter of 1219 Francis appointed a group of friars to go to Morocco, and at the same time he handed over the government of the Order to two Vicars: Matthew of Narni and Gregory of Naples. He himself would make another attempt to go to Syria: he and his companions would try to sail from Ancona. And sail they did this time, and a long-fostered hope was finally going to be fulfilled. We are left in the dark about the journey itself, but we do know that they set foot on the land across the sea.

The details of his stay in Egypt are not always clear: they may have been added to later on. At that time the Crusaders were laying siege to the town of Damietta, and Francis started wondering who needed his message most: the Muslims or the Christians. Sultan Malik el Kamil had a couple of times made a very generous offer to the Christian leaders, but the Papal Legate Pelagius had proudly refused. There was strife among the Christians themselves, and their general behaviour was far from what would be expected of bearers of the Cross of Christ. Notwithstanding Francis' warning they went into battle, and were badly defeated. Francis was sad that his prediction of defeat had been fulfilled, but

he was even more sad because he knew that no real victory is ever won by war. He had come with a message of peace, which is the message of the Gospel, and he was willing to carry that message into the camp of the enemy.

Again there was opposition from various quarters, especially from the Papal Delegate: why did this little fellow come to meddle with things which he apparently did not understand? When Francis pleaded with him, the Delegate finally washed his hands of the whole affair and let him go, without taking any responsibility for such a foolish mission.

We do know that Francis and his companion Brother Illuminato did reach the place where the Sultan was staying, though it seems mainly because they were captured by Muslim soldiers. The Sultan was a pious and God-fearing man, and he appeared to understand Francis better than the Papal Delegate did. It is not entirely clear why he treated Francis so kindly, and perhaps there is something in the suggestion of Chesterton that "the holy man was unconsciously protected by the halo of sanctity that is supposed to surround an idiot." Perhaps it was due to the courteous attitude of the Sultan who recognized in Francis a man of God and a man of peace: here, for the first time, there was a Christian who came to him without arms, without power, without even any official mission or mandate from the Christian leaders, a man who had nothing to lose, except perhaps his own life, and even that he did not seem to value very much, a man who spoke to the Sultan about God and Jesus Christ, about peace and understanding and love. For the first time Islam and Christianity had met in an atmosphere of friendship and understanding.

In the Rule of 1221 he would write: "The brothers who go (among the Muslims) can conduct themselves spiritually in two ways. One way is to avoid quarrels and disputes and be subject to every human creature for God's sake, so bearing witness to the fact that they are Christians. Another way is to proclaim the word of God openly, when they see that it is God's will...."

SICKNESS AND OTHER TRIALS

From Egypt Francis went to Syria and to the Holy Land. There he visited the places where Jesus was born, lived and died. Little or nothing is known about his stay there, but we can imagine with

what fervour he must have visited those places and prayed and wept for the "love that is not loved." It was there that he contracted an eye ailment that would make him blind in the last years of his life.

Sickness was nothing new to him: he had carried a sick body all over Italy on his apostolic journeys, and the fasting and penances which he had imposed upon himself had certainly not made things better. Here is something which is difficult to understand in Francis. Like no one else he knew to appreciate the good gifts of God in what we would call a positive appreciation of the world—nature and all the things that surround us as gifts from the good God. Yet, on the other hand, he could inflict upon himself penances and hardships that are frightening. He enjoyed and sang the beauty of God's creation, and yet he was still so much a saint of his own time that he relentlessly followed the hard rules of asceticism of his days. He is indeed known the world over as a joyful saint, but he took his share in suffering, in pain, in disappointments, in hardships and in trials.

Among these the physical pains were not even the worst. Whilst he was in Syria he was called back to Italy because of troubles that had arisen in his newly-founded Order. The little band had grown steadily, and not all the new-comers had the same zeal and enthusiasm as the first brothers.

The early brotherhood had lived and thrived on the scanty Way of Life which Francis had drawn up in 1209: "I had it written down in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me." The brothers had had the continued example and inspiration of Francis himself to make them into a true fraternity. Now, however, there were brothers who had never seen Francis, or never met him personally. In the course of years certain new decisions had been made at the annual Chapters, whilst certain decrees had even come from Rome. Therefore many of the brothers, supported by Cardinal Hugolino, insisted that they should have a new rule.

Francis gave it a try. In 1221 he could present a Rule to them, which however was never officially approved, though it remains a most beautiful document for the study of the Franciscan spirit. At that time it was considered as too long, and not sufficiently concise and precise for the legal-minded. The Chapter of 1221 witnessed a growing difference of views among the brothers: those who rejected the newly-presented rule made themselves very vocal. They had Hugolino on their side and many of the ministers.

Finally, in 1223, after another protest by the ministers, Francis completed the final Rule of the Friars Minor, which was then approved by Pope Honorius III. The process of the birth of the Rule was not without pain for Francis: how can you lay down an inspiration in a legal framework, how can you catch someone's enthusiasm and fix it once-for-all in an unchanging Rule, how can you catch the tune of a song unless you hear it sung by others? Francis experienced the tension that exists between every prophetic vision and the establishment, between the enthusiasm of the Gospel and the canon law of the Church. He was a poet, and he saw that much of the beauty and the poetry of the early brotherhood would be gone forever. Listening to the song that continued to sing in his own heart, he might well cry out: "Look what they have done to my song...."

Also in this he had to walk the footsteps of Jesus: when His vision clashed with the norms of the establishment, He had to die for it.

EVENING FALLS SO FAST

Francis was a young man still—in years, that is—when he finally completed the Rule of the Friars Minor, and got it approved by the Pope. But he was old in experience and physically he had been reduced to a mere shadow of his former self. He had started a movement in the Church, which was perhaps far more important than the foundation of his Order. In all fairness, however, we must say that it was his Order mainly that kept the movement alive. His Order had been made secure by the authorities of the Church, though in the process it had to lose some of its initial enthusiasm and thrust. It was up to the brothers now and to the Poor Ladies to keep the fire going. Francis had carried the message of peace through the towns and villages of Italy. He had set the pace for his followers and he had only one wish: that they would continue what he had begun.

He was sick and tired, and his eyesight started failing very fast. Already in 1220 he had left the government of the Order in the hands of his friend, Pietro Catani. After only a few months, Pietro died and the vicarship passed into the capable hands of Brother Elias. Capable hands indeed and a clever mind, but so very different from the simplicity and the trust which the first brothers had brought into the Order. So different from Francis too.

Sometimes now it looked as if Francis, who had never distrusted anyone, was not even sure any longer of his own brothers. Officially he withdraws from the leadership, since he is convinced that only his personal example will be effective in guiding at least those brothers who wanted to go the whole way with Christ. His apostolic journeys had come to an end, simply because he is no more able to make those long and tiring trips. Yet, his apostolic spirit was as much alive as ever. "I am the servant of all and so I am bound to wait upon everyone and make known to them the fragrant words of my Lord. Realizing, however, that because of my sickness and ill-health I cannot personally visit each one individually I decided to write you a letter...." This quotation is taken from the letter to all the faithful. The Little Man who calls himself "your poor worthless servant," "ignorant and illiterate," has still one ambition: that all should hear "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, whose words are spirit and life." The letter is addressed to "All Christians, religious, clerics and layfolk, men and women, to everyone in the whole world...." Only a truly humble man can have that kind of ambition, a man who forgets his own smallness, since the message is all-important. Only such a man could write another letter—to the Rulers of the People. The other letters of his which are still extant are less ambitious in as far as the addressees are concerned, but they all exhibit the same spirit. Reach out and tell as many people as possible about the love that is revealed in Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father.

More than ever before he now withdraws into the solitude of the mountains, and whilst his conversation with people, even with his own brothers, becomes more rare, his union with God grows from day to day. It is the period of his life when pain seems to be all-prevailing and when it is difficult to recognize the joyful Saint of whom we spoke in the beginning. But he shall overcome.

I WANT TO SEE WITH MY OWN EYES

Francis had found Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father, and he had found him in the Gospel, in the Crib, and on the Cross, in the eucharistic presence among men. The historical Christ, who had walked on this earth, became the Way for all the friars: the teaching and the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Therefore also Christmas was for him the Feast of Feasts. It was for him a reason for continual wonder and thanksgiving that the Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord would deign to become Man. And if Jesus wanted to be our Brother, then the brotherhood of all created things should be celebrated in a very special way on Christmas Day. Even the birds and other animals should share in the celebration and get a special ration of food or grain on that day.

His visit to the Holy Land had intensified his original inspiration, so that when December 1223 was coming near, he decided to re-enact with his brothers and with the other people who wanted to come, the scene of the first Christmas Night. In Fonte Colombo he met his friend Giovanni Velita: "If you wish us to celebrate the festival of Our Lord at Greccio, hurry on ahead and prepare exactly what I am telling you. For I want to observe the memory of that Child who was born at Bethlehem, and in some way see before my bodily eyes the discomforts of his baby needs, how he was laid there in a manger, and how, with the ox and the ass standing by, he was placed there on the hay."

Invitations were sent to the brothers in other places in the valley, invitations were sent to the people all around. They were to come with candles and torches at midnight. A manger was prepared in a cave, and an altar was placed over it for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

During Christmas Night people started moving, and lights appeared all around, moving in one direction only: Greccio. Francis was deacon during the Mass, and he sang the gospel in the liturgical Latin. But after the gospel he preached, and he spoke no more the clerical Latin, but the language of the ordinary man. He preached, but he could not pronounce the name "Jesus," but only the Babe of Bethlehem, bleating the "Bethlehem" like a sheep. He bent over the manger and pious people saw a child lying there, lifeless or perhaps asleep. But at the touch of Francis' hand it became alive. And such a vision was not at all out of place, says the old writer, for through his servant Francis the awareness of Jesus was revived in the hearts of many where he had remained lifeless or asleep for so long. All the people believed that on that night Greccio had become a new Bethlehem.

The joy in Francis' heart was not dead. Through the enjoyment of the things of nature, of trees and flowers, and birds and animals,

through the happiness also which he had found in the conversation with his brothers, through the happiness of his love for Lady Clare and the Poor Ladies, he now moved on a level where joy is found that cannot be taken away: "How holy and beloved, how pleasing and lowly, how peaceful, delightful, lovable and desirable above all things it is to have a Brother like this...." I almost think that Franciscan spirituality is born from that awareness: "How holy and wonderful to have a Father in Heaven....and to have a Brother like this: Jesus-with-us."

ANY PAIN IS MY DELIGHT

In the course of years, I have written a lot about Francis, but there is one episode in his life that has always scared me off. But no, it was not just an episode in his life, otherwise I would have written about it easily enough. I am afraid, though, that it would remain ununderstandable and inexplicable too, for it cannot have meaning if it is just taken as an isolated fact. The Stigmata on Mount Alverna can only be seen in the context of a lifelong imitation of Christ, a following in his footsteps, also where they trod along a way of the cross.

It happened one day that Francis was passing through Montefeltro, where a festival was being held to celebrate the knighting of the Count's son. Making use of the occasion he preached to the people gathered there. As a theme he chose a verse from an Italian song: "So great the good I have in sight that any pain is my delight." Elaborating on the theme he spoke about the sufferings and martyrdoms of the apostles and martyrs, of the penances and hardships of other saints. Perhaps this little incident can help us to make it somehow understandable. Or perhaps his Sixth Admonition can help us even further: "Look at the Good Shepherd, my brothers. To save his sheep he endured the agony of the cross. They followed him in trials and persecutions, in ignominy, hunger, and thirst, in humiliations and temptations, and so on. And for this, God rewarded them with eternal life. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves; the saints endured all that, but we who are servants of God try to win honour and glory by recounting and making known what they have done."

His devotion to the Passion and Death of the Lord never remained just a devotion that expressed itself only in prayer and meditation. He composed an Office of the Passion, which he

prayed with his brothers, but he would not have been satisfied by doing only that. Suffering was as much part of his life as joy. Suffering followed him all the way: his continual sicknesses, his tiring apostolic journeys, his fasting and other penances, his sleeping in caves and on the naked ground. All these things had ruined the last bit of his precious health.

On his journey to the east he had contracted an eye disease, which made him gradually lose his sight. Like no one else he had admired and enjoyed the beauty of nature and all things around him. Now that beauty was hidden from him, since he could only distinguish vague shades of grey.

He had known another pain in his life, and that was most probably the most difficult one to bear. During the first years of his conversion he had lived in the idyllic company of the first faithful companions who did not need many rules and regulations since they had the example of the founder and they needed only to look at him. When the group had grown, there came dissension and discord, and he felt the disloyalty of some of the brothers.

He had taken it all as part of his commitment to follow Christ all the way, and now, in 1224, during the fast on Mount Alverna, he had the courage—or must we say—the audacity, to pray that he might suffer both in body and in soul the same suffering which Jesus underwent on the cross. The answer from the sight of God was the impression of the Stigmata, the wounds of the Lord, in his hands, his feet and his side. And pain, a pain that never left till the end of his life.

Yet it gave him a peace and a serenity which he had never known before. Was that the perfect joy of which he had spoken to brother Leo: "Above all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ grants his friends, there is that of overcoming themselves and gladly for the love of Christ, bearing pain, insults, disgrace and discomfort. Because, we cannot glory in any other gift of God——they are not ours, but God's....But in the cross of tribulation we may glory, because that is our due." He is known as a joyful saint, but also for him the road to perfect joy was never an easy one. He carried the suffering and death of Jesus in his heart and in his way of life, long before he was also visibly marked by the signs of the Passion.

THE SONG GOES ON

In his youth he had made the rounds of the houses in Assisi with his friends, singing—singing the songs of the troubadours. After his conversion he had sung, by preference in French, the ditties and ballads that spoke about chivalry and about love. He had often added his own compositions, and he and his brothers were known as the Jugglers of God. Impatient to carry the message of peace, Francis would run almost ahead of the others and in dramatic skill he would outdo them all, in word and song and gesture, so that people might get the message....

After the episode of Alverna he is carried on a donkey to his hometown, a worn out, sick and blind man. Will he ever sing again? With the best of intentions the brothers carry him from one doctor to the other: Rieti, Fonte, Colombo, Siena, and back to Assisi again. He bears it all, and he never complains. In an attempt to ease the pain of his eyes, the doctor cauterizes both sides of his head, from eye to ear, with a red-hot iron. It only adds to the pain he suffers.

In this condition he is finally allowed some rest in the garden of San Damiano, near Clare and the Poor Ladies. A hut had been built specially for him, so that he may protect his eyes from the light, but since it is in the garden, his sleep is being disturbed by mice, who seem to have chosen his body as a playground.

Gradually, with the loss of his eyesight, Francis experienced the loss of the visible creatures of God, whom he had always befriended and treated as brothers and sisters. In his sickness he felt still more separated from them. It was in that loneliness in the dark hut near the house of the Poor Ladies that Francis composed and sang for the first time *The Canticle of Creatures*....or, as it is known, *The Canticle of Brother Sun*. He did sing again the praises of the Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord, through all God's creatures, which were already waving a sad and a fond goodbye to him.

In his *Canticle of the Sun* he sums up the greatness of God who is Most High and Omnipotent, and he sings the praise and thanksgiving of Him Whose love he had experienced all through life, and Whom he is allowed to call Good Lord. He had given to the people of his age a new understanding and appreciation of the creature world, but above all he had taught them that reconciliation with

God is possible only if man finds reconciliation with man, brother with brother, in true peace. Man who is at peace with himself, with his fellow men, and with the rest of the creature-world, can be truly at peace with God, the source of joy and happiness.

Francis had introduced a new style of life; when the hour had come he was to introduce a new style of dying. We are then in the year 1226. Exactly because he took life so seriously, he had been able to rejoice because of the many gifts he had received from it. Sickness and pain had not been able to rob him of the joy. Because he took death so seriously, and knew that it would be for him the gate to life, he could sing when he was about to die.

After a short stay in the bishop's palace in Assisi, he was carried to his beloved Portiuncula: he wanted to die where he had begun his life with God. The chronology of all the events that accompanied his death is far from certain. Repeatedly he made his brothers sing the *Canticle of Brother Sun* and on one such occasion he spontaneously added one strophe to it:

All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Death,
from whose embrace no mortal can escape;
Woe to those who die in mortal sin:
Happy those she finds doing your will;
The second death can do no harm to them.

The song goes on and Francis no longer seems to feel his pain. The guardian of the Portiuncula interpreted his wishes perfectly when he lent him a habit and a cord, forbidding him to give it away to anyone, because it was only on loan to him. The saint was delighted and his heart overflowed with happiness. Strange things that can make a saint happy.

Another reason for joy was the visit of Giacomina dei Settesoli, the noble Roman lady, who had been a lifelong friend, and who now brought for him a habit that was destined to become his shroud, and some almond cakes, which he accepted graciously and with a profusion of gratitude, but which he could only nibble bit by bit, to show that he loved them.

When his last moment had come, he made a final effort and he himself intoned the Psalm: I cried to the Lord with my voice.... Lead my soul out of its prison. We are told that he had the gospel of Saint John read to him, the passage that is read on Holy

Thursday, and for the last time he broke bread with the brothers giving each of them a little piece. The larks of Umbria sang on top of the little chapel and winged their way up into the sky, singing the praises of God and of the little Poverello of Assisi, who was going home and who accepted death....singing.

NOTES

As a whole I have limited myself to the main facts of Francis' life, which are well known to all. Apart from certain discrepancies in the chronology, they are, I think, also accepted facts. For that reason I did not add any notes or references in the text.

For those who are less acquainted with Saint Francis, I would suggest the book: *Saint Francis of Assisi, Omnibus of Sources*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1972.

The book contains almost all the available sources of our knowledge of St Francis:

Writings of St Francis
Lives of St Francis by Thomas of Celano.
Lives of St Francis by St Bonaventure
Legend of the Three Companions
Legend of Perugia
Mirror of Perfection
Little Flowers of St Francis
Sacrum Commercium (Francis and his Lady Poverty)
Thirteenth Century Testimonies

Most of these sources are also available in separate editions.
There is an abundance of modern biographies.

CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE FRANCISCAN ORDER

By Prof. Dr Deodat Tummers, O.F.M.

It was with a certain amount of surprise and with a great sense of humility that Francis had received the first companions in his venture with God. The surprise only grew and his humility became even more profound when the number started steadily growing. He had seen his conversion first of all as his own personal way of serving God and he had considered his apostolic work as a call directed to him, Francis. It had taken him many years to finally find his way and to be sure of his vocation. Was it for others so much easier to obtain certainty that this was the way they had to follow? He himself had heard the voice of Christ at a troublesome moment of his life, and in the beginning he had only been able to grope searchingly for a future that remained dark and uncertain for a long time. He had been all alone on that rough road till God's guiding hand had closed more firmly around his own: till he started seeing the light. Even then he never thought of asking others to follow him. He preached to them the way of Christ, the Gospel of the Lord. He told them that the footsteps of Jesus Christ had been imprinted on this earth of ours when the Most High, Omnipotent, Good Lord had come to share our human existence. He told them that even so Love was not loved, and that the only way to do so really was to walk in Jesus' footsteps.

Some people understood, and certain prodigals began to think of their Father's home. Was that not why God had called him: to remind people of their loving Father in Heaven and to tell them that Jesus is the Way? When the Lord gave him brothers, he did not want them to think that he himself could ever be the norm against which their lives would be tested. "When the Lord gave me brothers, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High Himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel."[1]

THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW TO FIND THE PASSAGE

The method which Francis employed to obtain more clarity for himself and his first brothers about their future way of life seems to be a rather naive one. He was certainly not playing a game of chance when he opened the Gospel-book three times. We can assume that by now he was sure for himself that God called him to a way of renunciation and poverty. He was not looking for a new command from the side of God, but for a confirmation of what he already knew, for the benefit of Bernard and Peter Catani and for all the other brothers whom God possibly would want to give him.

The *Legend of the Three Companions* is very revealing in this respect. "They went to the church of Saint Nicholas. They went in to pray, but, being simple men, they did not know how to find the passage in the Gospel telling of the renunciation of the world. Therefore they besought God that He would show them His will the first time they opened the Book."[2] Francis knew what he was looking for and together with his first companions he asked God to please help them find the relevant text in the Holy Book, so that their hearts could be fully at ease. The *Three Companions* adds therefore in the same passage: "Each time he opened the Book blessed Francis gave thanks to God for this threefold confirmation of the resolution and desire which he had long held in his heart."

Though Francis had never coveted the role of a founder of a new Order or to be the spiritual leader of a band of men who were attracted by his way of life, he did not shirk the responsibility when it was thrust upon him. "O brothers, this is our life and the rule of all those who may wish to join us," he said, and for the first time his voice found the right intonation to add an authoritative: "Go, therefore, and act on what you have heard."

THOSE WHO CAME FIRST

Some of the first eleven brothers are not more than just names for us, whilst others form an inseparable part of every biography of Saint Francis. Bernard will ever be remembered as the first-born, the first to join Francis in his venture with God. Pietro Catani is closely connected with that first vocation, and he will be afterwards the first Vicar to take the place of the Founder in the

government of the Order. These two were followed by Brother Giles or Egidio, a farmer's son, and somewhere along the line Sylvester stepped in, the first, and for the time being the only, priest in the group.

In the beginning, however, there was hardly a rush. Somehow they seemed to scare people, and the *Three Companions* remarks that specially "young women took to flight when they saw them coming, even from afar, because they thought that they were madmen."[3] Yet in about a year's time the group, including Francis, had grown to twelve. In Assisi, Sabbattino, Morico and Giovanni delle Cappella were admitted; Philippo Longo came from the side of Rieti, and so did Angelo Tancredi, a real and gallant knight. Besides these there were Bernardo da Viridante and Giovanni da S. Constanzo.

By that time about all walks of life were represented in the delightful little band: priesthood and knighthood, the merchant and the farmer, the lawyer and the businessman. Though it would always be Francis' concern that the brothers be small and simple people, and though the thrust of their apostolic work would be mainly for that kind of people, we can hardly say that the Order found its origin in the "small people." Only after the renouncement of earthly goods and wealth could they really identify themselves with the most humble and poor people. And there would be place in the Order for anyone who came, irrespective of his social, educational or economic background.

With this motley crowd, Francis made his way to Rome, and asked for an audience with the great Innocent III, to obtain the approval of a rather scanty and sketchy document, which they called their Rule. We are then in the year 1209 or 1210. The Rule consisted mainly of Gospel quotations, and Francis speaking about it in his Testament says: "I had this written down briefly and simply and His Holiness the Pope confirmed it for me." The Pope was not very enthusiastic at first: he governed the Church at a time when several groups were banding together in many different places, all of them people who wanted to return to the poverty of the Gospel and the apostolic way of life. Understandably, when Francis and his companions appeared before him, the Pope scratched his head at first and perhaps he had a sleepless night afterwards. But there was something disarmingly sincere and authentic in the little group, which made Innocent give an oral approval to their way of life.

WHEN THE LORD SHALL GIVE YOU INCREASE

The oral approval by Pope Innocent marks for us the real beginning of the Franciscan Order. It is true that Francis did not hold any official document duly signed and sealed, but if anyone could doubt the word of the Holy Father himself, would a piece of paper be able to satisfy him? Had not the great Pope said to the brothers: "Go with the Lord, Brothers, and as the Lord will deign to inspire you, preach penance to all. Then when the almighty Lord shall give you increase, return to me with joy, and I will add many more things to these and entrust greater things to you with greater confidence."[4] What more could anyone expect than these encouraging and heart-warming words? Francis and his brothers were happy, and joyfully they started off on their way back to Umbria.

The backing of the highest authority in the Church did not change much the way of life the brothers had led up till now. Bonaventure tells us that they had been given the clerical tonsure while in Rome, as an external sign of that approval. The organisation of the little brotherhood, if there was any such at that time, remained very much informal and extremely simple. On the trip to Rome, Francis had put Brother Bernard in charge of the daily routine of the group. He would decide when and where to stop for a rest, when to take time out for prayer, and at what hour of the day to eat. No one questioned the spiritual leadership of Francis himself, but Bernard being a very practical man, the division of work seemed to be a sensible one.

Francis had been preaching from the very first moment his vocation had become clear to him, and when the Lord gave him brothers, he had sent them out also to do the same. The approval of the Pope, moreover, allowed the brothers to extend their activity beyond the confines of the diocese of Assisi. Since most of the brothers were not priests, they could not be expected to give learned and elaborate sermons, but simple exhortations to do penance. That was also the word which the Pope had used: "As the Lord will deign to inspire you, preach penance to all." The brothers would do that, not in the official Latin of the Church, but in the language of the people, which straightaway formed a much easier and more comfortable link between them and their hearers.

Francis himself has left us a sample of this kind of "sermon" in his Rule of 1221, where he says in Chapter 21: "The praise and exhortation which the Friars may announce: Whenever they see fit my friars may exhort the people to praise God with words like these: Fear Him and honour Him, praise Him and bless Him, thank and adore Him, the Lord Almighty, in Trinity and Unity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator of all. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; remember, we must soon die. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given to you; if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive you your offences. Confess all your sins. It is well for those who die repentant: they shall have a place in the kingdom of Heaven. Woe to those who die unrepentant; they shall be children of the devil whose work they do, and they shall go into everlasting fire. Be on your guard and keep clear of all evil, standing firm to the last."

Though this text is now part of the Rule of 1221, it may well hail from a much earlier date and have been added to the earliest existing Rule.

A HALO AROUND A SAINT

Now the Brotherhood started growing, and growing fast. Rufino, joins, like Sylvester, a relative of Clare. And that is a fact not to be overlooked: these were men of respectable families, people of some consequence in the little nest that was Assisi. Another priest is admitted to obedience: Leone, the lion, whom Francis called the Little Lamb of God.

Leo, Angelo and Rufino are known as the three companions of Francis and specially in the last years of his life they are practically inseparable from him. From them we know also many details of that early beginning from the little book: *The Legend of the Three Companions*. And don't forget Masseo, handsome, selfconscious but at the same time dead sincere and full of common sense. Brother Juniper must have tumbled into the group somehow, and he becomes the joyful prank of whom Francis said that he would love to have a whole forest of such Junipers. And, finally, there is Pacifico, troubadour, poet laureate and "King of Verse."

These men formed the shining halo around the Saint; they were the knights of the Round Table, and it must have been a real delight to be part of that band, so diverse in character and background and yet so united and so much in harmony with each other.... Francis accepted the uniqueness of every brother, and he was thrilled at the wonderful variety of men that found a common aim and a common brotherhood—not by hard and fast rules, but by the inspiration of the Gospel, and because they were and wanted to be, notwithstanding all differences, plain people and at everybody's service.

Again in the Rule of 1221 it is said: "The Lord says in the Gospel: The rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It should not be thus among the brothers, but whoever wishes to be the greatest among them should be their minister and servant....They should be willing to serve and obey one another in the charity of their spirit."

Francis himself has put this into practice, as an example for all brothers to come. The love he has for his brothers remains humble, though in juridical terms one would call them his subjects. Francis never thought in such terms: his was a love that always thought of the good of others, a love also that respected the dignity of every human being and therefore treated them all with respect and reverence. Therein seems to lie the secret why he could attract so many men of entirely different character. There is brother Leo, simple and tender-hearted; Rufino, sensitive and refined; Masseo who keeps a certain complacency in check with his sincerity and common sense; Juniper, whose naivety seems to exceed sometimes the limits of what is admissible; John the simpleton and the two mystics Giles and Bernard; Angelo, the chivalrous knight; and Pacifico, the poet and troubadour.

When afterwards Francis is asked who is the real Friar Minor, he does not point at any one brother in particular. He certainly does not make himself the only norm, but he finds something exemplary in everyone of the brothers, something that is worthy of his admiration and his unfeigned appreciation. He characterizes the first group of brothers when he says in his Testament: "We were plain people and at the service of everyone." That is what he expected of a Friar Minor: that he be a simple man, and ready to serve. It would mean that he should not feel too big to deal with simple people, and that none of the ordinary people should feel

too small to come to him. On the contrary, the friars should be glad to live among social outcasts, among the poor and helpless, the sick and the lepers, and those who beg by the wayside.[5]

The brotherhood that is lived in the small group around Francis in an intense and intimate way must needs reach out to and embrace all God's children, and first of all His most unfortunate ones.

Little wonder that, whilst the first brothers called themselves rather vaguely "penitential men from the city of Assisi," Francis finally settled on a name for the new Order that is meant to indicate a programme, a way of life: Friars Minor or Lesser Brothers.

THE GRACE OF WORKING

All those who joined the new Order were invited to sell everything they had and give the money to the poor. They did not enter a monastery, since the fraternity did not have any monasteries: the closest they came to something that was at least temporarily theirs, is called "places." The term comes from Francis and a place for the brothers could be just anything: a cave in the mountainside, a barn or the porch of a house, a soft patch of grass underneath a tree. In his Testament Francis says: "We were only too glad to find shelter in abandoned churches."

Francis had purposely diverted from the old monastic way of life, and he wanted his brothers to be itinerant preachers. They should occupy any "place" only as strangers and pilgrims, ready to move on.

They could not do so always, and they were not even supposed to live at the expense of others: only in case of necessity "when we receive no recompense for our work," "we can turn to the Lord's table and beg alms from door to door." To work, therefore, is for the friars not only a human necessity and a direct consequence of their poverty, but it becomes a normal part of their daily life. Preaching alone would not fill their stomachs, whilst working, with and for other people, gave the brothers an opportunity to be close to them, and whenever possible and opportune, to drop a seed—to talk to the people about God and his love.

Francis gave his brothers yet another reason why they should always be engaged in some honest and useful work: he called it a grace from the Lord. But then we are already in the Rule of 1223: "Let those brothers, to whom the Lord has given the grace of working, labour faithfully and devoutly so that, in banishing idleness,

the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which all temporal things must be subservient." This text speaks about labour in general, and is already a change from the earlier injunctions, which explicitly spoke about manual labour.

Francis and his first brothers were occupied in many different kinds of work: care for the lepers, work in the fields and other kinds of manual work, and preaching. As itinerant preachers they were almost continually on the road, and they earned their keep whilst going along. Those who knew a trade continued to practise it even after they had joined, and those who did not know a trade had to learn one.

Thus in the new set-up which Francis had started, he had also to find a new way for the brothers to earn their daily bread. Since they had no monasteries and no property in the form of cultivable land, they worked with and for other people. "By day, those who were able laboured in the hospitals or other places, serving everyone humbly and devoutly."[6]

This way of living and working to earn their livelihood is more extensively described in the life of Brother Giles. It may be readily taken as an example of the practice of the first brothers. Giles became a kind of jack-of-all-trades. He never wanted to live merely on alms, as long as he was able to use his hands and work. He made baskets, carried water, helped in the harvesting of grapes and walnuts, collected firewood and assisted in carrying out the bodies of the dead for burial.

The payment for these services would never be money, but some bread and grain and grapes, sometimes even some scraps of food that were the leftovers of the employer's table.

In the Rule of 1221 Francis distinguishes three categories of brothers in as far as work is concerned. There are first of all the unskilled ones, those who are employed as hired servants or day-labourers. They should never accept a position that placed them above others. "Let them not be chamberlains, nor cellarers, nor overseers in the houses of those whom they serve." To the second group belong the skilled workers or artisans. They should remain true to their trade, also after they have joined the fraternity. Finally Francis admonishes the other brothers, those who are neither simple labourers nor artisans: They too must apply themselves to some useful occupation, even though it is for the sole purpose of

not remaining idle. It will always be a good example to others. In his Testament he writes: "I worked with my own hands and I am still determined to work: and I wish with all my heart that all the friars be busy with some kind of work that can be carried on without scandal."

THE SPIRIT OF HOLY PRAYER AND DEVOTION

There is one thing which Francis valued above all things in his brothers, and that is the spirit of holy prayer and devotion. We have quoted above from the final Rule of the friars where they are told that their work should never be allowed to extinguish that spirit. The same injunction comes back in the letter to Saint Anthony: "It is agreeable to me that you should teach the friars sacred theology, so long as they do not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotedness over this study, as is contained in the Rule."[7]

Whenever the brothers were or came together, they would also pray together, and read together from Holy Scripture. Since not all of them were able to read and write, one of them, who did master that art, would read to them. Books in those days were rare, and even the Bible was not so easy to come by, as it is now.

Even though for some time there was only one copy of the Bible, which they had to share among the whole group, it is remarkable how much the Word of the Lord and its practice shaped their lives. The two existing versions of the Rule, both that of 1221 and 1223, enjoined on all the friars that they make the Gospel of Jesus Christ their way of life. Francis saw to it that it would become so also in actual fact by insisting not only on the frequent reading of it but also that the brothers should make it their own in actual life.

Of Francis himself it is said: "He had never studied Sacred Scripture, but unwearied application to prayer and the continual practice of virtue had purified his spiritual vision. . . . Once he had read something in the sacred books and understood its meaning, he impressed it indelibly on his memory: anything he had once grasped carefully he meditated upon continually."[8]

The spirit of prayer was further nourished by private meditation for which there was always room and time, even in those first days and with the strange form of religious life they used to lead at that time. In comparison with the older existing Orders, it was indeed strange. The brothers were supposed "to carry their cloister with

them whilst going through the world," and so to create for themselves the atmosphere that was most conducive to meditation and contemplation.

They learned to find reminders of Christ's presence everywhere by the many churches and chapels that stood both as roadmarks and as pointers to heaven in practically every Italian village or town. "If they could see it only from a distance, they were to prostrate themselves upon the ground in its direction and were to adore God Almighty, saying: 'We adore thee Christ here and in all thy churches,' as the holy father had taught them."[9] "Whenever they saw a crucifix or the mark of a cross, whether upon the ground, or upon a wall, or on a tree, or in the hedges along the way, they were to do the same."

As it should be, the *Our Father* became their most favourite prayer, since it has been given to us by the Lord himself. Only when the number of clerics grew, of brothers who could read and write, did Francis make a distinction in the form of prayer: those who knew to read had to say the Office, according to the rite of the Church; the others continued to say the *Our Father*. Thus common prayer became one of the important means to cement the brotherhood together and to make them every day aware of what they were supposed to be: all brothers, sons of the same heavenly Father.

The most beautiful expression of this unity would be found in the brotherhood gathered around the one Table of the Lord, partaking of the One Bread: "This is my advice, this is my earnest request in the Lord: that in the places where the friars live, only one Mass a day be said in the rite of the Holy Church. If there are several priests in a place, each should be glad for the love of charity to have assisted at the celebration of the other."[10]

MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY

In the final Rule of 1223 Francis writes an injunction that sums up most succinctly his idea of the newly-founded Order: "Wherever the friars meet one another, they should show that they are members of the same family." The attitudes and the mutual relations which he wants to find among the brothers go far beyond a mere human companionship: "And they should have no hesitation in making known their needs to one another. For if a mother loves and cares for the child that is born to her, a friar should certainly

love and care for his spiritual brother all the more tenderly." He knew that such an attitude could not be forged by laws only, which he therefore restricted to a bare minimum. Neither could it be forced upon them by keeping them within the confines of walls or monasteries. The family spirit had to be fostered by the friars themselves, and the brotherhood had to be built by them; otherwise it would not exsist at all.

All those who entered put on the same habit of penance, which was an external sign both of identity and of recognition by outsiders. They all lived according to the same Rule, which mainly consisted of Gospel texts and therefore left a great amount of leeway for individual differences. As they had given away all things, they found both their wealth and their security in the love of their brothers. Becoming a friar was to commit oneself to a group of brothers, to the fraternity. Vice versa it meant also to be accepted by them in such a way that he could really feel at home with them. "They are bound to love and care for one another as brothers, according to the means God gives them, just as a mother loves and cares for her son."[11]

The term that is most frequently used in those early days is: the friar was admitted to "obedience." Unlike other religious institutes, the Order of the Friars Minor had only one superior, who was common to all the brothers: Francis himself, or whoever would take his place or succeed him. As long as he was alive, he formed the point of reference for all, and, rather than with a definite programme or with a set of laws, the Order of the Friars begins with a living person, whose enthusiasm could hardly be caught up in an institution, as the Church wanted it. In his mind, however, the "superior" of the Order is also a brother, and not even a Big Brother, but rather the smallest of them all.

Already in his lifetime the Order was divided into provinces, and in charge of every province there was a "minister"—not just another name, but a term that indicates clearly what Francis expects from such a person. "It is the duty of the friars who are elected ministers, and therefore servants of the other friars, to assign their subjects to the various houses of their province. [This is the time when the friars have already "settled down"] Afterwards they must visit them often, giving them encouragement and spiritual advice."[12]

There is a two-way relation between ministers and other brothers: the ministers are enjoined to visit the brothers frequently, and the brothers are free to go to their ministers any time they feel the need to do so. "The ministers, for their part, are bound to receive them kindly and charitably, and be so sympathetic towards them that the friars can speak and deal with them as employers with their servants. That is the way it ought to be; the ministers should be the servants of all the friars."[13] By being a true brother to the brothers, the minister also can strengthen the bond that makes them all members of the same family.

THE GENERAL CHAPTERS

Apart from the various elements which have been indicated in the foregoing, which helped to promote unity among the brothers, we should not overlook the General Chapters as a very important means to weld the brotherhood together. They had been introduced very early into the Franciscan Order, and they continued until a few years before Francis' death. Other Orders too knew and practised this kind of meeting, but the novelty among the friars seems to be that they were gatherings of all the friars. The number of friars who took part in them, and the almost casual and informal way in which they were organised, would baffle anyone who is asked to prepare a meeting of any such kind or size. The proceedings at the Chapter developed as it were automatically into a more or less fixed pattern. Francis expressed their purpose briefly in just one sentence: "To treat of those things which belong to God."

As roaming preachers, the friars were most of the time on the road, since Francis sent them out to the "various parts of the world." As a last admonition he told them: "Cast your thoughts upon the Lord and He will nourish you." No superfluous admonition indeed, for we must remember that as yet the friars had no fixed places to stay. Like the apostles, and like Jesus himself, they went from place to place, satisfied with whatever food was provided by the generosity of the people, and ready to take shelter wherever they found themselves at night. Celano makes us understand that the first gatherings were due to Francis' prayer and his desire to see the brothers again, and by a kind of homing instinct of the other brothers. "When they gathered together, they rejoiced greatly at seeing their kind shepherd; and they wondered that they had thus

come together by a common desire. Then they gave an account of the good things the merciful Lord had done for them; and they humbly begged and willingly received correction and punishment from their holy Father."[14]

This became the regular programme of the Chapters: reporting to Francis all they had experienced, confessing their possible failings, and receiving correction and penance. Francis then explained to them in detail his way of life: "For thus they had always been accustomed to act when they came to him." The accounts we have from contemporaries who did not belong to the Order express their astonishment at the informal way in which the meetings were held and the absence of material provisions.

A great friend of the friars, Cardinal James de Vitri, writes in 1216: "Once a year, to their great benefit, the members of this Order come together in a determined place, to eat together and to rejoice in the Lord. On the advice of good men they draw up and promulgate laws, which are confirmed by the Lord Pope. After this they disperse again for a whole year throughout Lombardy, Tuscany, Apulia and Sicily." [15]

Here we see also how soon the Chapters obtained legislative authority, which strongly influenced the development of the Rule. The original aim of the Chapters, however, remained. The Cardinal adds most appropriately: "to eat together and to rejoice in the Lord." In his *Historia Orientalis* the same Cardinal writes: "Once or twice a year, they come together at a stated time in an appointed place, in order to hold the General Chapter. Only those are exempt from it who live in lands far off, or across the sea. After the Chapter, they are sent by their superiors, in groups of two or more, into the different regions, provinces and cities."[16]

Though the legislative function was soon added to the programme of the Chapter, its main purpose remained the fostering of true community and brotherhood. It provided a happy reunion for the friars, who were otherwise scattered throughout the whole of Italy and beyond. During these reunions they experienced in holy joy a sense of their oneness and community, and through the prayers and meals they shared, a sense of belonging together. The days of the Chapter became a happy means of manifesting outwardly the bond of brotherhood, which inwardly welded them into a community. After their common deliberations, in which the experiences of the past year played their part, and the

reports and the confession of failings were considered, they issued laws and statutes, which were further to regulate their lives, and which were obligatory for all.

Father Esser, who is an eminent authority on the origins of the Franciscan Order, writes: "At all events, in the early days of the Order, Chapter had a far greater significance for the Friars Minor than for the cloistered orders. It was accordingly not so much an organ of administration, but more a service to the common life. The days of the Chapter each year were days of renewal and strengthening for the life of the fraternity. To use a modern expression, they were a kind of annual "retreat." Each Chapter made the friars freshly aware of their solidarity, thus promoting the outward experience of sharing a common life and a growing sense of togetherness."[17]

A very vivid account of such a Chapter is given by Brother Jordan of Giano. It was both the biggest of its kind and the last one. Since, according to this account there were three thousand brothers present at that time, it became practically impossible to continue these gatherings of all the friars. Moreover, there were other changes taking place in the Order, and the free and informal ways of the first group were slowly giving way to a more formal and more established institution.

WHY IT COULD NOT LAST

In the early days of the Order, Francis had once predicted growth of its numbers: "Be strengthened, dear brothers, and rejoice in the Lord; and do not let either my simplicity or your own dismay you, for, as it has been shown me in truth by the Lord, God will make us grow into a very great multitude and will make us increase to the ends of the world....I saw a great multitude of men coming to us and wanting to live with us in the habit of our way of life and under the rule of our blessed religion. And behold, the sound of them is in my ears as they go and come according to the command of holy obedience. I have seen, as it were, the roads filled with their great numbers coming together in these parts from almost every nation. Frenchmen are coming, Spaniards are hastening, Germans and Englishmen are running, and a very great multitude of others speaking various tongues are hurrying."[18]

Now this prophesy had come true and one wonders if it brought him the same joy as when he first uttered it as a future possibility.

The Order had grown and grown fast, so that both the intimacy and the intensity of that very first group could not possibly exist any longer. There were brothers now who had never seen Francis personally, and who knew him only from the stories told them by others. Certainly not all had entered with the same ideals Francis or his first companions had had, and their very numbers alone asked for a more detailed legislation for their way of life.

In the first chapter on Saint Francis and his ideals, we spoke about the development of the Rule. At the annual Chapters certain rules had been framed which had been added to the primitive Rule of the friars. Decrees had been issued by the Holy See, which were also applicable to the new Order of Friars, as for instance the decisions regarding the year of probation or the novitiate.

Whilst those new laws were meant to give to the Order a greater stability, they also took away from it the original freedom that had been so very much a characteristic of the first brothers. The Rule had grown with the growing numbers of friars. Francis had it written down in what we now know as the Rule of 1221, and later again it was pruned down and given the official shape that could get the approval of the Pope, which was given in 1223. A limpid little brook meandering through the fields can indeed be more useful and more effective if it is cut straight in the shape of a canal. In the process, however, it loses its beauty and its romanticism. All the same the operation may be needed.

Another very important factor in the change within the Order was the growing clericalisation. In the beginning hardly any distinction was made between priests and lay brothers: they all rolled up their sleeves when manual work was to be done, and they all were justly proud of what they had become: Friars Minor, all brothers to one another. When the number of clerics grew and the number of those who were lettered, there grew also a marked difference in the kind of work they would do, a difference which, unfortunately, had also its influence on the rest of their life together. The simplicity that was another mark of the first brothers was threatened, and with it the kind of poverty Francis had visualised for his Order.

It is in this context that his Canticle on Perfect Joy has such poignancy for those who study Francis and his ideals. Francis

imagines how, together with a companion, he arrives at the Portiuncula friary, wet and muddy and cold, and the brother at the door tells him: "Go away. You are a simple and uneducated fellow. From now on you don't stay with us any more. We are so many and so competent that we don't need you." And Francis observes; "I tell you that if I kept patience and was not upset, that is true joy and true virtue and the salvation of the soul." It is good to note the words: "You are a simple and uneducated fellow," and place them next to another saying of Francis that is found in several of the early sources: "I would not seem to myself to be a friar minor unless I were in the state I will describe to you. Suppose I, being a Prelate among the brothers, should go to the Chapter and preach and admonish the brothers, and at the end this should be said against me: 'An unlettered and contemptible person is not suitable for us; therefore we do not want you to rule over us, because you have no eloquence, you are simple and unlettered.' At length I am thrown out with reproaches and despised by all. I say to you, unless I listen to these words with the same face, with the same joy, with the same purpose of sanctity, I am in no way a friar minor."[19]

Only in the light of the development in the Order can the song of Perfect Joy be truly understood. Though that development simply could not be stopped, it did not pass him by without causing him a lot of pain....him and his first faithful ones.

THE ROAD TO PERMANENT DWELLINGS

Francis and his first brothers had taken quite literally the word of the Lord that they had no lasting dwelling-place in this world. As strangers and pilgrims they had been on the road with no fixed place to stay. It is good to realise that this way of life not only provided them with a great amount of freedom to move but also imposed on them many hardships, which tested their mettle every day. Certainly in the beginning the people were not always friendly to them, and the inclemency of the weather could be a severe trial. That, however, was the way of life they had chosen for themselves, and their enthusiasm helped them to see it through.

Gradually this also started changing. From 1220 onwards the friars became more and more bound to a particular place, and set out for their preaching activities from fixed abodes.

The writings of Francis, and more specifically the two existing Rules "combine the original idea of itinerant preaching with the

necessity of the friars' having fixed dwellings."[20] It is not easy to discover the exact causes that led to the more permanent settlements. Several contemporary authors simply accept it as a fact. A certain degree of permanency or stability was almost by necessity required for those who lived in hermitages and dedicated themselves to the contemplative life. In several places, however, the brothers came to live no more merely as birds of passage, but with a definite will that it should be a place of the friars.

From the life of Francis we know how easily he and his brothers abandoned the hut of Rivo Torto when a farmer wanted to use it as a place and shelter for himself and his donkey. He took a completely different attitude towards the Portiuncula: "If you are driven out by one door, come back in again through another, for this is truly a holy place and God's dwelling."

Perhaps even more remarkable is the gift he accepted in the earlier years of the Order: the gift of Mount Alverna. According to Esser: "In the year 1247 the sons of Count Orlando confirm that their father did orally give, donate and grant the mountain of Alverna, freely and unconditionally, to Brother Francis, his companions and friars, both present and to come so that the aforesaid Father Francis and his companions may dwell there."[21]

It remains a strange thing that Francis, who wanted to have nothing of his own, did not have second thoughts about this remarkable gift. Or perhaps it is not so strange after all: you can never really have or possess a mountain. You may have a deed of ownership, all legal and made up by a notary public, yet the mountain stands untouched in its awesome majesty. But a real transfer of property it was in this case without doubt.

As a general rule, however, Francis continued till the end of his life to insist that the friars appropriate nothing to themselves, that everything be in accordance with their promised poverty, and that the spirit of pilgrimage be preserved in all things. This was also the concern of the friars who journeyed further afield to evangelize other countries. The friars in England, who practically from the very beginning had fixed dwelling-places from which they carried out their apostolic activity, regarded themselves as guests there. In several cases their houses were owned by the municipality or by some other benefactor. Also in Germany the friars used to have houses, though we are less well informed about the

manner in which this situation had grown, since for quite some time they kept up their itinerant way of life. The same holds good for France and other countries.

With the number of brothers growing day by day, and moving away from the cradle further and further, it was practically impossible to continue to leave their dwelling-places to Providence or to the generosity of the people.

CONCLUSION

The last development which we have mentioned, viz. the settling down of the friars in permanent places, had other consequences as well for the fraternity. One was the appointment of a local superior or guardian. The Order maintained its centralized character: the individual houses under a guardian resorted under a provincial minister, whilst the minister general was the head of the whole fraternity.

Father Esser mentions further the beginnings of a daily conventual programme, which was a natural consequence of this settling down. This again led to the adoption of several monastic practices, which the friars of the early days had not known. Later on this development would sometimes go so far that one might ask if this was the Order founded by the man who with so much determination had turned away from the old monastic ideal. "My brothers, my brothers, God called me to walk in the way of humility and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want to hear any mention of the Rule of St Augustine, of St Bernard, or of St Benedict. The Lord has told me that he wanted to make a new fool of me in the world and God does not want to lead us by any other knowledge than that...."[22]

Even though the brothers did not always have the courage to be the kind of fools Francis would have liked them to be, the Order which he founded became the vehicle to carry much of his spirit also into the present age. And it has certainly never forgotten the mandate Francis gave to the first brothers when he sent them out for the first time: "Go, brothers, two by two into the whole world, and announce peace."

NOTES

[1] *Testament of Saint Francis*
[2] *Legend of the Three Companions*, 28-29.
[3] *Legend of the Three Companions*, 34
[4] I Celano, 33
[5] Rule 1221, ch. 9.
[6] I Celano, 39.
[7] *Omnibus of Sources*, page 162, gives both the text and questions about authenticity of the text.
[8] Bonaventura L.M., XI, 1.
[9] I Celano, 45.
[10] Letter to a General Chapter.
[11] Rule 1221, ch. 9.
[12] Rule 1221, ch. 4
[13] Rule 1223, ch. 10
[14] I Celano, 30
[15] Cajetan Esser: *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, page 72.
[16] *Origins*, page 72 etc.
[17] *Origins*, page 80
[18] I Celano, 27
[19] II Celano, 145
[20] *Origins*, pages 165-166
[21] *Origins*, page 157
[22] *Legend of Perugia*, 114

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CHAPTER III

FRIARS MINOR IN EUROPEAN SOCIETY

By Prof. Dr J. A. de Kok, O. F. M.

It is easier to write the story of 750 years of the Franciscan Order in two hundred or two thousand pages than in twenty or so. This is true even if one were to confine oneself only to the influence the Friars Minor had in West European society.

Separate contributions are made in this book on the activity and influence of the friars outside Europe.

The influence the Friars Minor had on society was considerable. The brotherhood came into existence in the same period when medieval towns were rising. In the North the friars were often the first religious to settle down in the towns that had recently been founded there. Or they came at the same time as the Dominicans, Carmelites and Augustinians, the other mendicant orders. The friars played an active part in the life of the towns, which were not so large then. They had close contact with the local population and magistrates.

The influence of the friars depended first and foremost on who and what they were in the practice of daily life, and secondly on tangible achievements and services rendered by them, and in many cases also on the contacts they had with persons who were to play an important part in European history. The Franciscan confessor of Queen Isabella of Castile, Spain (a member of the Third Order herself), who obtained for Columbus (also a Tertiary) admittance to her court is only one relevant example—important enough, though, for the discovery of America!

An incident such as this at once confronts the historian with a problem. What importance is to be attached to such an incident within the greater whole? About the particular achievements of a number of prominent friars and of their contacts with important persons we are generally better informed than about the dealings of the thousands of friars who were less conspicuous.

The names and the deeds of men like Bonaventure (a great theologian and spiritual writer of the 13th century), Antony of Padua (famed preacher from the initial period of the Order), John of Capistrano (the organizer of a crusade against the Turks after the

fall of Byzantium in 1453), Francis Ximenes de Cisneros (simultaneously cardinal-primate and Regent of Spain in the period 1495-1517), Peter of Ghent (relative of Charles V and after 1540 defender of the Indians in Mexico), Leonardo da Portu Mauritio (great organizer of the people's missions in the 18th century), Agostino Gemelli (founder of the Sacred Heart University in Milan in this century) are likely to be encountered in every book. But is knowledge of names synonymous with the importance of life and deeds?

The celebrities such as those mentioned above constitute only some individuals among the estimated one and a half million friars since Francis' time who chose the form of life he had mapped out for them. Of about 30,000 Friars Minor who lived in The Netherlands after 1228, there are only 8,000 whose names we know, and of these 8,000 we mostly know only little more than their names. And these 8,000 are for the greater part those who lived after the 17th century; before 1600 we know only a few hundred names.

Who guarantees that those we know by name and family-name had more influence than the large numbers of friars who went their way unnoticed and passed into oblivion?

For the influence on the world, the number of friars at each moment during the 750 years of history is more important than the rough estimate we made. In the 13th and 14th centuries, there were never less than 30,000 to 40,000 friars in Europe, living in 2,000 houses. In the 15th century the brotherhood grew to some 50,000 or 60,000 in about 3,000 houses. The time of the Reformation constituted a great crisis; the North European provinces were lost. Internal conflicts led to the division of the Order into three branches. The Conventuals and Capuchins had a Minister General of their own. Their numbers too should therefore be added to those of the main branch of Friars Minor. In the 17th century the latter grew to more than 60,000 friars in 3,420 houses. At the numerical culminating-point in 1762 there were 76,900 friars in 4050 houses—that is, excluding the Conventuals and Capuchins.

After 1762 came the great crisis of the Enlightenment, which was expressed in political terms by the rulers in the form of restrictive policies operating against the monasteries. It was followd by religious persecution during the French Revolution and afterwards

in the 19th century by the conflict between the Church and Nationalism in various European countries. Not only the public policies of the governments (e.g. the dissolution of the monasteries) but also an inward change in religious mentality, as a result of which there were fewer vocations to the religious life, brought about the great decline. In 1889 the brotherhood numbered only 14,798 members. As far as numbers are concerned, the renewal in the 20th century did not reach further than the present 20,000 friars (in 2000 houses). To these numbers are to be added also those of Conventuals and Capuchins. The three branches of the Order have together 40,000 members.

But these are only figures, not qualitative data. Such data, however, can only be filled in on the basis of the knowledge that at the zenith of the Order there was a friary in almost every European city, or at any rate in all the important ones.

Rather than tracing the evolution of the life and work of the Order chronologically, which is quite impossible in such a brief space, a profile-sketch of the lines along which the influence of the Friars Minor was perceptible throughout the ages may be given.

I. PREACHERS OF PENANCE BECOME SUPPLY-PRIESTS

The Order of Friars Minor was not founded to contribute to the improvement of Sunday preaching and catechesis or, through better religious education, to the combating of heresies. In so far as, in the initial stage, the friars took an active part in preaching, their central theme was the stimulation of conversion and penance, both their own and that of others. That is why Francis laid so much stress on the friars preaching by their own good example. The friars must go through life simply and humbly; they must be the servants of men. And, while going through life in this way, it is an added advantage if a few words of explication and stimulation can be added.

At the outset the priests formed a minority within the Order. But among that small group of priests there were men of the stature of Antony of Padua, already a great preacher before he entered the Order. Such friars were more eloquent than other members of the Order, and they were often asked by others to speak in public. They were asked sometimes by parish priests who could not preach

so well themselves or who took less interest in preaching. But it could also happen that the friars were invited because of difficulties with heretics or to act as peace-makers in conflict-situations.

In Northern Europe, where towns were just springing up, it could well be that people did not yet have a parish church of their own. In such situations they would try to get the friars to take responsibility for the Sunday Mass and the sermon. This was the case at 's-Hertogenbosch (Bois-le-Duc) in The Netherlands in 1228. Ecclesiastically the little town, only recently founded, still belonged to a neighbouring village, so that citizens asked the parish priest if he would allow the friars to provide services in a chapel as long as the town had no parish church of its own.

Thus it happened that in practice the simple call for conversion and penance subsequently made way for the Sunday homily (explanation of the Gospel), religious instruction, and festal sermons on special occasions. All these made new demands on the friars. One of these was that they should also include a sufficient number of priests. In the 13th century the priests did indeed come increasingly into prominence. From 1260 they not only constitute a majority in the order, but also determine its way of life.

At first sight, the change in the style of preaching seems to be of only minor importance. But, on reflection, the consequences are seen to be drastic. Friars who nurse the sick, lend a hand in gathering in the harvest, and then pray and live together in a barn near a chapel or (as at Mühlberg on the Elbe) in an unoccupied cellar, are not tied to a permanent abode by their form of life, no more than by their exhortations to penance. They can also quietly go elsewhere for a few weeks or even months, for example when the brethren of a certain region come together for a chapter meeting—a gathering where they can discuss their spiritual life and also solve any difficulties that may have arisen in the meantime.

But if a promise is made to assist at divine service in a town on Sunday, or if an obligation is accepted to preach in some existing parish church in order to help the priest there, then the situation becomes quite different. Between 1220 and 1260 one can indeed follow the evolution from a more or less migrant life to permanent abodes throughout the whole of Europe. Everywhere in the towns, plain houses were made available to the friars or were newly built for them, with an adjacent chapel or small church. Besides preaching in other churches on request ("on supply"), they henceforth

take care also of the liturgy and preaching in their own small church according to a fixed order of the day. Small churches, and later even large ones where many people could be accommodated, were built to facilitate such a preaching ministry. Then it is only the superiors of the houses, the guardians, who go to the chapter meeting, which consequently became, to a greater extent than at the initial stage, a governing council.

The brethren in the friary were not (and are not) tied to that one house like the Benedictines and Norbertines. They can be moved (and are indeed transferred from time to time) to other houses in other towns. The rather desultory wandering about of the first few years is now over. For seven hundred years the supply-friary became the model of a Friars Minor house. This model implied first and foremost a centre of plain living, from sober to very poor, without revenues from regular property; next to it a church where they prayed together (choral prayer with conventual Mass) and, moreover, held special services for people who attended the church; and finally a sally-port for "supplies": friars who, on request, render assistance to parish priests in other churches of the town or in the villages of the surrounding countryside. As recompense for such services, there developed also a regulated pattern of begging alms for the friars' subsistence. The so-called "termijn" (a typical Dutch expression for the regular begging-tours) implies that brothers from the friary collected gifts at set times in the district where their services were rendered.

This has been the life-style of the vast majority of the friars in the centuries after 1260. That style of life also accounts for the differences which developed in the role respectively of the priests and the lay-brothers. Preaching (and all that it entailed) became the special preserve of the priests. The lay-brothers, for the most part, found themselves engaged in household duties (and therefore confined to the friary itself): e.g. as porter, gardener, handyman, carpenter, and so on in their own houses. The priests had to be trained for their work as preachers; they studied general and pastoral theology; the lay-brothers were to be found where manual skills were needed, generally amongst the ranks of the illiterate. So it happened that the priests provided the leaders of the brotherhood: the Ministers General and—even more important in practice—the guardians, i.e. the leaders of the local friaries and the first to be responsible for the contacts of the friary with the outer world.

In the supply-friaries as described above will be found the large army of brethren of whom the historian has little or nothing to narrate. Even their names are not known prior to 1700. Yet the first and most constant impact of the life of the Friars Minor on European society has been exercised through this manner of presense. The friary belonged to the town: everybody knew how the friars lived and worked, whether things went well with them or not. They were familiar figures on the streets of most medieval towns. They were encountered in the lanes, walking (since riding had been forbidden by their founder) on their way to some village where their help had been asked for. They were best known in the pulpits, but their contact with society was also to a certain extent determined by the brother porter. All in all, it is a picture of regularity, often disturbed by the typical calamities of those days, such as fires, epidemics or violence of war.

As for the friars who made a name for themselves and even became famous, they are only representative in so far as the thousands and thousands of nameless supply-priests and brothers porters and others took over the initiatives of these individuals and carried them on in a less spectacular way. Without that taking over, the work of the celebrities would have had no consequence and hardly any influence. The renown of the pioneer has been achieved by the fact that many friars, nameless but no less devoted, helped to realize his idea.

Such silent cooperation does not make you famous, unless it fits in with the imitation of Christ, so that others will bestow on you the predicate of "saint." A number of friars emerge from the rows of the nameless through the Calendar of Saints in God's Church. Outstanding among the lay-brothers with the fame of sanctity are many porters, also a man like Paschal Baylon, who was conspicuous in the friary-church by his great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, proclaimed by the preachers, but visibly brought to life in him.

"Ordinary" friars could also find themselves in the Calendar of Saints in some other way. The Martyrs of Gorcum (The Netherlands, 1572) formed together the typical population of a friary in a small town. Most of them were anything but saints in the pious sense of the word, but at the critical moment of persecution in the time of the Reformation they were indeed loyal to the Catholic conception of the Holy Eucharist and the Papacy. That at the

moment of his execution one of these men still remained the hot-head he had always been and kicked in the stomach the hangman who tried to seduce him to apostasy may even be considered a delightful detail against the background of such "run-of-the-mill" friars!

God alone knows the names of the thousands and thousands of men who did not win distinction like the great preachers.

The renowned ones stepped out of the common work of regular supplies; they travelled from friary to friary and drew their mass-audiences during their stay in the towns where those friaries were. Such was already the case with Antony of Padua. When he preached in a town the magistrate decreed that all shops and businesses should close. Berthold of Regensburg (13th century) and Bernardine of Siena (15th century) are but two names out of the long list of friars who used to wander throughout half of Europe.

Their sermons were by no means short. Jan Brugman, a famous preacher in The Netherlands, who is immortalized in the Dutch phrase "to talk like Brugman," would according to the town-chronicle of Deventer, preach on the steps of the town hall (the church being too small) from eleven in the morning to five in the afternoon!

Great preachers were withdrawn from the normal rhythm of the cloister such as it was maintained in a fixed abode. This did not hold good for the confessors, who used to work quietly and in the background. Their labour, however, does follow naturally from the preaching.

II. SPIRITUAL CARE AND PASTORAL COUNSELLING

On the whole, the Friars Minor did not have parishes of their own. Where this did occur, it is a result of special circumstances or (outside Europe) of their participation in missionary work. In the Balkans the friars had the courage to visit the Christians in the villages after that region had been conquered by the Turks in the 15th century and divine service had not been permitted for a long time. Disguised as brothers of the farmers (hence the title of "nunkeys"), they helped to tide over a critical time for Christianity.

After the 16th century, in some Northern European countries, notably in The Netherlands, the Friars Minor—besides secular priests, Jesuits and others—devoted themselves to spiritual care among the Catholics. In these countries, after the schism of the

Reformation, Protestantism had become the prevailing religion. But not all inhabitants were willing to accept the new situation. Especially in The Netherlands it proved possible for Catholics to live on, provided that (until 1795 when there came general religious liberty) they practised their Catholicism in secrecy.

Except in such emergency cases, the Friars Minor did not assume the duties of a parish priest, and in towns where they had at first rendered services because there was no parish church yet, they never considered themselves as parish priests even when a parish church was eventually established.

Nevertheless they came to find themselves in the direct care of souls in various other ways. It is true, in their friary churches they did not attend to baptisms and marriages; that belonged to the parish church. But there was so much else. The fact that on an average the sermons in their churches were better than those in most parish churches attracted large numbers of people. This situation certainly obtained in the centuries before the Council of Trent (1545/64)—which Council took steps to improve the education of the clergy.

Listening to sermons easily leads to an appeal to the friars to hear confessions. This happened already in the beginning when the stress was still on preaching penance. When Gregory of Naples preached in Paris in 1219, he had to hear the confessions of people from his audience for three days on end. These confessions are to be understood as events transforming people's lives. It was not only a matter of a confession of guilt and absolution, but of a complete change of life. A number of such penitents joined the Order; a far larger number would not or could not do so, but asked for spiritual guidance in their lives.

In this way, important townspeople in the university town of Paris, and likewise everywhere else, and also persons from state governments became closely connected with the Order. Louis IX of France and William II, Count of Holland and Roman King (Emperor-Elect) of the German Empire, are only two out of many such in the 13th century and thereafter. They expressed their thanks in donations: they built houses for the friars and decorated their churches. And they liked to be buried with the Friars Minor and in their habit.

With certain groups of persons the pastoral contact of the friars was or became structural. The link with the Poor Clares was there

right from the beginning, at least for the convent of Clare herself, San Damiano near Assisi. That convent Francis declared to be the only one he had helped to found. He would have nothing to do with the other Poor Clare convents, and he also held the brethren back. Yet after Francis' death the Popes insisted on the friars taking over the spiritual guidance of those convents. This was arranged in 1263 by Pope Urban IV, together with the formulation of a general Rule for the Poor Clares.

The Third Order, being a lay movement, had a statute of its own. Unpleasant experience with tertiaries who had run into debts and expected payment for them from the friars contributed to the mutually independent status of the First and Third Orders. Yet the Third Order Rule of 1289 required that visitors and counsellors should preferably be sought among the Friars Minor. In the 14th and 15th centuries, religious institutions of "regular" tertiaries also came into being. In their houses, the Third Order Rule, destined for lay people in the world, was combined with a number of statutes relating to the daily life of the cloister, so that a greater freedom of life-style and religiosity (and for the convents of women also participation in charitable work) was possible than in other convents with strictly traditional monastic rules.

We have the impression that the secular Third Order (as distinct from the institutions of regular Third Order Convents) has been of only little importance after the 14th century. Much more important were the multitude of associations with a devotional and charitable purpose which had their home base in the churches of the Friars Minor. Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Holy Cross, of the Cord of St Francis, of Our Lady, and many more. The names refer to favourite themes of devotion. The confraternities ensured that many people had a regular bond with the church and friary of the Friars Minor.

It was not only strictly religious organizations that became linked up with the Friars Minor. So also were the guilds, i.e. organizations for the social security of the members and their families. The guild-altar stood in the city church. It was there that the guildsmen had their great gatherings on feast days. Also in many a town the board of management found its meeting-room in the parlour or refectory of the friary. Even the magistrates of the town held their meetings there. The friary was for many people

a place where they had easy access. City magistrates would sometimes go into hiding there when they were in danger because of political or social disturbances in the town.

In view of such relations it is understandable that the line from preaching via hearing confessions to giving spiritual guidance frequently led to more general social counselling as well. Very often, and for a very long time (diminishing in the 17th century), the Friars Minor also influenced the de facto government of rulers and city magistrates. We have already referred to Franciscus Ximenes de Cisneros, personal counsellor of Isabella, and after 1495 cardinal-primate and regent of the realm of Spain.

The friars' influence on the social plane was not always welcomed. Many town priests did not mind so much that common people went to the church of the Friars Minor, but when people of high rank did so and had the friars' church embellished, there was tension with the secular clergy. In periods when, and in places where, the friars lived in a reasonably exemplary way in accordance with their Rule, they were little liable to criticism. But in certain periods of their history (e.g. at the end of the 14th century), and throughout their history again and again in various towns, the friars frequently proved to be weak men as well, with the result that they would stand in bad repute outside the circle of their own friends.

A matter of importance in such tensions and conflicts was whether the friars had remembered the word of Francis: The Lord has told me that our greeting should be: may the Lord give you peace. The call to make peace did notably belong to the original preaching of penance. That peace had to be established in one's own heart, but equally also among other people and social groups. And, wrote Francis, if the brothers are not welcome in a particular place, they must go away and do penance elsewhere.

History has often been other than what these words of Francis had pointed out and given as a norm for the future. As early as 1260 Bonaventure appears as the defender of the *rights* of the Order, even where there was opposition to the presence of the friars.

III. LITURGY AND SOCIAL ACTION

Friaries were centres of prayer, of many different kinds of religious activities, and also of social life. This social solidarity sometimes went much further than meetings of governing councils

in the refectory of the friary. In several towns the organization of the local fire-brigade was entrusted to the Friars Minor. Cities and rulers made use of the friars as envoys or messengers. Long journeys to Tartary and China, by order of the Pope, were not the only ones.

In the first few centuries, and also later, many friars were called to episcopal sees. The number so called would have been greater had some of the friars not refused the mitre, Bonaventure as many as three times. Such was in the line of the ideas that Pope Innocent III had in mind when he gave his provisional approbation to Francis' Order. That approbation had for the most part been an experiment. An order without a fixed abode and with only personal ties between individuals was something new. But at a time when all sorts of new trends and movements came to the fore, which were more or less under the suspicion of heresy, it had been a notable event that the leader of a rising movement should have come to ask for the Pope's approbation. This had not happened before.

Innocent III was convinced that only a reformation of the Church on a large scale, and especially a thorough reform of the clergy, could obviate the oncoming heresies. Could this new Order possibly contribute to that reformation? When in a few years the small group of twelve grew to an Order of 5,000 men, and also kept growing afterwards, the Popes began to concern themselves with the Order more intensively. But such a thing is never one-sided; it also means that the Popes became impressed by men within the Order, whom they learned to trust to a high degree. They appointed such men to critical places or sent them on important expeditions like those to China.

The Friars Minor influenced not only papal policies but also Church government. Some were even called to St Peter's Chair. The friars also influenced the liturgy of the papal court, and along that way the liturgy of the whole Church. In the 13th century the choir offices had not yet been uniformly regulated for the whole Church; there were great differences according to diocese or religious institution. The Friars Minor knew no elaborate choir offices: that was the tradition of the Benedictines. The friars, much en route, were looking for a short text, and they chose the short office of the papal chapel. In 1240 Pope Gregory IX asked Haymo of Faversham, Minister General of the Franciscan Order,

to have this particular office of the papal chapel more conveniently arranged and to collect it in one volume that could be taken along easily. This became the precursor of the Breviary.

Pope Nicholas III prescribed that Breviary to be used in all the churches of Rome. Outside the specific liturgical celebration of the Benedictine monasteries, the book was so handy for priests in the care of souls or administrative work that, by the end of the 14th century, it ranked universally as the official Breviary of the Latin Church. In the 16th century this Breviary was revised by the Franciscan General Quinonez, who, by introducing a practical division, achieved what he was aiming at: the recitation of the whole of the psalter in the course of one week. After the Council of Trent a committee was to revise that Breviary once more; Pope Pius X was to have it done anew, but already the Breviary had long established itself in the Church.

The influence of the Friars Minor on the formation of the Missal was much less, and their part consisted mainly in introducing new feasts. Here, too, the form of prayer of the friars and the practice in their churches was the starting-point. On the basis of one's own devotion one celebrated the Sacrament and preached. More about those themes of devotion (and the new feasts) presently. We have already indicated one theme, Holy Eucharist and Cross, when we spoke of the confraternities that found their home in the churches of the Friars Minor.

These confraternities and also individual persons gave their contributions for the decoration of the churches. In so far as these embellishments, statues and paintings, were expected to be of a high standard they were more frequently the work of outside artists and painters than of the friars themselves. Such was the case also in Francis' sepulchral church in Assisi: there Giotto became the classical painter of the Order.

Much more direct was the contribution of the Friars Minor to poetic art and narrative skill: Thomas of Celano, Jecopone da Todi and many others. The two just mentioned gave form to liturgical canticles like the *Dies Irae* and the *Stabat Maier*. Caesarius of Spiers produced a rhymed office for the feast of St Francis. A number of friars became famous as instrument-makers: violins, lutes, organs. Some celebrities in the European history of music acquired their skills under the tutelage of friars who had discovered musical talent in such persons. Rossini was one of them.

Liturgy and preaching, celebrations with prayer and singing—all this was closely connected with social activities throughout the Middle Ages. The socially weak too were not forgotten. This is consistent with the initial story: Francis' meeting with the leper. However it is striking how, consciously or unconsciously, that encounter gradually falls into the background in biographies and in the plastic arts. The leper does not figure in the row of frescoes on the life of Francis, as Giotto painted them in Assisi after 1300.

As a matter of fact, also in European history as a whole, the leper disappeared behind the ranks of those who suffered from a worse calamity, the "Black Death." The great epidemics of the 14th century—various diseases under the collective name of "Black Death"—left their traces. For five centuries, until the disappearance of the great epidemics from Europe, we meet the friars in the nursing and spiritual care of the sufferers from the plague. The number of the friars who, in nursing the afflicted, died from contagion is lacking. But at a rough estimate more than two thirds of the Order perished during the great epidemic of 1347/49. Also, later on, it is a recurrent theme that whole friaries perished through the nursing of plague victims.

In standing up for the socially weak, the friars were not afraid of political conflicts. It is true that the defence of the original population in Central and South America from the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors belongs to missionary history outside Europe. But in the 16th and 17th centuries, the starting-points and arguments for that defence were thought out in Spain and also aired at the Spanish court. What took place on the missions was the continuation of action taken in Europe itself.

In the 13th century not all the regions of Europe were yet Christianized. Only now came the turn of the Baltic States: Prussia Latvia and Estonia, and not of their own free will either. The Teutonic Order had originally been founded in connection with the crusades to Jerusalem, which failed, however. They set themselves a new goal and changed over to the conquest of pagan regions in Europe. Political rule, economic and social dependence plus the new religion were thrust upon these states as a whole.

In 1304, the Friar Minor Frederick of Pernstein, a German, became bishop of Riga and in that capacity became also the great protector of the rights of Estonians and Latvians against the German rulers. Friars Minor were then the ones marked out for taking

in hand, in the 14th century, the Christianization of neighbouring Lithuania—the last European country to become Christian. A Franciscan bishop baptized king Jagiello and his son Vytautas in 1386. The first bishops of Vilna were Friars Minor.

The friars were not afraid either of conflict with the economically powerful. That bread and soup were served out to the poor at the friary gate is not specific, neither does it affect the economic order. But an initiative to thwart the malpractices of the money-lenders (the Lombards) did indeed do so. In Perugia in 1462 some friars started a money-lending bank with a social aim: *Mons pietatis*, mountain of mercy. Jacobus of the Marks became the great propagandist of the undertaking, which shows how much the life of the brethren was interwoven with—in this case—the daily life of the Italian towns.

Yet, in that same 15th century a certain reserve against so strong a social involvement began to make its presence felt within the Order. A number of friars wanted a different relation between prayer and action. Next to the liturgy, i.e. the conventual Mass and choir offices, a new form of methodical meditation came to the fore in the 15th century. That occurred not only among the Friars Minor. Everywhere one could see how individual meditation was becoming a regular daily item, for which all the brethren were expected to be in the church, or some other suitable place, at set times.

With this meditation or recollection there came a desire for a more withdrawn style of living, a more stilled form of living for the whole of the day and the whole week. This came into prominence amongst the Capuchins, who, after 1528, started to form a branch of their own in the Order of the Friars Minor. But the tendency also existed in groups that remained within the main branch. After 1600, the "Recollects" brought along—in keeping with their name—the desire to make the style of the secluded houses the model for the whole Order.

The result of these endeavours was that "outward" orientated activities came less to the fore. Even so, after the 16th century, the friars acted as nurses and spiritual directors during plague epidemics, but then the guardian of the local friary had first to ask the provincial whether he would give permission not only to leave the house for that purpose, but also to break the regularity of the daily religious life.

The friars also continued to help the city churches as well as those of neighbouring villages with supply-priests. The preaching of "spiritual exercises" came to the fore as a new form of work. But direct involvement in social questions seems to decline. The difference is conspicuous during the great social crisis in the 19th century, the initial stage of mechanization, industrialization and urbanization on the continent of Europe. There are no Friars Minor to be found in the first lines of practical activities of this period. Secular priests and laymen are the great pioneers then.

Did the friars have at least some indirect influence at the time? In the 19th century too they did tell the people with whom they came into contact the story of Francis and his ideals. As a result many of the great social pioneers of Catholic Europe seem to have been imbued with the spirit of Francis. We only mention the names of Frederic Ozanam in France, Bishop W. E. von Ketteler in Germany and G. Pecci (the future Pope Leo XIII) in Italy. All three were tertiaries. In The Netherlands the three most influential "social priests" (Schaepman, Ariëns and Poels) also belonged to the Third Order.

What Poels did about 1910 in the south of The Netherlands also happened elsewhere in Europe. Such tertiaries persuaded the friars of the First Order to found new houses in the places where colonies of miners and working-class settlements had come into existence. With that, the friars became involved in new forms of spiritual care and also enlisted in the new centres of sociological study and reflection that have come up. The movement is going on differently according to country and province of the Order. A new direct involvement in social questions has nearly everywhere become also a starting-point for one more shift in the equilibrium between prayer and action.

Against the emphasis on a secluded life (of the last four centuries) the scales sometimes dip far in the other direction in the present period of transition.

IV. FORMATION AND LEARNING

In the first few years, joining the Order was a quite simple affair. The brothers lived in small groups, often not more than two or three men. If the group got bigger, it was divided, and half the number went to another place where there were no friars yet. Experience

soon made it clear that a probationary period was necessary. In 1220 the novitiate was introduced as a time of probation and as a period of formation.

Starting such a novitiate also meant that certain senior friars were more explicitly entrusted with the guidance of the young brothers who had entered the Order. To introduce others into the spiritual life, prayer and a special style of living, is no easy task. Soon, books were written as a help for it. In The Netherlands, as late as 1950, the work of David of Augsburg, written in the 13th century, was still to be found in the cells of the young novices.

In the formation of the young friars, at least of those who were judged to have the capacity of learning, the education was soon to be more extensive. For, as has already been seen, the way of living and the style of preaching began to change in the course of time. As soon as preaching reached further than the call to conversion and penance, and dealt with the proclamation of religious doctrine, one had to know one's faith well. Next to proficiency in religious doctrine, one had also to be trained in the art of preaching.

Besides, the manner of entering the Order itself changed its character. In the initial stage, many of those who joined were older ones. After the Order had spread, it was chiefly people who were still young who presented themselves as candidates. Moreover, they did so no longer to a small and rather mobile group. Everywhere (certainly after 1250) the brethren lived in the towns in fixed friaries, where they celebrated the liturgy in their own church for themselves and for others, and then went on supply in the neighbourhood. The young, sometimes very young people, who entered had to be trained to carry on the activities of the brotherhood.

The first great preachers (e.g. Antony of Padua) and also the first scholars (e.g. Alexander of Hales) were already great preachers and scholars before they entered. Money and goods could be left behind on entering, but not the gift of speech or scholarship! These friars saw clearly that the consolidation of the Order, the changing style of preaching, and the nature of the activities performed and the ever-swelling number of untrained young people must have consequences.

Therefore Antony of Padua made a plea with Francis for theological schooling for those young friars who were to be entrusted

with the office of preaching in the future. Students cannot be without masters. Students and masters cannot do without a library, which again has consequences for the structure of the house and the defrayal of expenses for books, for before the invention of printing they were very expensive.

The first masters were to be found among the university professors and advanced students who joined the Order on the arrival of the first friars in the university towns (especially Bologna, Paris, Oxford). But when, afterwards, mainly young people entered, the most suitable candidates for a mastership had, after their basic schooling and theology, to be sent to the university for further studies.

In the 13th century, the organization of studies in the Order of Friars Minor reached an established form within a few decades, which is quite understandable from the data we know. In each house a friar was designated for instruction, while the better students were sent to a central friary of the custody (district within a province of the Order). After the 16th century, the practice of tutoring all candidates for the priesthood in one provincial house of studies developed. The very best students, the prospective masters, were next sent to the friary of a university town.

The lectures in the friary near the university were also accessible to others. Universities in the Middle Ages were more a collection of lecture institutes than a tightly and centrally set up educational establishment. Especially in the 13th century the Order aimed at placing its cleverest masters in the friaries of Bologna, Oxford, Cologne and, above all, Paris. From their own friary-schools in the university towns, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and John Duns Scotus earned the great reputation they have in the history of theology.

The influence of the Friars Minor (and in this context must be mentioned together with them the Dominicans) in the university towns did not confine itself to scholarship. They had great influence also on the life-style of professors and students outside their own circle. The tuition given by the friars was moreover open to outsiders free of charge; this meant that others too were compelled to do something for poor students, who otherwise would go to the lectures of the mendicants. The latter had already a wide appeal on account of the quality of their teaching. In the golden years of High Scholasticism after 1240, it was not only the

Friars Minor who had a strong position of authority in Paris. The Dominicans too had Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas there. And, for all their differences of opinion, Bonaventure and Thomas were friends.

V. THE FRANCISCAN SCHOOL

Textbooks of the history of dogmatic theology are studded with theories launched by Franciscan scholars in the 13th century and later. More important than their specific theses was their style of working. When one speaks of a Franciscan School, it is not because of the consistent maintaining of a body of ideas, like one can state for Thomism or (within the Franciscan School) Scotism. History reveals to us that the friars showed little interest in getting tied down to a strict and permanent system of thought. They were rather inclined to agree to differ, having started out from practical questions.

For a good understanding of their attitude it should be said in advance that the friars wanted to be practical men. At the root of their studies was the will to train good preachers and spiritual leaders. By that standard of scholarly activity one was apt to look askance at speculation. About 1300, the work of Scotus (*doctor subtilis*), who assumed a very critical attitude towards a line of argument that started too easily from theories, testifies to such scepticism. After him, William of Ockham became one of the most important founders of Nominalism, a trend that in philosophy and theology emphatically wants to stand by determinable facts. Its resistance applied notably to the practice of reasoning from the general to the particular instead of starting from individual phenomena.

Both Scotus and Ockham must have been aware of the pioneer work of their fellow-English confrère Roger Bacon (1214-1294). In the European history of learning he was one of the first and most important precursors of the experimental method. He wished to test old "general" theories for exactitude by means of practical experiments, in which he was particularly active in the field of mechanics.

It was essentially the same practical attitude that induced other friars, starting from their involvement in the nursing of lepers and other patients, to found in 1317 at Dubrovnik (on the west coast of

Yugoslavia) the oldest pharmacy (still in active operation); or, after 1462, in order to strike at the root of the evils of the pawnshops, to found a bank for money-lending without any harsh practices.

With the markedly practical character of the Franciscan style of living and studying is closely connected a recurrent thesis in the Franciscan School: the will (the seat of love) is as a human organ more important than reason (seat of knowledge); and moreover the former precedes the latter more or less. In polemics, the contrast with Thomism was often aggravated excessively; by itself, however, the stand referred to says a great deal about the spiritual background of the brotherhood.

Something of Francis' spontaneity has always been preserved: one refused to confine oneself to a system of knowledge. The attempt of Minister General Lychetto in 1520 to make Scotism more or less compulsory within the Order came to grief at this very point. It was closely bound up with the primacy of the will (voluntarism) and with what one was inclined to see as the ultimate destination of man—the beatific love of God and fellow-man, born of contemplation. One is rather inclined to see knowledge, certainly knowledge in the sense of theology and learning, as a *result* than as a condition of it.

Against that background, learning for the sake of learning is fundamentally wrong. The theme "knowledge and wisdom" (the latter being the measure for the former) therefore comes back again and again in Franciscan tradition. With Franciscan scholars it repeatedly determines their taking a stand in questions like the relation of faith and love, the sense of an implicit knowledge of God as it is found in the actual life of (mostly uneducated!) people, the significance of affective contemplation of salvation history in relation to the Life of Jesus.

Not for the sake of speculation, but from a view of theology as practical learning, Scotus launched his theses about the motive of Jesus' Incarnation, about Christ's Kingship and Mary's Immaculate Conception. Earlier, Bonaventure had, starting from the bond between theology and contemplation, put wisdom before knowledge, and formulated a very pronounced opinion about the (serving) task of theology.

Most theses, as they were defended by Franciscan authors, were not or were only partly original. But from their own background

Bonaventure and others most emphatically put accents of their own within the development of Augustinian theology.

From the 13th to the 17th century that theology had had direct influence on the conception of life and society within Western Europe. The very fact that social life and religion were so much interwoven made the schism of the 16th century such a tragic thing. The Protestant Reformation thought that the Church had to be purged of a thousand years of decadence. Therefore, of the Fathers and theologians, only the very oldest from the first centuries of Christianity—and for the West practically only Augustine—seemed to remain authoritative Bible commentators. But already in the 17th century some medieval theologians found again recognition in circles of the Reformation. Besides the Cistercian Bernard of Clairvaux, this held good also for Bonaventure.

After 1650 the Franciscan theologians shared with all Scholastic theology in the crisis which the rise of modern science and philosophy brought in its train. Especially in the 18th century the study of theology degenerated into a repetition of older theses in the schooling of young confrères. This theology was supplemented with apologetics against the new notions of the period of Enlightenment (from which they sometimes adopted more than they noticed themselves). Such theology and apologetics scarcely influenced the developments in learning and social life outside the circle of faithful followers.

Pope Leo XIII attempted through papal support (encyclical of 1879) to stimulate a form of Neo-Scholasticism. In it Neo-Thomism predominated, but the Pope positively intended also a revival of Bonaventure and Scotus. As a matter of fact, the result remained limited to a better knowledge of the past. The Fathers of Quaracchi (near Florence in Italy) provided critical text-editions of the most important Franciscan theologians. By the side of these appeared analytical studies. Also others, besides Friars Minor, e.g. Etienne Gilson, contributed liberally to the study of Bonaventure.

Our knowledge of the history of theology and dogma has been deepened considerably by the Neo-Scholastic movement. The awareness of a *development* of dogma, however, was adduced in the 19th century by someone who was quite outside the ranks of the Neo-Scholastics. He was a member of the Third Order of St

Francis: John Henry Newman. For a long time Neo-Scholasticism turned a blind eye to Newman's views; a few Scotists showed an early interest in them. But Neo-Scotism, also because of the age-old reluctance of Franciscans to tie themselves down to one particular system, was too restricted in extent to exercise real influence. And probably it was also limited, as were the other theological systems, in its possibilities to transform age-old theological doctrines into answers to questions of the 20th century.

When, in the middle of the 20th century, the inadequacy of answers to ecclesiastical and social questions was really accepted, Neo-Scholasticism broke down. New insights into the history of Salvation (and the resultant renewal of biblical exegesis) have not provided a new theology as yet. It was clearly noticeable at the Second Vatican Council that the Council was rather a groping for new ways than an answer to all questions. The crisis of Western European theology has become conspicuous in the last twenty years in a fast succession of trends and tendencies.

In the searching and groping of contemporary Western European theology, one could ask if a specific Franciscan outlook too is going to emerge. The 21st century might be a better judge of that.

VI. PREACHERS AND WRITERS

The name of Antony of Padua demonstrates the link between preaching and the need for study and scholarship. To this combination, Bonaventure adds spiritual writing. These three gifts are really inseparable. Over the centuries, well educated friars have not only preached reform of life and deepening of faith and given guidance to people in their lives by talking to them, but also contributed to this with the pen.

A full list of names cannot be given here. Only a few of these writers will be mentioned. First of all, if we leave out Francis with his letters to priests and others outside the brotherhood, reference should again be made to Bonaventure. As Minister General of the Order (1257-1274) he sought to defend the Franciscan ideas and to expound them systematically. For him, the Order is the most perfect, because it combines the ideals of the hermits (contemplation), of the monks (asceticism, prayer and the practice of virtues) and of the secular priests (the care of souls and spiritual guidance).

The difference between him and Francis is immediately obvious. As soon as there is talk of "ideals" on which a religious order is built, it is a matter of objective aims such as a theoretician sets them out and no longer the concrete encounter of living people with God in Jesus Christ. However, one must do Bonaventure justice: he could do no other. Among the friars, there was a great difference of opinion which way the Order ought to go; the Order was in danger of splitting up on account of those disputes. As General of the Order Bonaventure then contrived to carry through one interpretation of the life of the Friars Minor. For that purpose a theoretical definition of aims was indispensable. The attempt to have all the older descriptions of the life of Francis destroyed and replaced by an official biography (written by himself) was also in keeping with this project.

Nevertheless, Celano's biographies and the *Legend of the Three Companions* survived that treatment. Next to Francis' own writings, these biographies are today the main sources of information about him. But for seven centuries the image of Francis had been determined by Bonaventure's two biographies. In them, and also in writings for the defence of the Order against outsiders, Francis appears as a man sent by God to bring these already mentioned ideals among men, and thus to build up a new bulwark against ignorance and superstition.

Bonaventure's work not only determined for people the image of Francis, but also for seven centuries the self-understanding of the Order. It needed an outsider, Paul Sabatier (Protestant professor at Strasbourg) with his book *Vie de Saint François* (1894), and then a great revival of the study of St Francis and the Order itself (e.g. Kajetan Esser), to see the historical limitations of Bonaventure's vision.

That nowadays the older sources and interpreters of Francis' life are coming into prominence, that especially Francis' own writings are again being closely read and studied, is of great importance, now that the Order in Western Europe, seven centuries after Bonaventure, is faced with considerable changes necessitated by changes in the whole of society, for which the Bonaventurian interpretations do not provide adequate answers.

Bonaventure not only wrote about Francis and the ideals of his Order, but also wrote on the basis of his own experience about the path of life leading man to God: *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.

Corresponding with it followed *Incendium Amoris* (the ardour of love), in which the triple way to God (purgation, illumination, affection) is described. *Lignum vitae* (The tree of life) is a series of 48 meditations on the events of Jesus' life and his death on the cross. To that life of Jesus is directed also the piety of other Franciscan writers.

The Order also inherited from its founder a great devotion to the Holy Eucharist. When in 1217 Francis divided the Order into twelve provinces and assigned a part of Europe to each province, he himself wanted to join the group that was to go to Francia, what is now Northern France and Southern Belgium. The reason was that he had heard from Jacques of Vitry, who was a native of Liege, that there was great devotion to the Holy Eucharist there. The plan fell through, however. Cardinal Hugolinus, who after a meeting with Francis, had been asked by him to become protector of the Order held him back: they could not do without Francis at the centre of the tempestuously growing brotherhood. As leader of the brotherhood, he had promised obedience to the Pope of Rome, and the brethren in their turn had promised obedience to him. How was that to be carried out in practice when Francis was far away?

Francis saw himself as the herald of the great King, and he knew the King as one present among us in the Holy Eucharist. The theme regularly recurs in the 13th century with great preachers such as Antony of Padua and Berthold of Regensburg, and with the great theologians Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure and Scotus. The theme moreover found a solid base in Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament as they were found in the churches of the Friars Minor (by the side of those of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Cross, and others). Along this way, the patron of all Eucharistic unions has come to the front: the Spanish lay-brother Paschal Baylon (16th century).

In the life-story of Francis, the Cross took a central place; with Franciscan preachers and writers attention was also directed to the events that immediately preceded the crucifixion. Not everyone could follow the path of those events in Jerusalem itself. Thus originated in the 14th century the devotion of the Way of the Cross, the passing along the stations of Jesus' sorrowful last journey. In the 18th century new life was breathed into this devotion by the Italian Leonardo a Portu Mauritio. In the 15th century devotion

to the Holy Name was emphasized. Especially Bernardine of Siena was its propagandist and is therefore rightly depicted in art with the Christ's monogram, the Greek letters IHS, within an aureole.

With the Son goes the Mother, later elevated to the position of Patroness (Queen) of the Order as Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. Her life on earth, too, is followed in detail by the friars. Thus originated the feasts of the Visitation (first in the Order, and in the 15th century for the whole Church) and of the Betrothal, and starting from it also a feast day for St Joseph (in 1399 a special office within the Order, in 1621 for the whole Church). The angelus-bell ('the Angel of the Lord announced to Mary') dates from the 13th century. There developed also the devotion to Mary's parents, Anne and Joachim.

Nowadays attention in the Order is markedly shifting from Bonaventure's systematic view of Francis to the reading of Francis' writings themselves. Now it is also becoming clear again how Francis tasted the deepest mystery behind all, the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. In some places Trinity Sunday had been celebrated before, but in 1260 it was introduced into the whole Order. John Peckham provided the text for a new office. In 1334 the feast was introduced into the whole Church, on the first Sunday after Pentecost, as a conclusion of the liturgical celebration of the great Mysteries of Salvation: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost.

Specific accents were laid in the Order on the love for the Mother of the Lord, and consequentially Scotus, the theologian, arrived also at a dogmatic thesis about the Immaculate Conception, Mary's being conceived without original sin. The argument seemed straightforward enough: God could do it; it was becoming Jesus' Mother; so God did do it. The love for the Holy Virgin was a stronger argument than strict logic: you can never enough sing Our Lady's praises!

This argument was not simply adopted by Pope Pius IX in the dogmatic definition of 1854, but that proclamation was indeed celebrated as a victory over others (Thomas Aquinas), who had their doubts in the Middle Ages.

VII. DEFENDERS OF TRADITION

It was certainly a painful moment in the history of the Western European Church that most of the Friars Minor (and with them most Dominicans) did not understand the deepest intentions of a

Biblical revival at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century. Afterwards, friars even contributed to denigrating the greatest representative of that movement. The absolutely unfounded accusation of bad faith as it was alleged against Erasmus was also maintained by a number of Friars Minor after his death.

In the history books this movement is known as Scriptural Humanism. *Humanism*, for two reasons: first because of great attention paid to man—how the human being ought to live as a Christian. Where does man find the *sources* from which he can know it? Then comes the second element: the sources should not come from stray texts taken out of their context, after which one might manipulate the quotations in theological polemics. The Bible, the source of Christian life, must be seen as a human entirety. Therefore no stray texts, but texts in the whole of the Sacred Books are to be studied in a way that can make the Bible a Book of Life, a book for the reform of life.

The ideal, which is harder to realize than what the pioneers imagined, resolves itself into this that one tries to understand the biblical books as it were from within. Only after that, with avoidance of quibbling and polemics, may one try to draw out the implications for the Christian life. For that purpose, reconstruction of the pure text of Holy Scripture is important, for during the repeated copying over and over again in the centuries before the invention of printing (1454) a great many mistakes had crept in. Moreover, the Latin translation was mostly used, whereas the Sacred Books had originally been written in Hebrew and Greek. Also the study of the old Fathers, the Greek ones and in the West particularly Jerome, is important for a good understanding of the Scriptures. Those Fathers should specially be read where they give an exegesis of Holy Scripture. One should not limit oneself to the quotations as medieval authors cite them in the course of theological reasonings.

That was going to be a rather difficult task. Many people thought this a long philoglogical detour, which, moreover, seemed important only to a small intellectual elite. It is particularly these two objections that consciously or unconsciously conditioned the opposition to the movement. The first objection, though, does not lie in the tradition of the Friars Minor. In the 13th and 14th centuries the friars have, from their practical approach to theology

and learning, repeatedly entered protests against the use of the Bible as a theological book of quotations.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, the Friars Minor edited a long series of Bible-commentaries and even a sort of dictionary of the Bible. That they were forgotten is due to the fact that they were superseded by the work of one of the Friars Minor who found universal recognition and circulation for his work. Nicholas of Lyre first worked at a tripartite *Postilla literalis* (1322/31) and next for nine years at a *Postilla moralis*. The titles are characteristic: look first at what the text says literally, before you start speaking or writing about the sense it has for theology and piety. Of the *Postilla literalis*, 1200 manuscripts have been preserved, and after 1471, the work was printed more than a hundred times.

From this tradition, then, a number of Friars Minor supported the ideals of Scriptural Humanism. Among them was the Cardinal-primate and Regent of the Realm of Spain, Franciscus Ximenez de Cisneros. In his dual capacity he commissioned the university of Alcala to print side by side six classical Bible-editions (in different languages) as material for collation (*Complutensian Polyglot* 1514/17). But in those years most Friars Minor were, for practical reasons, thinking quite differently from a number of scholars among them: for the care of souls among the great mass of the people who could not read or write, the laborious work on the correction of scribal mistakes would be of little benefit.

The urgently needed reformation of the Church, the amendment of Christian life in every day practice, could not wait for scholars to complete their labours. And many friars were inclined to extend the objection to the top: for the elite, too, no essential points would change by the emendation of scriptural texts and translations. Because, God was with His Church; on crucial points things could not have really gone wrong. Also, without the work of linguists and philologists it was clear enough what was wrong with the Church around 1500.

For the standard-bearers of Scriptural Humanism, it became the occasion for berating the monks and friars as ignoramuses. And in reaction against this, it followed that, overlooking their real aim, the opponents labelled Erasmus and his peers as authors of "learning for the sake of learning". Consequently, a charge of *non-commitment* was brought against them, when, after the schism, the Scriptural Humanists did not unconditionally opt for one side.

For convenience's sake one ignored the fact that even brethren from one's own ranks had chosen the side of Martin Luther, or hesitated. That hesitation was induced by the difficulty that people experienced in wanting to remain Catholic but, at the same time could not bring themselves to defend through thick and thin the actual practice of the Catholic Church.

This hesitation was more pronounced among the Scriptural Humanists. In their eyes the Lutheran schism, and especially the fierce mutual fighting, meant a disaster. The real reformation of the Church, so urgently needed, could only be harmed by it. Adducing arguments, Erasmus remained a Catholic, raising also his objections against Luther, but many Friars Minor (and Dominicans and later also Jesuits) thought ill of him on the ground that his was a courteously formulated rejection on main points (the maintaining of human liberty and responsibility), and not an overall defence of the Church.

In this manner, at a decisive moment of history, on the eve of the schism and in the first decades after it, important defenders of the Church, in communion with 1500 years of Tradition and with the Bishop of Rome, missed each other. As a result there could originate disputations between the wrong persons. For that is how one must view it when for instance in 1522 the guardian of the friary of Zürich conducted the dispute with Zwingli, which was of crucial importance for the course of events in that town. The city magistrate had asked for advice on how to act on the question of the schism.

Zwingli came from the tradition of Scriptural Humanism. What would have happened if, before the magistrate, he should have had to argue with an opponent from the same tradition who had remained a Catholic? We do not know. But what is notable elsewhere, too, e.g. in the dispute of the guardian of Zwickau with Thomas Müntzner, who was active there, is the following: Friars Minor who remained Catholics could hold their own with opponents who joined the Reformation when the latter came from the same Scholastic tradition. Disputes, however, with Scriptural Humanists who became Protestants, were lost by them repeatedly, or, more correctly, every time the city magistrates agreed with the arguments of their opponents. For, these Scriptural Humanists made the focal point of their arguments the use of Holy Scripture as the foundation of a Christian philosophy of life. And then they

posed the necessity of a correct text, against which the Friars Minor upheld the value of tradition. The anything but flourishing ecclesiastical practice and notably also the degeneration of the papacy of those days made that argument weak in practice. The magistrates agreed with the thesis that in Holy Scripture God Himself was speaking through His prophets and apostles, and that it was better to listen to precisely that, that is, to a text which was as near to the original as possible.

This surely was a first signal that the friars were beginning to lose their influence on the development of European culture, and that they shared in the wider phenomenon that after the 16th century the influence of the Church on world events was steadily declining.

The developments in biblical studies in the next four centuries would demonstrate later that the ideals of Erasmus and his supporters were much more practical, much less learning for the sake of learning, than many Friars Minor (and others) thought was the case. Also in Protestant Europe many have not properly understood the significance of the new methods of biblical studies. Such misunderstanding determined the orientation in the 17th and 18th centuries towards a Bible-exegesis detached from Church and Tradition. And next it happened that the outlook upon life receded more and more from Christian Tradition.

In the history of the Friars Minor appears what obtains for the Church as a whole. The impact upon general social events gradually decreased; the renewers of the outlook on life and society went their own way starting from other backgrounds than the traditional ecclesiastical ones; Church and Order were pushed back into a position of defence and protection of a group of their own that had remained loyal.

Also after the 16th century, the Friars Minor remained defenders of the traditional conception of the Holy Eucharist and of the role of the papacy in the life of the Church. One kept fighting the Protestants but discovered only very late how much in the last few centuries faith in a Revelation itself was being undermined. Therefore, in retrospect, the controversialists made less impression than the martyrs who were put to death in the 16th and 17th centuries because of their beliefs about the Eucharist and the Papacy.

VII. LOSS OF INFLUENCE

After the schism the Friars Minor attempted to revive the classical theology of Scotus, just as Dominicans and Jesuits tried to do with the theology of Thomas Aquinas. This is easy to follow at the Council of Trent (1545/63). The theological advisers of the bishops who were meeting there succeeded in reverting to the great theological systems of the 13th century, when they formulated the decrees of the Council. The theology of the 14th and 15th centuries was deliberately overlooked in this process.

The elan of the Catholic revival in the 16th and 17th centuries took its stand on the basis of Scholasticism. From the tradition of Scriptural Humanism one took over an interest in the historical background of the Bible-books; and the controversy with the Protestants brought about an increase in the interest in ecclesiastical history. The historiography of the Order fitted in with the whole of that interest. In the 17th century, Lucas Wadding, an Irishman, made a name for himself with his *Annales Minorum*. But the genuine interest in a philosophical dealing with biblical and historical texts remained the province of a small group of scholars, which, for lack of interest on the part of most of the theologians gradually came into the sphere of influence of the developing "modern" sciences, increasingly independent by the side of (and detached from!) theology and traditional spirituality.

In that field of non-theological learning, mathematics was becoming more and more powerfully the mother of all sciences. After 1500 mathematics proved applicable to mechanics and more generally to the measuring of physical processes, and then to a radical renewal of technology. After 1760 that renovation of technology was to lead to a complete change in the forms of society.

The Friars Minor also experienced the general historical development which separated institutional Church from European society. The history of the Order after 1600 has up to now not been studied so thoroughly as the history of the period before 1600. Consequently, little is known about attempts to break through that evolution. Certain it is, as we wrote above, that after the 16th century the longing for a more contemplative and retired life was markedly in evidence. There are also indications that the anti-religious politics of the rulers in the period of Enlightenment (18th and 19th centuries), and especially the French Revolution,

took the brotherhood by surprise. But whether the Friars Minor saw the developments less clearly than others cannot yet be determined because of the lack of historical research.

In 1848, Frederic Ozanam (a Franciscan tertiary) pointed out to what extent the Church ran the risk of becoming the Church of the "old" population-groups: the nobility, farmers and tradespeople. And he also described how far the Church had become estranged from the new groups of intellectuals and industrial labourers. And it is certainly no solution to seek closer relations with the other new group, the liberal bourgeoisie, as they would be called nowadays, which was only half-heartedly committed to the Church: that is, the new elite of officials and middle-class employees.

But the First Order was then passing through difficult times. After the restrictive monastic policy of the 18th century and the storm of the French Revolution there was much suffering in the 19th century owing to anti-ecclesiastical measures, caused by a nationalistic policy in Germany and Italy, and by the oppression of annexed Poland and Lithuania in Russia, and by the anti-clerical policies in France, Italy and Spain. Spain had also experienced several civil wars which had been accompanied by great destruction. As a result, the notion of "tradition" (and the defence of tradition) could—in the 19th century even more strongly than in the 17th and 18th centuries—even be reduced by many friars to the notion of *preservation*: that is, to a defence of a historical heritage and of the people against dangerous developments in society. In the 20th century, a change in this seems to be in the making. The friars are now getting more emphatically, and especially more directly, involved in modern problems.

Do they still have a message for Europe (and North America) from their own history? European culture would now seem to be at a turning-point. In essence, the modern philosophy of life as well as modern learning seem to be based on a dream. A dream of human power; the dream that the world as a whole could be manipulated in order to serve human aims. Of this, the limits are being discovered in the 20th century in many different ways. The deepest realities of life offer resistance to such manipulation. There is an old Dutch saying: "Money alone does not make you happy". In our culture, money is *the* great means of exerting power; but what is really essential is not for sale. The ultimate impotence of wealth cannot be concealed any longer.

A confrontation with ultimate human impotence, however menacing, is inevitable. What does it mean that, within the Order, interest in the meeting of Francis with the leper—as a theme fallen into the background for centuries on end—has come to the front again from the reading of Francis' own writings?

"Loss of influence": perhaps a question-mark should have been placed behind that sub-title? For, returning to the question posed at the beginning: what are the criteria by which influence can be measured? The lines along which public life was more or less strongly influenced are visible. Very little indeed has been written down about what was roused in the hearts of men by the lives and works of the Friars Minor. And that is quite right!

NOTES

Literature: It is very extensive. A good introduction to the history of the Order in the English language: John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order, from its origins to the year* 1517, Oxford, 1968, with an excellent bibliography.

A current bibliography is edited by the journals *Collectanea Franciscana*, Rome, 1929 seq., in addition to which reference should also be made to the systematic *Bibliographia Franciscana* (the last one covering the years 1964-1973 is nearly completed), and *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 1908 seq.

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

The expansion of the Order beyond Europe

By Prof. Dr Louis Mascarenhas, O.F.M.

It sounds like a commonplace to say that the Franciscan Order is missionary, but when one looks back at the early beginnings of the Order, one is amazed at how Francis did indeed bring a new element into the life of the Church and the Order. Most of the movements at the time were a protest against the style of life of the clergy, but very little was heard about the preaching of the Gospel outside Europe. Francis, who had no idea whatsoever of founding an Order, looks back and says that the Lord inspired him to live the way he lived. He starts an Order that breaks away from the Benedictine tradition of stability, and makes mobility and poverty the hallmarks of his new religious community. This new group was described by some writers of the time as God's salvation come to men. Francis had indeed brought new life to the Church and emphasized the apostolic character of the Christian community once again.

The missionary elan of the new Order can be seen first in the movement towards the common man. Francis did not want to identify himself with the nobles and the educated clergy. He wanted his friars to go to the common man and to preach the good news in simple words. However, this did not satisfy the restless soul of Francis. He began to send his friars to the north across the Alps, and to the south to the lands of the Saracens and the unbelievers. He had no definite missionary methodology or vision. He was a child of the time and believed very strongly that only through Baptism would people be saved. He longed to bring the good news of salvation to the Saracens. And so in his Rule of 1221 he writes:

> "Our Lord told his apostles: Behold, I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves. Be therefore wise as serpents, and guileless as doves (Mt. 10, 16). And so the friars who are inspired by God to work as missionaries among the Saracens and other unbelievers must get permission to go

from their minister, who is their servant. The minister, for his part, should give them permission and raise no objection, if he sees they are suitable; he will be held to account for it before God, if he is guilty of imprudence in this or any other matter.

The brothers who go can conduct themselves among them spiritually in two ways. One way is to avoid quarrels or disputes and be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1 Pet. 2, 13), so bearing witness to the fact that they are Christians. Another way is to proclaim the word of God openly, when they see that it is God's will, calling on their hearers to believe in God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Creator of all, and in the Son, the Redeemer and Saviour, that they may be baptized and become Christians, because unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (Jn 3, 5).

They may tell them all that and more, as God inspires them, because our Lord says in the Gospel: Everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven (Mt. 10, 32); and: whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and of the holy angels (Lk. 9, 26).

No matter where they are, the friars must always remember that they have given themselves up completely and handed over their whole selves to our Lord Jesus Christ, and so they should be prepared to expose themselves to every enemy, visible or invisible, for love of him. He himself tells us: He who loses his life for my sake will save it (Mk 8, 35), for eternal life. Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5, 10). If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also (Jn 15, 20). When they persecute you in one town, flee to another (Mt. 10, 23). Blessed are you when men reproach you and persecute you, and, speaking falsely, say all manner of evil against you, for my sake (Mt. 5, 11). Rejoice on that day and exult, for behold your reward is great in heaven (Lk. 6, 23). I say to you my friends: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do (Lk. 12, 4). Take care that you do not be

> alarmed (Mt. 24, 6). By your patience you will win your souls (Lk. 21, 19). He who has persevered to the end will be saved (Mt. 10, 22)."

We have purposely quoted the above at length because it brings out very clearly and for the first time in a religious Rule the task of mission. Francis in his own inimitable way of Gospel simplicity underlines the work of preaching, but at the same time the witness of the life of the friars. Mission is born out of their own dedication to the Lord.

Two years later in the final Rule of 1223, this missionary vocation is again emphasized (Ch. 12):

> "If any of the friars is inspired by God to go among the Saracens or other unbelievers, he must ask permission from his provincial minister. The ministers, for their part, are to give permission only to those whom they see as fit to be sent."

Francis also indicates very beautifully how the friars are to conduct themselves in the world. In Gospel words he underlines the need of peace and respect and courteousness.

> "And this is my advice, my counsel, and my earnest plea to my friars in our Lord Jesus Christ that, when they travel about the world, they should not be quarrelsome or take part in disputes with words (cf. 2 Tim. 2, 14) or criticize others; but they should be gentle, peaceful and unassuming, courteous and humble, speaking respectfully to everyone, as is expected of them. They are forbidden to ride on horseback, unless they are forced to it by manifest necessity or sickness. Whatever house they enter, they should first say, 'Peace to this house' (Lk. 10, 5), and in the words of the Gospel they may eat what is set before them (Lk. 10, 8)."

This passage from Chapter 3, Rule of 1223, indicates also the way the friars became known as messengers of peace, brothers of reconciliation.

I. FRANCIS, THE MISSIONARY TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Francis was born at a time when we first begin to notice signs of tiredness and disillusionment about the Crusades. The enthusiastic response of the first Crusade could not be continued. It was becoming a burden to maintain a war with so much money and personnel and so far away from home. Between the third and fifth crusade (1189-1192, 1228-1229) the interest in fighting the Muslims is on the decline, and instead there is even secretly trade and commercial ties maintained with them. This does not mean that the Church gave up her wish to recover the Holy Places. She continues to try, but always meeting with a poor response.

Whilst this approach to the Muslims was on the wane, Francis himself longed very much for their salvation through the love and mercy of Jesus Christ, and not with arms. He wanted to go as he was, the simple man of Assisi, and to win the Muslims over by his very powerlessness. This was the message he gave his friars when he sent them out. But he longed to give them the example of his own life. Deep down he felt that the conversion of the Muslim would not be so difficult. The power of the Gospel would suffice.

Some authors state that as early as 1212 Francis was determined to go to Syria and to disembark at Acre. It is not clear at which port he embarked, but contrary winds forced him to go ashore at Dalmatia. When finally he saw there was no hope of ever sailing from there to the Middle East because of contrary winds he came back to Italy. In 1213 he tried again. This time he wanted to go to Morocco with a companion, but he fell ill in Spain. He had had in mind to preach the Gospel to Miramolino Mohammed al-Nasir. These attempts did not discourage Francis. He remained the restless man longing to spread the message of the Gospel beyond the Christian lands.

In 1219 he set out again to the Middle East. He went there with Brother Pietro of Cattani via the port of Ancona. They reached Acre after a month's sailing, and from there made plans to go on to Egypt. There at Acre the first house of the Order was founded in the Middle East. He reached Damietta a month later just about the time when the Crusaders suffered a terrible defeat. Sultan Al-Kamel was willing to have a truce, and while negotiations were going on, Francis decides to meet the Sultan and to convert him. He moves

through the lines right up to the Sultan's court, and is received very kindly. He is allowed to preach and to speak about Christ. But the kind way in which the Sultan received him ended all his hopes of receiving martyrdom. It indicated a new way in which the friars would relate to Muslims, not through war and violence, but through simplicity and humility; not with power, so vulnerable and powerless.

Some writers say Francis returned to Italy disappointed and sick. This may be true, and yet in going to the Middle East he had initiated a new direction in the approach to Muslims. This approach would be followed in the years to come by both the Dominican and the Franciscan friars. It has also influenced the respectful approach to Muslims which characterizes so much of our own mission policy today.

Tradition has it that the Sultan was inspired by the ordinary rough man he saw before him, and ended his meeting, saying: "Remember me in your prayers, and may God, by your intercession, reveal to me which belief is more pleasing to Him." The Sultan gave Francis many presents, which the latter in his usual way refused. "Take them at least for the poor," urged the Sultan but Francis only accepted a little horn which he used for calling people together when he preached.

This story which has been embellished with all kinds of interesting additions was meant to remind the Christian world that it is not in war that people can be won over, but by genuineness and simplicity. Francis was no threat to anyone. The message he gave to his own people in Italy—Peace and Goodwill—was the message he also gave to the Sultan, even though he felt that the Saracens would not reach salvation unless they believed in the Lord Jesus.

II. THE EARLY FRANCISCAN FOUNDATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Before the first General Chapter of the friars in 1217, there were as yet no real provinces. Areas or regions were entrusted to a group of friars. For these areas and regions volunteers were asked to serve as ministers of the friars. At the Chapter, certain friars were now designated as Provincials. It is at this time that Francis speaks very earnestly of the need of establishing a Province in Syria. The decision to do so was quickly followed up. In the

years that followed, some 14 houses were established in Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Cyprus. These formed the nucleus of what is today known as the Custody of the Holy Land.

The houses served a double purpose: they were mainly for the friars engaged in the pastoral care of the many Latin families who had taken residence there during the Crusades as well as the pilgrims who came to visit the Holy Land. Besides this, some of the friars also tried to preach the word to the Muslim population. The atmosphere of the dominating ruling power in the hands of the Latin lords was not at all conducive to good relations. The presence of the Latin Christians was tolerated both by the Eastern Christians as well as by the Muslim subjects. The Muslims could not forget the massacres of the first two crusades. Further, the rivalry among the Christian princes themselves did not serve to project a correct image of the Christian community itself.

The thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries describe new foundations, and then also new disasters as the Muslims slowly took over the Holy Places again, and many of the friars were killed. By 1291 with the capture of the city Ptolomy, Palestine once again came under the control of the Egyptian Muslim dynasty (1291-1516). Being closer to the scene and able to support themselves with manpower from among their own citizens, the Muslim armies gradually proved the stronger party.

It was clear that another way would have to be found to relate to the Muslims and to guarantee access to the Holy Places. This was through diplomatic channels. Delegates from Naples and Aragon to the Muslim courts started what has become the normal procedure today. They became the link for safeguarding and protecting the pilgrims who went from their kingdoms to the Holy Land, and at the same time the safety of the Christians themselves in Muslim lands was assured. It was also primarily due to the influence of the Christian legations to the Muslim courts that ultimately the friars could once again organise themselves to form the Custody of the Holy Land. There was a regular correspondence between the legates, mostly Dominicans, and the friars looking after the Holy Places. If at any time the friars felt that the places were neglected and needed help and protection, they would seek the assistance of the legates who in turn took up the matter with the sultans.

The friars were especially keen on having within their grasp the Holy Sepulchre. At this time we hear of the friaries at the Cenacle, the Holy Sepulchre and Mount Sion. The protection afforded by legates resulted in more houses being opened at almost all the places connected with Jesus' life. Connected to these houses, hospices were also opened for the pilgrims themselves. Although the Popes demanded that the pilgrims to the Holy Places first get permission from them, many ignored this ruling. Among them specially were the merchant class which took up contact with the Muslim rulers for reasons of trade and commerce. Interestingly, as happens in many other places today, even when the Crusades were being fought, the merchants somehow continued their trade with the Muslims.

The friars who were entrusted with the care of the Holy Places maintained good relations with the Muslim rulers. Now and then incidents took place and misunderstandings arose, and local rulers would deal harshly with the Christian community, resulting in some of them being put in jail, sometimes even put to death.

It is understandable then that the policy towards the Muslims remains low-keyed. Good relations had to be maintained at any cost. New Crusades brought new problems and aroused the anger of the Muslims against the Christians. The documents of the Custody reveal that many friars died together with the Crusaders. At one time the Custody of the Holy Land was practically reduced to Cyprus. This was after the fall of Acre in 1291. The fourteenth century saw a calmer situation and the houses that were opened have survived to our day.

Knowing the risk involved in preaching Christ to the Muslims, it is surprising that we do hear of missionary work done quietly and without too much publicity. Apostasy from Islam was dealt with by death.

The early missions then to the Middle East were concerned mainly with the care and protection of the Holy Places, the care of pilgrims and of the Christian communities there, with an occasional outreach to the Muslim. Given the difficult political situation, it must have demanded quite a bit from the friars themselves. Many of them did indeed give their lives for Christ. The friars also looked after the Christians of the Eastern rites, but here too,

given the Latinising trends of the Christian princes and of the Latin Church established in the Holy Land, relationships were not always pleasant.

III. THE EARLY MISSIONS TO NORTH AFRICA

After Francis had returned from Damietta, he dispatched a group of friars to Morocco (1220). They almost immediately betook themselves to a local mosque and spoke openly against the prophet Mohammed. Five of them were martyred. Francis rejoiced when he heard the news saying that at long last he had five real friars! A little later another mission was sent to Tunis, but it was strongly opposed by the Christian merchants who were just opening new relations with the Muslims by trade and commerce.

The initiative for sending friars was then taken over by the Popes who sent Dominican and Franciscan friars with official letters to the courts of the Muslim kings and princes. In 1225 Pope Honorius III sent Franciscans and Dominicans to Morocco where he appointed a Dominican bishop, the first of many bishops of both Orders. The Franciscan friars worked mainly among the Christian slaves, captives and merchants. But we do have a few documents which show an outreach also to the Saracens. There is a recorded conversion of the prince of Tunis, who had to run away to Rome to save his life.

In 1233 Franciscans and Dominicans were sent to the courts of Iconium, Aleppo and Damascus in the Middle East, and also to Egypt and to Baghdad. The delegates were sent with letters of recommendation, underlying the wish of the Pope to have good relations with the Muslim Princes. In 1245 Pope Innocent IV wrote to several sultans asking that his legates be received well. In expressing their wishes to the friars themselves the Popes openly spoke of the work of conversion of the Muslims. It was by no means easy for the friars to live and work among the Muslims. Many still spoke of the missions to North Africa or to the Middle East as places for martyrdom.

Yet a new attitude can clearly be seen. There is a deeper interest to know Islam and to study the Qur'an. Opportunities for discussions by learned friars and learned Muslim ministers become

common at the courts of the Caliphs and princes. The development of scholastic philosophy and argumentation sharpened the minds of many a Dominican and Franciscan friar. The Muslims would be amazed at their logic.

This does not mean that the friars had a different understanding of salvation. They still were convinced that they were right and the Muslims absolutely wrong, and that ultimately the Muslim must be led to baptism. The study of the Muslim religion and literature and history remains polemic. However, this more peaceful approach also brought a more welcome response from the Muslim side. They too were interested in dialogue and also wished to show the superiority of Islam over Christianity.

In Morocco, after the first martyrs, we hear once again of friars preaching: Friar Electus (1227) and Friar Daniel, in Ceuta. Martyrdom forced the friars to restrict their activity to the Christian community.

In Tunis our first friar was Brother Giles who worked for only a short time, but in 1270 there were other friars preaching quite freely but with very few conversions.

In Libya we hear of Conrad of Ascoli (1289) preaching with extraordinary success. Some 6000 persons were converted.

In Egypt we have the names of many friars working among the Saracens and Christian slaves, and most of all working for Christian unity with the Copts, and having a great deal of success in the 15th century.

IV. RAYMOND LULL, FRANCISCAN MISSIONARY TO MUSLIMS

The history of the early beginnings of mission activity of the friars would be very incomplete if we did not include in this study the life and work of Raymond Lull, a Franciscan Tertiary. He stands out as a man very much in the line of the Franciscan tradition of a peaceful approach to Muslims, but is also far ahead of his times when he worked for a more scientific approach to the study of language and religion of people. He combines in himself the zeal and dedication and longing for martyrdom of Francis and the learning of St Dominic. He differs from the other missionaries in as much as he was a scholar and an artist and was never really actively engaged in the mission field.

Lull was born in Palma, Majorca, in 1232, of a rich family which exerted quite some influence at the court of King James I of Aragon. The king had two sons and at the age of fourteen Raymond was appointed their page and companion. In 1256 when the son James was made heir to the throne of Majorca, Raymond became his tutor, and for seven years he devoted himself very much to the life of a courtier. He married at this time, but lived a dissolute life and did not care much for religion, till one day in 1263 he had a vision of Christ on the cross. That shook him, but he soon forgot it and continued as before. A few more visions followed and these ultimately converted him. It was a difficult change, and Lull went through a real religious crisis before he finally decided to give his whole life for the service of his Master.

This deep desire made him devote his life and attention to the conversion of the infidels. Slowly, it took further shape into a planned method for the winning over of Muslims to the Christian faith. Then quite soon afterwards he began to make known his plan. He travelled widely to various universities and to the Pope himself to convince him of the need of a new approach to the world outside the Church, but especially to the Muslims and Jews. He advocated the foundation of colleges to train the growing number of missionaries, and the writing of Christian books. He was so convinced of the strength of logic, that he felt if one could present the faith in as forceful a logic as possible there would be nothing to hinder the Muslim from accepting the truth of Christianity.

Again, in line with the Franciscan tradition, there was not to be the force of arms. Raymond did not at all like what the Christian armies were doing and proclaimed the only means worthy of Christ, the power of loving persuasion. He wrote extensively on different topics, but in all of them he came back to his basic thrust, the conversion of the unbeliever. He portrays a new theology of missions as well as a new method. We would like to describe this in detail since we feel this has been the background of the Franciscan movement towards mission and can be of value also for us today.

If we try to describe the theological thrust of Raymond Lull, it would be accurate to say that for him the conversion of the unbelievers is first of all an act of love. Jesus Christ gave his life on the cross for the love of man, to lead people to the light and to the fullness of life. Thus says Lull: "All Christians who love Jesus

Christ truly should move towards loving, adoring and contemplating with fervour Jesus Christ, and see that he be honoured in the whole world." The task is the more urgent for those who have strayed because of lack of knowledge. Lull is not hard on them but feels that the Christian has the task to remove the veil of ignorance and to help people share in the fulness of truth. The Christian has to help the unbeliever to understand. This requires a systematic way of conveying the truth, knowing that Truth itself is invincible, and its light will dissipate all errors. At the same time there is need of the power of the Spirit: prayer, penance, sacrifice.

In typical Franciscan fashion, Lull advocates a return to Gospel simplicity and to the original inspiration of the early Christian community. He reminds his readers that the Apostles converted the world not only by their preaching, but also by tears and blood and death. They had converted the lands which we now call the lands of the Saracens. The missionary needs to be heroic and steadfast.

However he must know to whom he is preaching the message. Therefore it is very necessary that he should study the religion of the people to whom he is preaching. This must be done in depth and with a scientific system. Together with this study of religion there must be the study of language, manners, philosophy, and the way of reasoning of the people. Behind this last point is once again Lull's basic conviction that with logic we can win over the minds of the unbelievers.

Lull immediately set himself to do this. He studied Arabic, Islam and Muslim philosophy. He engaged a Muslim slave to teach him the language. Lull picked up the language so well that he wrote several works in Arabic, and most noteworthy of all the monumental "Book of Contemplation". He summarised in Arabic the logic of Al-Ghazali. He also wrote many books of a more apologetic nature, but was still very respectful to those of opposite views. All this earned him the name of Christian Sufi or mystic. It is quite sure that Lull knew Islam as no one else in his time, and with this knowledge understood the psychology of the Muslims, the beauty of Islam's liturgical language, the depths of its religious spirit, and most of all how close Christianity and Islam really were. Therefore he also addressed himself to the Christians of the Orient who were living in such close proximity to their Muslim fellow-citizens about their responsibilities and opportunities.

It is in this line that he speaks of the need of qualified workers in the apostolate. At times he stressed the value of the language of the people. The Dominicans in their Chapter of 1236 had already spoken of this, and there is no doubt that somehow this had also influenced Lull. But it also fits in very well with the Franciscan ideal of the peaceful spread of the Christian message. It is said that Lull has grasped the concept of mission even better than Francis had done, and is more in agreement with Bonaventure who introduced better facilities for learning in the Order.

In this respect Lull influenced Prince James to start a college for language studies at Miramar in the island of Majorca in 1274 and it was meant for the Friars Minor. Two years later Pope John XXI approved the foundation. But somehow the foundation did not last very long. That was most probably because Lull was too busy travelling around and could not give adequate attention to its running. Nevertheless it did serve to act as a model for future colleges and elicited response to Lull's appeals to the rulers who were concerned about the conversion of the unbelievers to provide facilities for study at centres and at universities. In 1311 the General Council of Vienne decided to create five centres of Oriental studies at Rome, Bologna, Salamanca, Paris and Oxford.

Lull also proposed an exchange of personnel. He wanted the Pope to send to Muslim lands messengers who could discuss with the Doctors of Islam, and he wished that the Muslim princes would send some of their wise men to the Christian West where they could share for some time the life of the Latin Christians. They would then get an opportunity to see the life of the Church and so might be led to seek baptism in the Church. He even insisted that a kind of obligation be placed on Muslims who lived among Christians to listen to sermons. It was hoped that these sermons would incorporate his logic and would serve to lead people to the truth.

There are more directives that Lull gives, but the one which has become common today is his idea of an organisation to direct the whole mission effort. He wrote to Popes Celestine V and Boniface VIII convinced that mission is the very life of the Church. Today the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is a development of this very idea of Lull.

Lull was ahead of his time, and it was not at all surprising that he met with misunderstanding and disappointment. In the end he became impatient, even advocating the use of arms to win over the

Muslim. Then because martyrdom seemed to elude him he decided to go to Tunis and there openly proclaimed his message in the market place. Naturally it resulted in mob violence. The people began to stone him but somehow his friends managed to snatch him away although badly wounded. He died on board a ship whilst being taken away to Italy.

With that the new missionary approach to Muslims slowly cooled down. The friars in the Middle East and in North Africa continued to work among the Christian communities and where possible relate to Muslims. Under very adverse situations they very loyally kept to their posts. The Custody of the Holy Places was maintained and developed under the Muslim rule of Egypt (1291-1516) and later under the Ottoman Turks (1516-1917). The experience of the Crusades was never forgotten, but the friars by their example of simplicity and powerlessness did much to create goodwill both in Palestine and in the countries of North Africa.

Whatever the circumstances, the friars have continued to witness by the presence of their lives. The work of guiding and caring for pilgrims, the care of the slaves, and work for Christian unity were maintained. Where possible contact was kept with the ruling class. At times through discussions and at times just personal contacts the friars did not forget the original inspiration of the Rule of Francis, the mission to the Saracens and other unbelievers.

However, in the 15th century when the new missionaries set out from Portugal, once again from the Franciscan Order, this area of the world was not very much in prominence. There was very little to show in terms of conversions, with the result that the attention of the Church slowly moved to other areas. Today once again the Church is focusing its attention on the Muslim nations. A new mission approach has grown meanwhile with Vatican II. Would this not be once again a new opportunity for the friars in the Middle East and North Africa?

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST FRANCISCANS IN THE EAST

By Prof. Dr Arnulf Camps, O.F.M.

In this contribution we limit our study to the mission of the Franciscans in the Far East during the Middle Ages. By Far East we mean the empire of the Mongols and China. China in this period belonged to the empire of the Mongols. But we do not treat all the missionary activities of the Franciscans in the Mongol Empire, for this would include also Persia, Turkestan and India. These details will be treated by other authors. We only deal with the Franciscan missions to the court of the Great Khans, whether this court was established at Karakorum (Mongolia) or Khanbaliq —Cambuluc (Peking, today Beijing).

This is a very important mission-period, as it represents a transition from the medieval Near-East missions to missions of later centuries during the colonial period. This does not mean that there is continuity between these former and later missions. In a way the mission of the Franciscans to Mongolia and China stands on its own, as will become clear from this study. But it is remarkable that already during the Middle Ages a mission in such a far-away country was undertaken.

We shall treat this history according to the leading Franciscans who undertook the missions. In chronological order they were: John of Pian di Carpine, William of Rubruck, John of Montecorvino, Odoric of Pordenone, and John of Marignolli.

JOHN OF PIAN DI CARPINE, O.F.M.

He was born towards the end of the twelfth century. His family lived in Pian di Carpine, a small town near Perugia in Italy. As an early disciple of Saint Francis, he was sent by him to help establish the order in Saxony, Germany, in 1221. Afterwards he served in Spain and returned to Germany in 1232 to become provincial of Saxony. In 1239 he left Saxony, and it is only in 1245 that he reappears on the scene of history.

He was then about sixty years old. Pope Innocent IV entrusted to him a most delicate mission. It took the papal delegation ten

months to travel across Europe. During that time it tried to accomplish the wish of the Pope that West Russia should join the Catholic anti-Mongol bloc. A reunion with the Roman See was considered to be the way leading to that goal. This did not come about, but the mission went on. The friars reached Kiev, which was in the hands of the Mongols. From there they proceeded to the headquarters of the Mongols at the Volga river and to the heart of Mongolia. On July 22, 1246, they reached the capital of the Mongols, Karakorum, which is situated south of the Baikal Sea in Mongolia. They had crossed deserts and fertile lands riding on small Mongolian horses. They were Western observers in an unknown land. However, they wrote down their personal observations.[1]

The friars came just in time for the election of Güyüg as the Great Khan. After the enthronement they left the court for Europe on November 13, 1246. John of Pian di Carpine and Benedict the Pole brought to the Pope in Rome a letter of the Great Khan, which was an answer to the Pope's letter. The Great Khan was not willing to be converted to the Christian religion, but asked the Pope and all the kings of the West to submit to him. John and Benedict wrote down their long reports to the Pope, of which we possess critical editions.[2]

Both members of the papal delegation were sure that the time for a dialogue between East and West had not yet arrived. They were convinced that the West had to prepare for war. The empire of the Mongols extended from Western Russia to the sea of China. The two Franciscans had experienced the threat of this well-organized and strong people. John's report is very precious, as it contains a full history of the Mongols, a description of their lands, their customs, their religion, their warfare and the countries conquered by them. The survey of Mongol society is realistic and impartial. The description of the military code, of the organization of the army, of the weapons, and of the fighting techniques of the Mongols is very detailed, and had great importance for the West.

It is interesting to notice that in John's report information about the Kitai or the Chinese is given for the first time. According to John, the Chinese were humane, industrious and civilized, and all they needed to be perfect Christians was baptism. It was a consolation for the Franciscans that China at least promised to be an ideal land for missionary work.

These reports were written during the journey from Karakorum to Western Europe. The friars arrived in Kiev on 9 June 1247, and had shortly before collected Father Stephen and the servants left behind with him in Western Russia due to illness. They passed through Poland and Hungary, went to Cologne and Lyons, and on 18 November 1247 they met with Pope Innocent at Lyons. John's report was put into final form. "According to Salimbene, the Pope was very pleased with the report, even though the outcome of the mission was not really what he had hoped for. Soon after, he entrusted the energetic friar with another delicate mission, this time to King Louis of France.... Upon completion of this mission Innocent made him Archbishop of Antivari in Dalmatia. Friar John died in Italy, probably at Perugia, in 1252."[3]

WILLIAM OF RUBRUCK, O.F.M.

This Franciscan Friar was born at Rubruck, near Cassel in French Flanders, between 1215 and 1220. He studied for some time in Paris and was personally acquainted with King Louis. He accompanied the king to Egypt on a Crusade and stayed with him in Palestine from 1248 till 1252. There he met Father Andrew of Longjumeau, a Dominican, who had been with the Mongols before. Friar William was filled with the desire of converting the Mongols to Christianity and of bringing consolation and help to the Christians living under their yoke. But king Louis still remembered the failure of Friar John of Pian di Carpine. He let William go, but asked him to make clear to the Mongol rulers that his mission was unofficial. Thus the mission of William got the character of a fact-finding mission.

With another friar and two assistants William left Acre for Constantinople at the beginning of 1253. From there they travelled to the Crimea after crossing the Black Sea. Soon they arrived in Mongol territory. They crossed the Volga and were sent by local Mongol rulers to Mongolia in order to obtain permission for their ministry from the emperor himself. The name of the Great Khan was Mongke, who ruled from 1251 to 1259. He lived at Karakorum. William and his party continued the journey through Central Asia. It took them three and a half months to cover the distance between the Volga and Karakorum, the capital of Mongolia.

Friar William took great pains to collect geographical and ethnographical information. He discovered the true character of the Caspian Sea, the correct course of the Don and the Volga, and he identified Grand Cathay as being China. For the first time Europe received some information about Tibet, a country under control of the Mongols from 1240 onward. He paid much more attention to the spiritual culture of the Mongols than his predecessors had done. We hear about Christian communities spread over Central Asia and Mongolia and about the presence of the Nestorians. He searched for German Christian slaves, captured by the Mongols, but did not actually meet them. He visited Buddhist temples and informed Europe for the first time of Buddhist ritual. On the way, Mongol chiefs asked the two friars to pray for them. William learned that this was a custom of the Mongols: to employ clerics of all faiths to pray for their prosperity.

On 27 December 1253 they reached Karakorum. On 4 January 1254 they were admitted into the presence of the Great Khan. The friars spent six months in the emperor's entourage. They were considered as belonging to the numerous Nestorian clergy. They met William Boucher, a Parisian artist and engineer, who as a captive worked in the emperor's palace at Karakorum. From him they got much information, and he was a very able interpreter. There was an international society at the court: Frenchmen, Germans, Hungarians, Slavs, at least one Englishman, Alans, Georgians, Armenians, Persians, Turks and Chinese. The latter drew the attention of William of Rubruck as he was impressed by their writing system and paper money, both unknown in the West.

As far as the religions were concerned, the friars met Buddhists, Muslims, Nestorians and other Christians, and Shamanists. The Mongol Emperor professed a monotheistic faith, but added that just as God had given different fingers to the hand so he has given different religions to men. The attitude of William was uncompromising and he criticized the other faiths in a sincere but tactless way. He was confirmed in this attitude by the knowledge that he had come not as an envoy of King Louis, but as a missionary cleric. Towards the end of May 1254 William asked to return to his country. He was disillusioned, and the emperor made no attempt to retain him.

However, before sending him off he asked William to join the Nestorians in a public debate with the Muslims and the Buddhists.

Three judges, one for each faith, were appointed and the emperor issued a proclamation forbidding abusive language and threatening with death anyone who hindered the proceedings. This historic debate took place on 30 May. Boucher was William's interpreter. William started the discussion by taking issue with the Buddhists on the existence of God and His attributes. Then the Nestorians wanted a discussion with the Muslims, who prudently withdrew. They continued with a Buddhist by expounding the coming of Christ, the judgement and the Trinity. "All the people present listened without a word of contradiction, 'yet'—writes William—'not one of them said: I believe, I wish to become a Christian.' When the debate was over 'the Nestorians and the Saracens alike sang loudly while the yuins (i.e. the Buddhist priests) kept silence, and afterwards they all drank their fill.' This, perhaps, better than any other description, gives an idea of the cultural context in which the Western missionary had to carry out his apostolate. The debate in which Friar William participated was the first of several religious disputes that took place at the Mongol court in the following decade. The representatives of Tibetan Buddhism eventually emerged as the real victors, a fact that accounts largely for the favour accorded to Lamaism by Mongke's successors."[4]

Friar William's companion, Friar Bartholomew, did not return to Europe. On account of ill-health he obtained permission to stay at Karakorum and he died there, having been cared for by Boucher. He is the first missionary and the first Italian to die in the Far East, as far as we know.

William left Karakorum about 10 July 1254. He crossed Central Asia, the southern Caucasus, eastern Turkey, and sailed for Cyprus. There he received an order to return to Palestine. This must have happened somewhere in 1255. In Acre he wrote his *Itinerary* and sent it to King Louis.[5]

During the next decades the scene altered. The Mongols started a crusade against the Muslims in the Near East. In a brilliant campaign Hülegü, a younger brother of the Great Khan, conquered the whole of Persia between 1256 and 1257 and in 1258 destroyed Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid Caliphs. In 1260 Aleppo fell into his hands and a month later Damascus. The road to Jerusalem was open.

However, in Egypt the Mameluk Turks had come to power and they defended the holy city. Moreover, the Great Khan, Mongke,

had died in 1259 during a campaign in western China. Hülegü returned with quite some soldiers to Persia. The Mongol and the Mameluk armies met in Galilee on 23 September 1260, where the Mongols suffered a crushing defeat. This was also the beginning of the end of the Frankish possessions and of the influence of the Eastern Christians in the holy land and in the Near East. Hülegü ruled over Persia as the Ilkhan or Viceroy until his death in 1265. The new Great Khan was Kublai Khan, who decided to reside in China, in Khanbaliq (Peking or Beijing).

In the West the rulers came to understand that the greatest danger came from the Mameluks in Egypt and Asia Minor. Thus a new willingness to join hands with the Mongols came about. Relations between the Ilkhans and the Pope became more frequent through embassies. The Ilkhans had a similar interest in these relations, as they too were constantly threatened by war on the part of the Mameluks. Several times a Mongol-Western Crusade was attempted.

But in the West the crusading spirit had died with the death of King Louis of France in Tunis. There was a great disunion among the European powers in the latter part of the century. Therefore, the Popes of this period reverted in their relations with the Mongols to a policy of religious propaganda. Through the journeys of the Polo brothers (Niccolo and Marco) and through the report of their stay in Central Asia and China (1275-1291) news from the court of the Great Khan at Peking reached Europe. The Franciscans took a new interest in the missions among the Mongols: they founded two custodies in Southern Russia and attempted a mission to the court of the Great Khan, Kublai, in 1278, but they only reached Persia and never went as far as China. The next mission to China was that of the Italian Franciscan, John of Montecorvino.[6]

JOHN OF MONTECORVINO, O.F.M.

He was born in Montecorvino, now in Salerno province, Italy, in 1247. He spent several years as a missionary in Armenia and Persia and arrived in Italy in 1289 as a legate of the King of Armenia. John reported to Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292), who happened to be a Franciscan too. The Pope had been informed by several sources that the Great Khan protected the Christians.

Moreover, it was said that he was interested in their faith. The Pope decided to send a new Franciscan mission to Cathay, China. Five friars were chosen and John became their leader. He carried papal letters of goodwill to monarchs and religious leaders of the Orient.

The party sailed from Venice to the port of Lajazzo in South Eastern Turkey and proceeded by land to Antioch and to Tabriz in Persia. Sometime in 1291 John, without his five companions, continued his journey. He was now accompanied by a Dominican, Nicholas of Pistoia, and by an Italian merchant, Peter of Lucalongo, who had business in China. The route across Central Asia was unsafe and therefore they took the sea route. From the Persian Gulf they went to Quilon on the west coast of India. By sea they reached Mylapore near Madras, where they visited the Christian community. Nicholas died there and was buried in the famous church of St Thomas. John spent thirteen months in India as a missionary. He was the first to give a lengthy report on India.

At the end of 1292 or at the beginning of 1293 John and the merchant left India by sea. We only know that they arrived at Zaitum, China, Fukien province. By land they proceeded to Khanbaliq (Peking), the Mongol capital, where they arrived in 1294. By that time Kublai Khan had died. He had united China under his foreign rule after four centuries of disunion. He had adapted himself to Chinese customs. In May 1294 the new Great Khan was elected and John presented as an official envoy the letters of the Pope to him. The name of the new ruler was Temür Oljeitü, a thirty-year-old grandson of Kublai. John obtained permission to settle in the capital and to start his religious work. He enjoyed considerable status as an ambassador of the country of the Franks and as a Christian cleric.

In China John of Montecorvino discovered the presence of many Christians: "Towards the end of the thirteenth century there were in China many thousands of Christians of the Greek rite, found mainly among the Alan, Georgian and Russian troops serving in the imperial army. There were also numerous Christian Armenians, engaged in trade and various crafts. However, the Nestorians represented by far the largest and most powerful group. Nestorianism had not come to China with the Mongols but had been introduced as early as the middle of the seventh century by Syrian missionaries. The 'Brilliant Teaching', as this faith was

then called in China, had flourished as a minor foreign religion until A.D. 845, when a fierce persecution directed against Buddhism and all foreign cults swept away the Church and its followers. During the Liao and Chin dynasties Nestorianism had reappeared in North China, brought by immigrants from Central Asia and Mongolia. The Mongol invasion gave a powerful boost to the Nestorian Church and we know from William of Rubruck that at that time (1254) Nestorian Christians were established in fifteen cities. Twenty years later Marco Polo found Nestorian communities in the Yang-tze region and even in Yunnan."[7]

The Great Khan Kublai—though himself a Buddhist—protected all the religions in his multi-national empire. Also the Nestorians enjoyed privileges like tax exemption and grain donations as did the Buddhists, the Taoists and the Muslims. In 1289 Kublai established a special government department for the Christian cult. Many important offices were held in the government by Nestorian Turks. When John of Montecorvino arrived in Khanbaliq there was a Nestorian Archbishop. The ruler of Tenduc, a Mongol province to the West of Khanbaliq in China, was the Nestorian Prince George, the son-in-law of the Great Khan. John of Montecorvino enjoyed a generous stipend and the privilege of travelling freely on the state post-relay system. Soon he travelled to the capital of Tenduc hoping to convert the Prince and afterwards other Mongol leaders. Prince George welcomed the papal legate and was converted from Nestorianism to Catholicism together with many of his subjects. A church was erected and Prince George received the minor orders of the Roman Catholic Church. Like the Jesuits in China in the seventeenth century, George did not consider Confucianism to be incompatible with his Christian faith: he was a keen Confucian. Unfortunately, the Prince died in 1298, and the Nestorian clergy, who had resented his conversion, led the people back to their original faith.

John's attempt to convert the Great Khan at Khanbaliq failed. Temür remained a Buddhist. John therefore directed his efforts towards the schismatic Christians at the capital. He approached the Alans, who had been deported from the Caucasus fifty years earlier. They professed the Orthodox Greek faith. They had no clergy and they welcomed John as their pastor. John also approached many Armenian Christians, to whom he could preach in their own language. They were attracted by his preaching.

John possessed a talent for languages. He knew Armenian and Persian before he came to China, and in China he learnt either Mongolian or Turkish. It is very likely that he translated the Gospels into Turkish as also the Psalms. He built two churches in Khanbaliq. He bought forty slave boys, presumably Chinese, whom he baptized and instructed, and whom he trained to sing the liturgy in Latin. From his palace Temür enjoyed listening to the boys singing in the church nearby.

John claims to have baptized during the first twelve years about six thousand people. In one of his letters he writes that had it not been for the Nestorians he would have baptized more than thirty thousand. The Nestorians accused John of having killed the true envoy of the Franks and John almost landed in jail. He was, however, able to clear himself. The opposition of the Nestorians did not come to an end. By the time of John's death in 1328 he may have converted some ten thousand people. It is quite certain that they belonged to what was then called: the group of schismatic Christians. They were a privileged class used by the Mongols, who distrusted the Chinese, in matters of administration. Thus there was a social and a language barrier between John of Montecorvino and the Chinese population. In this matter John was a medieval missionary who hoped to convert the Chinese through the conversion of the elite. This may explain why neither he nor the friars who came after him tried to learn Chinese. They relied on interpreters. In one of his churches at Khanbaliq John had scenes of the Bible painted with inscriptions in Latin, Turkish or Mongolian, and Persian, not, however, in Chinese, the language of the majority. John complains that he was without confession during eleven years and from this we may conclude that he had not converted a single priest.

In 1304 John was joined by another Franciscan, Arnold of Cologne. But he was still cut off from his Order and in Europe they thought he was dead. Only in 1306-1307 two of John's letters reached the Curia in Rome. John asked for more helpers. Pope Clement V took action. He appointed John as Archbishop of Khanbaliq and Patriarch of the Orient, with jurisdiction over the whole Mongol Empire from Kipchak and Asia Minor to China or Cathay. The Pope also appointed seven other Franciscans as suffragan bishops and sent them to China in 1307 to consecrate

John. Only three of them eventually reached the Mongol capital, Peking, in 1313. They consecrated John as the first archbishop of Peking.

John now decided to extend the missionary work to the south of China and he chose Zaitum as the first episcopal see. There was a rather large Muslim community in Zaitum and they worshipped in the oldest mosque of China. Moreover, there lived Buddhists, Manicheans, Hindus and Nestorian Christians there. Around 1313 Friar Gerard Albuini was appointed the first bishop of Zaitum. He was succeeded by Peregrine of Castello in 1318. In Zaitum too the Friars laboured mainly among the Christians. The church and monastery were donated by an Armenian lady, who also donated the necessaries of life. Friar Andrew of Perugia succeeded Bishop Peregrine in Zaitum in 1322. From the letters sent by the friars to Europe we come to know that there were quite some Latin and Genoese merchants in China. They used the Catholic mission as a base. The preaching was done through interpreters and that is most probably the reason why the Chinese converts did not strictly adhere to the Christian ways, as recorded by the friars. In Peking John of Montecorvino spent most of his time in ministering to the Armenians, for whom he built another church leaving the care of the other two churches to his coadjutors.

In 1318 Pope John XXII reorganized the mission in the Orient. He gave to the Franciscans three vicariates—the countries of the Near East, the Golden Horde, Mongolia and China—and he made them dependent on the archbishop of Khanbaliq. To the Dominicans he gave the dominion of the Ilkhans, Central Asia and India and he placed these countries under the see of Sultanieh (southeast of Tabriz), the new capital of the Ilkhans. Changes did take place in China too. The Great Khan, Temür, died in 1307. Between 1307 and 1328, the year in which John of Montecorvino died, four emperors occupied the throne at Peking. A strong tension developed between the foreign rulers and their Chinese subjects. The Mongols came under the influence of Tibetan Lamaists and Buddhism was very much favoured. Huge grants of money and lands were given to Buddhist temples. Buddhism became a state within a state. In the few letters which have come down to us, written by the Franciscans in China, this situation is touched upon, but in a delicate way, as they did not want to offend their masters.

At the age of eighty-one John of Montecorvino, the first Archbishop of Peking, died at the capital in 1328. He was mourned by 'a very great multitude of Christian people and of pagans'. He had no real successor. The only other Franciscan bishop still alive in China was Andrew of Perugia, who was Bishop of Zaitum from 1322 till his death in 1332. He too had no real successor. Some sources speak about three other bishops appointed by Pope Clement in 1310-1311, but nothing is known about them except their names. But we know from the report of the friar and traveller, Odoric of Pordenone, who spent several years in China in the 1320's, that there were several Franciscans in China. But the official reports are silent. "They were sent by John of Montecorvino to establish churches and convents in other important centres of China, notably Hangchow in Chekiang and Yangchow in Kiangsu."[8]

ODORIC OF PORDENONE, O.F.M.

It is not known in which year this friar was born. Some authors place the year of his birth between 1265 and 1285 or 1286. He was born in a family of soldiers in Bohemia to which his native city of Portum Naonis belonged. He joined in his youth the Franciscans of the Province of Venice. He lived an austere life and was for some time a hermit. In 1314 he left for the missions in the East and worked for 16 years baptizing many people. Back home he drew up a report and wanted to present it to the Pope at Avignon and to receive his blessing for himself and for fifty companions, who intended to return to the missions with him. But on his journey to Avignon he died at Udine in the Franciscan monastery on 14 January 1331.

During the sixteen years of his missionary life he went from Europe to Sultanieh (southeast of Tabriz in Persia) and laboured there for five or six years. After that he travelled through Persia and Iraq and left the harbour of Ormuz for Thana on the northern coast of India. It took 28 days for him to arrive in that city, and it was in the year 1321 or 1322. He visited the South of India and Sri Lanka, then Sumatra, Java and Kalimantan in South-East Asia, and arrived in Canton. Travelling via Nanking he reached Peking and remained there three years. He returned to Europe most probably by the land route.[9]

Odoric has been called: the roving friar. This, indeed, he was. But this makes his report all the more interesting. Here we are

interested in his reports on the Franciscans in China. We hear that in Yangchow there was a Franciscan monastery and three churches of the Nestorians. It seems that there was a small colony of Venetian merchants, to whom the Franciscans administered the sacraments. In 1951 a tombstone, with Old Gothic letters, of a Venetian woman, Catherine Vilioni, was discovered.

In Khanbaliq he lived with his confrères and shared in their privileges. He went to the court of the Great Khan together with Archbishop John of Montecorvino. He writes that the Archbishop blessed the Great Khan. He does not speak about his missionary work; nor does he even mention the names of the Franciscan missionaries. In Zaitum Odoric stayed in the friary, but he gives no details. He left China before the death of Archbishop John of Montecorvino.[10]

JOHN OF MARIGNOLLI, O.F.M.

Eight years after the death of John of Montecorvino in 1336 several chiefs of the Christian Alans of Khanbaliq wrote a petition to Pope Benedict XII asking for the appointment of a pontifical legate to China to succeed the late Archbishop. The letter was brought to Avignon by an embassy of the Great Khan, led by the Genoese Andalò of Savignone, also known as Andrew the Frank. In this letter the Christians of Peking inform the Pope that Friar Nicholas, whom they had heard the Pope had sent, had never yet appeared.

The embassy arrived in Avignon at the end of May 1338. The mission was a success, and in March 1339 both the embassy and the recently appointed papal delegation left Naples. The papal embassy consisted of a large group of Franciscans under the leadership of Nicholas Bonet, former Professor of Theology at the University of Paris, and of John of Marignolli, a Florentine friar of aristocratic origin. When they arrived at Constantinople at the beginning of April 1339 Nicholas Bonet returned to Europe for unknown reasons and John took charge of the mission.

We know little about the early life of John of Marignolli. He came from a noble family in Florence, Italy. Before he was appointed as papal legate, Friar John had been a lecturer in Bologna.

The journey took him through the Black Sea, through Southern Russia, to the country of the Golden Horde, where the mission was received by the Mongol ruler. In the spring of 1340 John and his

party continued the journey from the Volga region to Central Asia or Eastern Sinkiang. There they stayed in the city of Almaliq till late 1341. In 1339 the Franciscan Bishop and six friars had been murdered by a fanatical Muslim usurper, who had himself been murdered shortly after. John and his companions rebuilt the church and the monastery. When they left Almaliq they travelled eastwards through Mongolia and arrived at Khanbaliq in 1342. They were received by the emperor, and John blessed him solemnly.

The whole mission, comprising thirty-two persons, was entertained at the Mongol Court for about three years. In the report he later wrote John mentions little about his life in Khanbaliq. We hear about the churches built by the Franciscans and about the good name left behind by John of Montecorvino "whom the Alans venerate as a saint." He mentions also many glorious disputations with the Jews and members of other religions. We hear nothing about Friar Nicholas, who had been appointed by the Pope as Archbishop of Khanbaliq. The Pope had nominated Friar John of Marignolli as his personal legate as he believed that Nicholas had in the meantime taken possession of his see. But Marignolli did not see him. He was not willing to remain longer than three years in China, for he considered himself to be merely an ambassador and did not want to take the place of another.

But there may have been other reasons too for his departure. The Mongol dominance over China was coming to an end. The administration deteriorated and the Great Khan had to rely on the Alan army too much. The relations between the Chinese population and the foreign Mongol rulers became worse. In 1348, less than three years after Marignolli's departure, the final rebellion which overthrew the Mongol regime erupted. In the provinces of China fighting had already begun in 1337. Marignolli saw that the last Mongol ruler was lax and incompetent, and he could predict that the good time for foreign rulers had passed. When John took leave of the emperor, the Great Khan asked him to request the Pope to send John or someone else back with the rank of a Cardinal and with full powers to be a Bishop.

John of Marignolli could not return by the land route, as the overland route had been cut off by a war. The group travelled to the port of Zaitum. There he visited the three Franciscan churches and had two bells cast. We do not hear anything about the

Franciscans living there. The embassy left by boat on 26 December 1345. We do not know how many of his former companions left with him. The party arrived at Quilon in April 1346. Due to illness John had to stay fourteen months at Quilon with the Dominican Fathers, who had a bishop there. He visited Mylapore and even explored the Sunda islands and the kingdom of Majapahit in East Java.

On the way back to India he stayed in Sri Lanka which he describes as "the loftiest spot on the face of the earth." But there he was detained for four months by a local Muslim ruler, who stripped him of all his money and presents from the Great Khan. Then he sailed to the Persian port of Ormuz and from there went by land via Baghdad, Damascus and Jerusalem to the Mediterranean. Continuing the journey via Cyprus he finally arrived in Avignon in 1353 with the Great Khan's letter, written eight years before. He reported to the new Pope Innocent VI.

John of Marignolli ended his life as a domestic chaplain and historiographer of the Emperor Charles IV at the court in Prague. There he completed a Chronicle of Bohemia which he interspersed with the recollections of his travels in Asia. He died, probably in Prague, in 1358 or 1359.[11]

Pope Innocent asked the Franciscan General to appoint friars for China. This was not done for two reasons. The Black Death in 1348 had almost emptied the Franciscan monasteries in Europe (two-thirds of the friars had died within a year). This was the first reason. The second was the general decline of missionary activity all over Asia as a result of persecutions and political disorder. The Mongol dynasty in China came to an end in 1368 after much war and many rebellions.

The last time we hear about an attempt to send Franciscans to China is in March 1370 when Pope Urban V sent Friar William Despres, O.F.M., a Frenchman, to Khanbaliq. This embassy never reached its destination and its fate is unknown. The new dynasty in China was Chinese. A restoration period followed and alien groups and interests were no longer welcome. Christianity had been the religion of the foreigners, mainly Alans and Armenians and some Italians. By forced assimilation it disappeared. At the end of the century, a vague rumour about the existence of Christians in China could still be heard. After 1401 there was no mention of them anymore.

We are conscious of the fact that we have not told the whole history of the Franciscans in the Far East. Other contributions to this volume will do that. We have concentrated on Mongolia and China. This was a very important mission of the Franciscans and certainly not a mission easy to reach. During one century it was possible to keep the lines of communication with China open. It is hoped that in our time this may be possible again.

NOTES

[1] For a history of the Mongols, see: B. Spuler, *History of the Mongols, based on Eastern and Western Accounts of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, London, 1972. For a history of the Christians in China during this period, see: A. C. Moule, *Christians in China before the year* 1550, London-New York-Toronto, 1930, 166-215; and also: L. Lemmens, O.F.M., *Die Heidenmissionen des Spatmittelalters*, Munster in Westfalen, 1919, 21-79. Lemmens returned to this subject in: *Geschichte der Franziskanermissionen*, Munster in Westfalen, 1929, 78-93. Two recent studies are: F. Margiotti, O.F.M., 'Sinae, I. Aevo Medio' (saec. XIII-XIV), in: *Historia Missionum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, I-Asia Centro-Orientalis et Oceania*, Romae, 1967, 105-122; and I. de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Great Khans*, London, 1971. The letters and reports of the Franciscans sent to the Mongol Courts were edited in a text-critical edition by Anastasius van den Wyngaert, O.F.M., in: *Sinica Franciscana*, volumen I: *itinera et relationes fratrum minorum saeculi XIII et XIV*, Quaracchi, Firenze, 1929, 578 pp. For a report by Benedict, the Pole, a companion of John of Pian di Carpine, which was discovered after the edition of van den Wyngaert, see: R. A. Skelton, a.o., *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation*, New Haven and London, 1965. For the history of the journey of John of Pian di Carpine, cf De Rachewiltz, *op. cit.* 89-111.

[2] For the report of Benedict the Pole, cf. note 1. See also: van den Wyngaert, *op. cit.*, 135-143. For the report of John of Pian di Carpine, *ibid*, 1-130: Ystoria Mongalorum; newly discovered manuscripts were used by: Dom Jean Becquet et Louis Hambis, *Histoire des Mongols*, traduite et annotée, Paris, 1965.

[3] Rachewiltz, *op. cit.*, 111.

[4] *Ibid.*, 138.

[5] Achatius Batton, O.F.M., *Wilhelm von Rubruk*, Munster in Westfalen, 1921. De Rachewiltz, op. cit., 125-143.[6] The report of William of Rubruck, the *Itinerarium*, was published by van den Wyngaert, *op. cit.*, 145-332.

[6] De Rachewiltz, *op. cit.*, 144-159

[7] *Ibid.*, 164-165

[8] *Ibid.*, 178. For the life of John of Montecorvino, see: Anastase van den Wyngaert, O.F.M., *Jean de Mont Corvin, O.F.M., premier evêque de Khanbaliq* (*Peking*) 1247-1328, Lille, 1924; and: De Rachewiltz, *op. cit.* 160-178. The letters of John of Montecorvino and his companions have been edited by van den Wyngaert, *Sinica Franciscana*, volumen I, Quaracchi, Firenze, 1929, 333-377.

[9] For the life of Odoric of Pordenone, see: van den Wyngaert, *op. cit.*, 381-383; and De Rachewiltz, *op. cit.*, 179-181.

[10] *Ibid.*, 181-186. The report of his journey, *Relation*, was edited by van den Wyngaert, *op. cit.*, 379-495.

[11] The life of John of Marignolli is described by: De Rachewiltz, *op. cit.*, 187-204. The report of his journey is edited by van den Wyngaert, *op. cit.*, 513-560.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY FRANCISCAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

By Revd Dr Achilles Meersman, O.F.M.

The Franciscans were the first to establish a permanent Catholic Mission in Sri Lanka. Now these missionaries did not just drop like angels from the sky. They came from somewhere. As a matter of fact they came from neighbouring India where they had settled after the Portuguese navigators had discovered the sea-routes via the Cape of Good Hope to the subcontinent. There they developed centres where they initiated the work of conversion in India itself and whence too they could despatch missionaries to areas, including Sri Lanka, which the Portuguese would subsequently discover. How this occurred will be briefly narrated in the present chapter.[1]

When in 1498 Vasco da Gama succeeded in rounding the Cape of Good Hope and reached India, he was accompanied by only one Chaplain.[2] Obviously the latter had been appointed chaplain to the fleet only, and was not meant to remain in India and initiate the work of evangelization.

Even before Vasco da Gama had returned to his homeland, the King of Portugal had ordered a second fleet, consisting of some thirteen ships, to be assembled, which he placed under the command of Pedro Alvares Cabral. The latter set sail on 9 March 1500 and arrived at Angediva, an island off the Konkan coast below Goa, on 22 August 1500. Unlike on the previous occasion when only one priest was appointed to accompany Vasco da Gama, eight secular priests and eight Franciscans had volunteered to accompany this expedition.

Who were they? Unfortunately, of the secular priests not a single name has been preserved. On the other hand, the names of the Franciscans have come down to us. According to the traditional list, they were: Henrique Soares of Coimbra, the leader, so it seems, not only of the Franciscans but also of the whole contingent, Francisco da Cruz, Simão de Guimarães, Luiz do Salvador, Masseu, Gaspar, priests; Pedro Netto, still only a cleric, and Brother João de Victoria.

Of the whole group of clergy the outstanding figure was Henrique of Coimbra. Before and after his voyage to India, in those days of close cooperation between Church and State, he was actively employed on diplomatic missions. For instance, at one time he was involved in promoting a crusade to eliminate the *Turcos* from the Holy Land. As far as the Order is concerned, he was instrumental in introducing the Poor Clares of the observance into Portugal. Finally, after his return he was appointed Bishop of Ceuta (Septenis), which, besides this, the only stronghold on the African Coast the Portuguese by then had captured, included part of the Portuguese mainland.[3]

As to the other friars of the pioneering group, three lost their lives, as we shall see, in Calicut; two would be put to death in other parts of the country and only two, after having spent their lives in the active apostolate, died a natural death.

Cabral soon realized that Angediva was not a suitable place for a fort and factory, and forthwith sailed south to Calicut on the Malabar Coast. For centuries this part had been one of the chief trading-centres where the Arab traders had settled and where they acquired the commodities many of which eventually found their way to European markets. Though the sovereign was a Hindu these Mohammedan traders wielded the most influence. This is evident from what happened to Cabral's party. The latter on arrival set up a centre where they displayed their wares and began trading. The Arab merchants forthwith incited the populace and attacked the place. Besides a number of Portuguese merchants and sailors, three Franciscans were killed. The rest fought their way back to their ships and after having bombarded the place sailed for Cochin.

The king of the latter place was Calicut's chief rival for the hegemony in Malabar. Hence he gladly received the Portuguese, not so much because he was so fond of them, but because he would profit by their trade, and their presence would strengthen his political position in Malabar. On their arrival in Cochin the priests and friars began their apostolate and the merchants their trading. After loading his ships Cabral departed for Portugal. Henrique de Coimbra returned with him to report.

Even before their arrival in Lisbon, another fleet under the command of João de Nova had set sail for India. It arrived in Cochin on 5 January 1501. A number of Franciscans accompanied this

expedition. A group of friars also embarked for India when Vasco da Gama made his second trip to the country and further when Francisco de Almeida departed from Lisbon in 1505 to assume the newly-created office of Viceroy. Finally a number of Franciscans sailed with the great Affonso de Albuquerque on his first journey. In other words the number of friars in these early years was sufficiently large to initiate the work of evangelization for which they had been recruited.

On the other hand we find that they were in many ways unprepared for this task. For centuries both the Spaniards and the Portuguese had been forced to defend their religion against the Moors who had overrun their country. There had been no question of adapting or of in any manner compromising their religion in the days they existed under the Moorish domination. Neither could there be very much of any compromise or adaptation now that they had arrived in this new strange land. It would take some years before they and others would think of anything of the kind. Moreover the Portuguese kings had been invested with the rights of Patronage (Padroado) by the Holy See. This bound the friars perhaps a bit too closely to the rulers and would affect not only their relationships with the Hindus and Mohammedans they would encounter, but also with the St Thomas Christians who from ancient times had represented Christianity in Cochin and Malabar.

COCHIN AND QUILON

As we have seen, Cabral, after the failure he suffered in Calicut, made for Cochin. The Franciscans who survived the tragedy accompanied him. Those who arrived in subsequent expeditions likewise settled in Cochin. Now these friars were as yet unorganized. Most likely they, like other functionaries, had been recruited for a three-year period only. Some of these friars after having completed the three-year term as stipulated in their contracts and overcome by the utter strangeness of their surroundings, returned to Portugal. A number, however, decided to remain and continue the apostolate the friars in general had initiated.

Now their first field of missionary activity was Cochin. However, this was not an easy task. Though the king of Cochin had given his consent to the establishment of a Portuguese fort and

factory, deep down in his heart he was not in favour of proselytization on the part of the missionaries. As a matter of fact he only allowed members of certain castes to be approached. And even after their conversion he did not allow them to enjoy the same privileges as those who embraced Islam. They continued to suffer under the same disabilities as before. Nevertheless by 1513, the missionaries, including the Franciscans, had made some 6,000 converts.

But who were the early friars who were engaged in the apostolate? From what has been said above, a number of friars had arrived. But who were they? As a matter of fact, only a few names have come down to us. Thus we hear of a Fr Gastão whose report on the war of 1504 between Cochin and Calicut has come down to us. Further, we know that in 1509 Francisco da Rocha was appointed by Albuquerque as official almoner in Cochin. The same in 1514 was named Vicar of Cochin.

But the Portuguese and equally the Franciscans were looking farther afield. Only a few years after their arrival in Cochin, the Portuguese realized the importance of Quilon as a trading-centre and decided to found a fort and factory there. After having obtained the permission of the Queen, they dispatched a contingent of soldiers and traders to this fort. Fr Gaspar, thus tradition has it, one of the Franciscans who had survived the disaster of Calicut, accompanied them as chaplain. The Portuguese were convinced that this would be a permanent settlement. They must have communicated this to the Court in Lisbon, for in 1505 in his instructions to the first Viceroy, the king stipulated that a Franciscan friary should be erected in that place. That same year, however, their stronghold was attacked and among those who lost their lives was Fr Gaspar. It would be some years before the Portuguese returned. The friars too would return, somewhere between 1546 and 1556, when they not only founded a friary, but also inaugurated a successful mission in the surrounding area.

But though the friars these first years had been active in the apostolate, as a matter of fact they were as yet officially unorganized. Though one of the friars may have been appointed superior of the group, and this is likely, he as yet bore no official title. Soon, however, the friars realized, especially after Goa had been captured in 1510, that there was need for permanent settlements and a more canonical form of government. The one who thought along these

lines was Antonio do Louro. He had come to the East in 1507 in a fleet that seized Socotra. He and a number of friars remained on the island to care for the garrison and attempt to evangelize the inhabitants, at least some of whom still professed some vague form of Christianity. Subsequently after a number of adventures he returned to Goa. This occurred in 1512. However, he did not remain long in that city, but proceeded to Portugal.

It seems that the main purpose of his journey was to inform the authorities in the home-country about conditions and prospects in India and persuade the authorities to organize the friars on a permanent basis. He succeeded in his attempt and in 1517 returned with twelve friars and with the title of Commissary and guardian of the still to be erected St Francis Friary, Goa. In other words the Franciscans had been officially organized into a Commissariate, which is the first step in the process of raising a group of friars into a Custody and finally into an independent Province.

When Antonio do Louro returned to India, he also carried orders from the King to erect three friaries, one in Cochin, one in Goa, which in the meantime had been seized, and a third in a still to be determined place. However, before describing the founding and erecting of these friaries, it might be well to narrate how the Portuguese captured Goa and made it their headquarters.

After the Portuguese had settled in Cochin they continued exploring the subcontinent's west coast. They soon realized that Cochin was not the ideal place to establish their headquarters. Goa seemed a better place. It was more centrally located and boasted of an excellent harbour. But it belonged to Adil Shah, the Mohammedan ruler of Bijapur who owed some kind of allegiance to the Mogul empire.

Now for years the Mohammedans had been endeavouring to extend their hegemony to the south. But at the time they were being thwarted by the powerful Hindu empire of Vijayanagar. It is likely that the Portuguese were early informed about the state of affairs and decided to draw certain advantages from this rivalry. Otherwise how should we understand why Luiz do Salvador, one of the first Franciscans to come to India in 1500, was sent already in 1505 as an envoy to the Court of the Vijayanagar Emperor in Hampi? At any rate no official alliance between the two powers was then negotiated. Later the same Luiz do Salvador was once

more sent to Hampi. On his return, however, he was assassinated by order of the Bijapur ruler. This occurred in 1511, after the Portuguese had seized Goa, which had been accomplished by Affonso de Albuquerque on 25 Nov. 1510.

One of the Franciscans who accompanied him on this expedition was João Allemão. He was one of the friars in whom Alburquerque placed great confidence. He eventually appointed him the first Provedor of the hospital he established in Goa. Another friar who was highly esteemed by the great Admiral was Francisco da Rocha. He seems to have been appointed the first parish priest in Goa, for it is reported that in the last months of 1510 and the first months of 1511 he had performed some one hundred and fifty marriages. Soon more friars were called from Cochin and settled in some temporary quarters.

FRIARY IN GOA

As we have seen, the Portuguese King had ordered a friary to be constructed in Goa. But the local authorities, very much occupied with arranging accommodation for their personnel and their commercial enterprises, besides fortifying the place, neglected to implement the King's order. It was only after many complaints and urgings on the part of the Franciscan Commissary that on 2 Feb. 1520, the first stone of the friary and church was laid. Progress was very slow, so that it was only in 1527 that the building was completed. This was the first religious house erected in Goa. Eventually as the number of friars increased, the friary had to be extended, but this belongs to a later period.

While the Goa friary was being built, a second one was also being constructed in Cochin. According to a letter of Antonio do Louro, of 27 Oct. 1520, the building was then nearing completion. The friars must have occupied it by the end of the following year.

While these two friaries were being erected, the number of friars was increasing. Not only had a few more arrived from Portugal, but they had also begun recruiting in India, chiefly from among the Portuguese who had brought their families, later also from those who had married in India. Thus in a letter of 1 Dec. 1527 we read that there were five priests, three clerics and four brothers and two novices in Goa.

However, this number was far too small to undertake missionary work on a large scale. No wonder we read of complaints the Indian superiors addressed to the authorities in Portugal. All the same, the number was increasing, so that St Francis Xavier, when he arrived in Goa in 1542, reported that there was a Franciscan friary "with many friars" in the place.

As we have seen, during the first years they resided in Goa, the Franciscans were very much concerned about the building of their friary. We must, however, not deduce from this that they were not interested in missionary work. As a matter of fact, in his letter of 4 Nov. 1518, Antonio do Louro writes that the friars had already converted some 800 Hindus in Goa and he adds that their number might have been greater had they not been opposed by the secular priests. The latter claimed that the care of souls and also the work of evangelization among those living in the fortresses and areas controlled by the Portuguese was their exclusive domain. No wonder the friars complained. Later even St Francis Xavier refers to this arrangement in his letter of 1546: "....since there are no recent converts in India outside the forts of the King and those in the fortified places are under the care of the Vicars who must instruct and baptize them, I decided to go to Macasser...."

However, a change of policy did eventually take place and the Religious were included in the task of evangelizing the people in and around Goa. This occurred in 1555 when Ilhas was assigned to the Jesuits and the Dominicans, Salsette also to the Jesuits, and Bardez to the Franciscans, where in the course of time they converted the greater part of the population and founded a veritable network of parishes.

During the early period Goa ecclesiastically resorted under Funchal, the ordinaries of which deputed Vicars General to exercise jurisdiction in Goa. However, there was also need in Goa for Bishops to perform those functions for which episcopal ordination is required. Hence, during the early years two Bishops were dispatched to Goa for this purpose, one of them being the Franciscan, Dom Fernando Vaqueiro. He arrived in 1532 in Goa and functioned as what we may loosely call an Auxiliary Bishop, up to 1535. But this arrangement did not prove satisfactory and the erection of Goa into a diocese was urged. Rome acceded to the request of the Padroado authorities in Lisbon and in 1537 the Franciscan

João de Albuquerque, was appointed the first Bishop of Goa. He was incidentally also the first Latin Bishop in India. He ruled the diocese up to 1553, when he died.

During his incumbency as Bishop of Goa, João de Albuquerque had for some years as his Vicar General an extraordinary man by the name of Miguel Vaz. He was genuinely interested in the welfare and progress of the Church in the Orient. In 1541 he and a group of like-minded clergy and laity, obviously with the blessing of the Bishop, erected a confraternity by the name of Holy Faith. This body would be responsible for the founding and maintenance of a seminary where young men both from India and other parts of the Orient would be trained for the priesthood. During the early period of this institution the Franciscans provided the teaching staff. However, soon after the arrival of St Francis Xavier, the seminary was handed over to the Jesuits. The main reason why the Franciscans so readily withdrew from the seminary in Goa was perhaps due to the fact that they themselves had founded a similar institution at Cranganor, chiefly for the St Thomas Christians.

FRANCISCANS IN CRANGANORE

From the time of their arrival in Cochin, the Franciscans had been involved in building up a relationship with these St Thomas Christians. It was not an easy matter. The latter resorted under the East Chaldean Patriarchs who were not united with Rome, whereas they themselves, due to the Padroado rights conferred upon the Portuguese monarchs by the Holy See, were very much dependent on the latter. How they tried to solve this problem and justified their policy of subjecting the St Thomas Christians to their authorities need not occupy us here as it would lengthen this introduction beyond measure. That on the whole their relationship with the St Thomas Christians and especially with the East Chaldean Bishops, who during the early Portuguese period put in an appearance in Kerala, was good we may deduce from the fact that ultimately, as we have seen, they founded a seminary at Cranganor.

Cranganor at the time occupied a strategical place in contemporary Kerala. It straddled the main road which linked Calicut in the north with Cochin in the south. The heads of either state,

who at the time were adversaries, could make use of this highway to invade the territory of the other. Moreover Cranganor was the centre of the pepper-trade in which the St Thomas Christians were heavily involved, not only in the production and processing of this commodity but also in its marketing.

The Portuguese understandably were interested in the place and its inhabitants and were prepared to defend it against all rivals. Already in 1507 they erected a small fort in this centre, but as a matter of fact it was insignificant and could not offer adequate security to the large St Thomas community. No wonder the Franciscans urged the Portuguese authorities to erect a larger and better equipped fort in the place. It was in this vein that in 1530 the Franciscan Antonio do Padrão wrote to the Portuguese King. As a result, a larger fort was erected there in the years 1536-7.

It was in this important centre of the St Thomas Christians that the Franciscans decided to erect a seminary. This occurred before 1540. Incidentally this was India's first seminary. The founder was the Franciscan, Vicente de Lagos. He was later succeeded by a Malayali friar by the name of Jorge de S. Pedro. He had gone to Portugal and there joined the Order. He was perhaps the first Indian Franciscan. The seminary was very much appreciated. Even St Francis Xavier lauded it. Quite a number of young men from the St. Thomas community received their priestly formation in this institution, especially during the first decades of its existence.

Besides the establishments in Cochin and Cranganor, the friars also founded in these years another centre for their apostolic work in Kerala. This was in Cannanore where they settled in 1542. This same year the Commissariat of the Franciscans in India was raised to the status of a Custody by John Maltei, the general of the Order. In other words the Order was even more permanently bound to India and there was no question of abandoning their mission in the country.

After a few more decades and especially after their training centres had been expanded and even more firmly established, this Custody would be raised to the rank of a Province. The number of missions and permanent settlements would grow. Already in the forties of the 16th century, with promises of further contingents of friars from Portugal, they were in a position to expand not only in India but also in neighbouring countries where the Portuguese

had established themselves. Thus it happened that in March 1543 João da Villa do Conde and companions embarked in Lisbon for Goa. They had been destined by the authorities to establish a permanent mission in Sri Lanka.[4] However, they did not constitute an independent mission, but had been subjected to the authorities of the St Thomas Custody, later Province. It was this arrangement that guaranteed the permanency of this Mission. This will become even more evident when perusing the following chapters where the history of this Franciscan Mission will be unfolded.

NOTES

[1] In compiling the early history of the Franciscans in India, whence Sri Lanka drew its first permanent missionaries, the author has relied almost exclusively on what he wrote in another volume: A. Meersman, O.F.M., *The Ancient Franciscan Provinces in India*, Bangalore, 1971. There the sources on which the author relied are given.

[2] There are authors who claim that Vasco da Gama was accompanied not only by one secular priest but also by two Trinitarian Fathers. L. Kilger, O.S.B., in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft*, 2 (1946), 308.

[3] F. F. Lopes, O.F.M., "Fr. Henrique de Coimbra, O Missionario, O Diplomata, O Bispo," *Studia*, Lisboa, No. 37 (Dec. 1973), 7-119.

[4] For a description of how the Franciscans came to Sri Lanka and established the Church cf. E. Peiris, O.M.I. and A. Meersman, O.F.M., *Early Christianity in Ceylon*, Chilaw, 1972; Fernando Felix Lopes, O.F.M., *A Evangelização de Ceilão, desde* 1552 *a* 1602, in: *Studia*, Lisboa, Nos. 20-22 (April-Dec., 1967), 1-73.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF THE FRANCISCANS TO SRI LANKA

By O. M. da Silva Cosme

The advent of the Franciscans to Sri Lanka to exercise their special expertise in the field of evangelization took place in the 16th century when the face and mind of Europe was being reshaped with the Renaissance. The Franciscans' advent to Sri Lanka was closely linked with the fortunes of the infant Iberian nation of Portugal.[1] Inevitably this chapter will be devoted to the foundation of Portuguese power and influence in 16th century Sri Lanka, which enabled the doors to be opened for the Franciscans to come in and perform their arduous work within reasonable limits of safety and with varying degrees of assistance from the local kings, royal families, chieftains and the ordinary folk at large.

This secular link and process was unavoidable in view of the fact that the right to send missionaries to distant lands, called *padroado* or ecclesiastical patronage, had been given by the Pope to the sovereigns of Spain and Portugal. In 1455 Pope Nicholas V had made African discoveries the special preserve of Portugal, while in 1493 Pope Alexander VI had made those of the New World that of Spain. It was no secret that with a view to pushing its own spiritual frontiers the Papacy was an interested spectator in the ultramarine adventures of these two Iberian powers.

By 1505 Dom Manuel of Portugal was optimistic of extending his nascent empire in spice-rich South-East Asia, for trading posts had been established at Calicut, Cochin and Cannanore only a few years after Vasco da Gama's history-making discovery of the sea-route to India. Thus Francisco de Almeida came out in March 1505 as the first viceroy of Portuguese India with royal instructions "to discover Ceylon & Pegu[2] & Malacca & other places & things of those parts."[3] In November of the same year he detailed his young son Dom Lourenço to blockade the sea-lanes between the Maldives and Sri Lanka through which Moorish argosies laden with spices, silver, drugs and gold were sailing to avoid the Portuguese armadas off the Malabar coast.

When Lourenço's fleet ran into hostile seas it was Friar Vicente, a Franciscan, who proved to be his guiding light and dissuaded him from returning to Cochin and prevailed upon him to be patient and abide by the will of God. So it was that his fleet drifted to Galle where Lourenço learnt of his bearings as being in the waters of the celebrated island of Sri Lanka.

After some rest the fleet coasted northwards and dropped anchor on the 15th of November 1505 in the port of the ancient Moorish settlement of Kolontota, also known as Kolompura and Kolamba, which came to be called Columbo by the Portuguese.

The port[4] of Colombo was at the mouth of the river and was the chief port of the premier kingdom of the island, namely, Kotte, by which name its capital city was also called. Its ruler was Vīra Parākrama Bāhu but owing to his dotage, his son Dharma Parākrama Bāhu was the virtual de facto ruler. There was friction between him and his brother Vijaya Bāhu.

Consternation struck the Moorish mercantile community with anticipation of the loss of their monopoly of trade, while the Moorish-instigated Sinhala people with visions of threats to their independence attacked a party of Portuguese who had gone ashore for wood and water. A volley of retaliatory cannon balls thundered across the port terrifying the inhabitants.

According to the Sinhala chronicle, the *Rājāvaliya*, prince Cakrāyudha, a brother of the king, spied in disguise and advised Dharma Parākrama Bāhu to grant an audience to the Portuguese, whose martial exploits in the Indian ocean were not unknown. A delegation was arranged but mutual suspicions prevailed on both sides. Dom Lourenço retained hostages, while the Sinhala escorts in an attempt to screen the proximity of their capital to Colombo led Cutrim, the Portuguese emissary, through a circuitous route for three days. The Sinhala escorts were beaten in this battle of wits by the Portuguese, who fired a gun every hour, which helped Cutrim to realize the subterfuge. Cutrim's success was duly celebrated with volleys of artillery, flag-waving and buntings.

Another mission followed, led by Payo de Souza in full-scale pomp on elephants sent from Kotte and produced more tangible results in the shape of an alliance of vassalage stipulating that an annual tribute of 150 bahars[5] of cinnamon would be given by the ruler of Kotte in return for the protection of his kingdom and ports

by the sovereign of Portugal. The treaty was drawn up in Portuguese and Sinhala and a Sinhala copy on a sheet of beaten gold was presented to the Portuguese emissary. Another naval celebration followed and proverbial Sinhala hospitality inundated the Portuguese flotilla with poultry, fruits and vegetables.

The "strategic" eye of Dom Lourenço and his aides picked Galbokka, the rocky promontory on the south-west side of the Colombo bay, which carries the anglicized name of Galle-buck today, as the site for the erection of a factory for promoting trade and collecting the tribute. The first Roman Catholic chapel, called St Lawrence's after Dom Lourenço's patron saint, was erected here, probably due to Friar Vicente's influence. The *quinas*[6] or five shields of the Portuguese coat-of-arms was engraved here on a boulder as a mark of the "discovery" of the island and the peace established with its people. A small staff was left with the factor as the manager of the factory, which in fact was a trading settlement. The Franciscan, Friar Vicente, was not permitted to stay and indulge in his evangelical zeal as Dom Lourenço quite rightly considered that the time was not propitious.

The island's natural resources and strategic position on the sea-routes were considered adequate reasons for the Portuguese sovereign in 1506 to instruct viceroy de Almeida to make it a fortified seat of government. Meanwhile the inmates of the factory were undergoing increasing discomfiture due mostly to the harassing tactics of the Moorish-instigated Sinhala population. Consequently in 1507 viceroy Almeida ordered the factory to be abandoned without any retaliatory measures and the Portuguese inmates were evacuated, although the Kotte ruler was not hostile and not responsible for the mal-behaviour or rather patriotic conduct of his subjects.

Meanwhile on the 21st December 1507, in distant Rome a religious procession was held in honour of Portugal's discoveries, and the Prelate-General of the Augustinian order delivered an oration eulogizing the Pope and the sovereign of Portugal. Portuguese power, unfortunately so vital for the spread of Christianity, had a long way to go before it ensconced itself in the island and the Franciscan messengers of the gospel had to be patient for many decades before they could establish a regular mission in Sri Lanka.

Dom Manuel's order to construct a fort in Sri Lanka only materialized in October 1518[7] under the personal surveillance of governor

Lopo Soarez de Albergaria, who owing to a record of failures wanted to get back on course by following royal instructions. He set out in September of that year with an armada of 25 sail accompanied by a thousand personnel which included aristocrats, soldiery, seamen, stone-masons and 200 of the fighting Nairs and their officers loaned by the friendly raja of Cochin and with some Indian quarry-men, munitions and material as well.

Albergaria's envoy João Flores convinced the Kotte monarch Dharma Parākrama Bāhu that the Portuguese had no diabolical motives, explaining that a fortress was necessary to protect the factory from thieves and arson and also impressed upon him the consequential protection the country would have and the flow of European goods and the ensuing prosperity that would follow it. Formal talks followed at Colombo between the distinguished Portuguese visitor and the Kotte monarch at a reception of European and Sinhala vintage "with salutes of artillery, musketry, trumpets, tambours and other tokens of naval courtesy"[8] and gedige decorations of young coconut palm fronds, much in vogue even today. The monarch's visit was a signal honour and a recognition of Portuguese military power.

Ere Sinhala-Portuguese cordiality could bear fruit, skilful Moorish propaganda infected Kotte with a severe bout of uncontrollable Portuguese-phobia. The first Sinhala-Portuguese clash saw Sinhala arrows and Moorish-supplied shot from the Sinhala mud and wooden palisades directed on the foreign fleet, whose cannons replied adequately. Calm, however, was restored and profuse apologies tendered by the helpless pro-Portuguese monarch, who now offered stone-masons for cutting stone and lime for the fortress.

Governor Albergaria forged ahead and a triangular-shaped fort rose on Galbokka, which Portuguese engineering ingenuity transformed into an island with a deep moat and wooden bridge linking it to the mainland. Another successful mission to Kotte with gifts of velvet silks and two richly caparisoned horses coupled with a veiled threat that the salvation of the kingdom lay in tributary vassalage to the Portuguese sovereign resulted in the second Sinhala-Portuguese treaty providing for an enhanced tribute of 400 bahars of cinnamon with additional items of 20 rings set with rubies and 10 tusked elephants in return for succour against the local king's enemies.

Before Albergaria's departure, the tributary terms were implemented and two new Portuguese posts were created, namely, a captain of the fortress and a captain-major of the seas to guard the port and comb the seas for prize vessels. A factor managed the factory, while a chaplain ministered to the spiritual needs of the alien settlement.

The Kotte king was friendly but helpless to stop the hostility of his subjects, who breached the walls of the fortress during the south-west monsoon of 1519 when help from Goa was only a remote possibility. His brother Vijaya Bāhu, who succeeded him in suspicious circumstances, surreptitiously engineered a joint Sinhala-Calicut attack on the fortress, which was repulsed and followed by a Portuguese naval victory over the fleet of the Zamorin of Calicut. In 1520 the new in-coming captain of the fortress brought stone and mortar and carpenters and masons to repair the fort.

The Sinhala population was still on the war-path, and punitive sallies were resorted to by the garrison against the local population whose success at one stage emboldened Vijaya Bāhu to repudiate the treaty on the score that it lacked popular assent. The fortress was besieged for six weary months. A surprise attack by the besieged with the support of fifty soldiers from Goa and a night-long bombardment on Colombo and the burning of two mosques made Vijaya Bāhu sue for peace, which owing to misgivings of fresh succour from Goa was readily accepted on condition the tribute was continued.

Vijaya Bāhu's burning desire to install his second wife's adopted son Dēva Rāja Singha as his heir egged his three sons Bhuvaneka Bāhu, Pararāja Singha and Māyādunnē Raja to get him assassinated in 1521. The assassination is best known to history as the *Vijayabā Kollaya.*

The fort in Colombo was still an eyesore to the Sinhala population and the captain of Colombo Fernão Gomez de Lemos wisely recommended to his sovereign that a factory would suffice for trade and the stamp of vassalage. Governor de Menezes more or less endorsed this view in stating that only the cinnamon trade was of any consequence. Thus in 1524 Vasco da Gama came out to take office as the second viceroy of Portuguese India with express instructions to dismantle the fortress in order to establish better relations with the local population and avoid a show-down of power.

The fort was dismantled and the factor Nuno Freyre de Andrade with a clerk and 20 soldiers was left under the protection of Bhuveneka Bāhu, the eldest of the three princes, who after the *Vijayabā Kollaya* had been elected in 1521 to the Lion Throne of Kotte by the council of ministers and who was to prove as weak and as fallible as his father before him in the matter of his own succession. The constant of sixteenth century Sri Lanka's history, namely, confrontation due to problems of succession to the throne, already mildly foreshadowed with Vīra Parākrama Bāhu's death in 1509,[9] appeared now with the vaulting ambitions of the kings of Sitawaka to wear the crowns of Kotte and Kandy, which paved the way for the foundation of Portuguese power.

Māyādunnē, the warrior king of Sitawaka and younger brother of Bhuvaneka Bāhu, now made a bloody and ruinous attempt for well-nigh half a century to sit on the throne of Kotte, which he grasped in all but name, to add to the bitterness of his heart. At first he sought the aid of the powerful Zamorin of Calicut, the inveterate enemy of the Portuguese, keenly aware that a sea-power was needed to counter Bhuvaneka Bāhu's new-found European allies. He even offered some ports and tributary vassalage to the Zamorin.

In 1525 the Zamorin's general Ali Hassan and his men appeared twice in Sri Lanka and demanded first the surrender of the Portuguese factor and his men and on the second occasion threatened the destruction of Kotte unless the Portuguese factory was razed to the ground. They were beaten off by a Sinhala force with the assistance of the gallant inmates of the factory, who were invited by a grateful Bhuvaneka Bāhu to his capital for rest and treatment.

Thereafter undaunted by failure Māyādunnē repeatedly besieged the city of Kotte four times in 1527, 1536 and twice in 1538 with the help of the Zamorin's Muslim generals. The first three Portuguese expeditionary forces in response to Bhuvaneka Bāhu's frantic appeals to the Portuguese governor in Goa took the form of goodwill missions as Māyādunnē raised the siege on hearing that succour was forthcoming to Kotte.

Māyādunnē's fourth siege to Kotte brought the fourth expeditionary Portuguese force under the veteran Portuguese nobleman Miguel Ferreira who was a personal friend of the Kotte monarch and prevailed upon him that punitive action against Māyādunnē was an indispensable condition for his survival. Māyādunnē was

compelled to disgorge the Kotte sea-ports and territories he had conquered, pay a war-indemnity to Bhuvaneka Bāhu and also shamelessly to send to Ferreira the heads of his chief Calicut allies-in-arms. It cannot be gainsaid that Māyādunnē's policy of aggrandizement was responsible for embroiling the Portuguese in the local political scene, leading them from a policy of trade and suzerainty over the kingdom of Kotte to one of open conquest of all Sinhala territory after the death of Dharmapāla, the last king of Kotte and after half a century of pouring their blood and money.

It was 1539 now and the 21st year after de Albergaria's fortress had been built in Colombo and it might be convenient to survey the progress of Christianity in the island. Up to 1524 when the fort was dismantled its chaplain was the only Roman Catholic priest in the island and after its dismantling it is not unreasonable to assume that a chaplain was attached to the factory. Whether he was a Franciscan or not cannot be established, but most probably he belonged to the order, as a band of eight members of the order had accompanied Pedro Alvares Cabral to India and Friar Vicente, who accompanied Dom Lourenço to Sri Lanka, was one of them.

In the prevailing atmosphere of tension the chaplain could not have gone far from the fort to indulge in any missionary activity. At the most, however, he may have experimented with the local labour force or friendly and curious inhabitants and attempted to teach them the rudiments of the Christian doctrines and that too through an interpreter or in "pigeon Sinhala". There is little doubt that the Franciscans had their sights trained on Sri Lanka and that particularly those who had come to South India were biding their time for a fecund opportunity to enter and sow the seeds of the gospel. There is no evidence that they did come so far but when closer links were being forged between the Portuguese and Bhuvaneka Bāhu after 1524, with Māyādunnē's harassing campaigns, it is not impossible that of the priests who may have come as chaplains or observers with the expeditionary forces already adverted to, one or two of them may have remained behind.

The above surmises do not seem to be altogether unjustified or far-fetched when one hears that in 1528 the factor Nuno Freyre de Andrade took up residence in the city of Kotte with the Franciscan friar Paulo de S. Boaventura, who it is said was responsible for a number of conversions. It is even possible that the friar built Kotte's first church. The early churches were of clay and palm

branches. The climate was definitely favourable for Christianity for towards the end of 1528 Bhuvaneka Bāhu, according to a letter[10] of one Mexia (dated 30th December 1528) to his sovereign in Portugal, had sent an ambassador asking that a fortress be erected in Colombo. A passage in the letter runs as follows: "A gallion which arrived from Ceylon with cinnamon, brought an ambassador from the King to request the erection of a tower on the site of the old fortress, where the Factor and a few men should reside. He even offered to pay the expenses of the building, so anxious was he to be in good terms with the Portuguese, in consequence of his being at war with two brothers[11] who were endeavouring to seize his dominions. It seemed to be for the good of Your Majesty's service that a tower capable of being held by a few men should be erected as it will afford a secure shelter for the Factor, which is anything but the case now, as, when Moorish paraos[12] arrive there, he dare not remain but is compelled to flee for safety to the King's palace. This king is very devoted to Your Majesty and places more confidence in us than in his own people, and only this year, when in terror of his own brother he placed himself, his treasures and his jewels, under the protection of the Factor. He is so much inclined towards us and our customs that we may hope soon he will become a Christian."

By 1531 there was a priest called Luis Monteiro de Setuval, who according to the inscription on his tombstone,[13] which was discovered at the Battenberg bastion in 1836, had built the church of St Lawrence and other churches as well, with the help of his faithful flock, who may have included local Sinhala people too. The inscription may be rather exaggerated for it claims that he was not only the first vicar but also the primate as well, which could not have been so as this indicates the existence of other priests as well. According to a letter of his to Dona Catharina, the queen of Portugal, written in 1561, he wanted his salary, which he said was in arrears for 15 years, to be donated to the Misericordias (Poor-Houses) of Goa, Cochin and Colombo. The fact that he was a salaried priest would indicate clearly that he was not a Franciscan or a member of any other order of friars.

By the end of the fourth decade of the century there would appear to be a small but nevertheless growing population of *casados* or married Portuguese men, apart from the floating population of Portuguese especially in the ports on the western coastal belt.

By about 1547 there were about 40 Portuguese domiciled in the island, cultivating their own plantations. Many of them like Christovam Rabelo, Henrique de Matos, Belchior Rodriguez and Miguel Fernandez were *casados* (married men) and must have had local wives, and perhaps some of the latter may have joined the new faith. White imported wives[14] were a luxury and prohibitive in the early years of the Portuguese period.

The presence of Sinhala-Portuguese families and the novelty of their church-going and church-services and processions would naturally, perhaps, have attracted local families to the new faith. The chief attractions, however, in the very early years of Christianity in the kingdom of Kotte were the legal benefits that would accrue, such as the exemption or rather attempted exemptions from feudal dues and the Sinhala customary laws. For this reason particularly slaves were among the new converts, whose distinguishing mark was a cap which they discarded in times of persecution. Their numbers seem to have been assuming sufficient proportions as to draw Bhuvaneka Bāhu's attention. Portuguese nationals, mostly of the mobile class of shippers, adventurers and merchants, would appear to have frustrated his officials with their anti-social behaviour, which involved the smuggling of cinnamon and goods, avoiding customs duties and port dues, kidnapping children, forcing their merchandise on Sinhala households and making purchase of goods at prices fixed by them, denuding the countryside of trees, specially jak, for building boats. Even Portuguese officials in the matter of handling of cinnamon were to be reproached. A list of grievances including those against the neophytes was despatched by the Kotte monarch to João III of Portugal, who in March 1543 promulgated *alvaras* or decrees in an attempt to grant redress. Obviously the administrative machinery of Kotte was out of gear and ineffective due to the steady and insidious opposition from Sitawaka.

Bhuvaneka Bāhu and his chief ministers were by now keenly aware that his salvation from Māyādunnē's unbridled ambition was to seek the protection of his European overlord and that Portuguese fire-power was the only answer in his predicament, which was even made more serious by his decision to ensure that his infant grandson Dharmapāla, the son of his daughter Samudra Dēvi, should ascend the Lion Throne of Kotte after his own demise. The Portuguese had, indeed, played admirably well their part as

protectors of his kingdom and met their treaty obligations. Accordingly in 1540 a very novel programme was executed. Two ambassadors, the brahmin Sri Radaraksa Pandita and Sallappu Aratchie, a hero of the first victorious encounter against the Zamorin's commander Ali Hassan in 1525, accompanied a golden effigy of young Dharmapāla to the court of Portugal, where it was received with the customary courtesy accorded to royalty and crowned with all the solemnity and pomp and gaiety associated with Portuguese coronations. An *alvara* from Portugal ensured Dharmapāla's succession on his grandfather's death.

The most interesting upshot of these events goes to the heart of this chapter. A Franciscan friar Henrique, who had access to Bhuvaneka Bāhu, is said to have persuaded him to make a request through his ambassador for missionaries to work in his kingdom. The request was duly conveyed by Sri Radaraksa Pandita to the Portuguese monarch, who gladly acceded to it. The ambassador, according to the Portuguese version, is to have also said that his sovereign would become a Christian. This was going to be the bone of contention for many decades between the Portuguese authorities and Bhuvaneka Bāhu, who vehemently denied ever having made such a promise. One can well imagine the euphoria that must have swept through the court and religious circles in Portugal at the news of the request from Kotte.

Thus it was that the ambassadorial mission returned to Sri Lanka in 1543 with seven members of the Franciscan order, their chief, or *guardião* as he was called in Portuguese, was the indefatigable friar João de Villa de Conde, into whose enlightened hands Bhuvaneka Bāhu entrusted the education of his grandson Dharmapāla, who was destined to a tragic end on the throne of Kotte, childless and devoid of his kingdom. The wondrous spirit of tolerance, which has been the hall-mark of Buddhism saw to it that the friars were well received, while the Kotte monarch magnanimously set apart 200 *pardaos*[15] for their annual expenses, the whole or part of which he had ordered to be given to a Portuguese national to be spent on them as they had refused to accept the money from him, doubtless owing to their vow of poverty. In addition he later made an annual grant of 50 *pardaos* for their churches during his lifetime and that of his grandson. During the factorship of Duarte Teixeira he made a further grant of 10 *bahars* of cinnamon, and out of the sale

proceeds of 10 bahars, given as a further grant to the churches, Antonio Pesoa had got a silver chalice and incensory made.

According to the brahmin ambassador in his letter dated January 28, 1551, to the queen of Portugal, Bhuvaneka Bāhu had permitted the erection in the centre of his capital of "two important churches, where up to now no insult was ever offered to them, but instead great respect, as it is right should be the case."[16] The Franciscans set up their headquarters in the capital city of Kotte. And so the curtain rises on the evangelistic stage of Sri Lanka, which was dominated by the Franciscans for nearly six decades.

NOTES

[1] Portugal became a monarchy only in 1139 when Affonso Henriques assumed the title of king over the country of Portugal (which name is derived from Portus Cale, a pre-Roman or Roman settlement near the river Douro). Portugal was assured of independence with the victory of John I at the great battle of Aljubarrota in 1385 when the Castilian yoke was shaken off, and reached nationhood in 1411 with the peace with Castile. The country was ready now to launch out on its daring voyages of discovery which were spearheaded by the saintly and able Prince Henry the Navigator, the third son of John I, of the capable House of Avis. He was a master of the Order of Christ and harnessed the resources of the order to attract the best navigators and geographers and to equip numerous voyages of exploration.

[2] Siam

[3] *Royal Asiatic Society Journal* (Ceylon Branch), vol. XIX (1907, no. 39), p. 332.

[4] The port was moved to its present site in Portuguese times.

[5] A measure of 3 and 4 quintals according to Couto (Portuguese historian). In 1554 a quintal was about 176.25 kilograms.

[6] This boulder was unearthed near the breakwater in 1898 and was brought to the Gordon Gardens, Colombo.

[7] Viceroy Almeida was too preoccupied with India to implement the royal instructions and his own pet plans to make Colombo the seat of government. Governor Affonso de Alburquerque who succeeded him was engaged in extending and strengthening the growing Portuguese empire with his conquests of Goa, Malacca and Hormuz. Besides, he favoured Cochin as the centre of government but apparently did some re-thinking and opted for Goa.

[8] Fr S. G. Perera's translation of Queyroz's Conquest of Ceylon, vol. 2, p. 189. Details of the meeting are given here.

[9] According to a letter of Albuquerque written in 1513 to his sovereign, the site for a fortress had been offered on the death in 1509 of the sovereign of Sri Lanka who must have been the aged Vīra Parākrama Bāhu and the offer must have been from his son Dharma Parākrama Bāhu (the de facto ruler referred to earlier in this chapter) because of his tussle for the throne with his brother Vijaya Bāhu.

[10] See Vol. I of Peiris' Portuguese Era, p. 465 note 4.

[11] A mistake. Bhuvaneka Bāhu was at this time harassed only by his brother Māyādunnē.

[12] A large flat-bottomed boat still used on the rivers.

[13] Monteiro's bones and tombstone were removed from the Battenberg battery to St Lucia's Cathedral, Colombo, in 1844.

[14] In the early days of Portuguese expansion, women were discouraged from going overseas, so the men married local women or kept them as mistresses. In order to avoid the stigma of illegitimacy, after 1545 orphan Portuguese girls were dowered by the Portuguese sovereigns and given in marriage to Portuguese bachelors in the Portuguese settlements abroad. Yet women did travel. In 1546 Governor João de Castro's wife and son were in Goa. The Portuguese settlers in Colombo and the kingdom of Kotte most probably had Sinhalese wives.

[15] A Portuguese silver coin of changing value. It was originally an Indian gold coin. According to Hobson-Jobson the term was derived from the Sanskrit *pratāpa* meaning majesty, splendour.

[16] Schurhammer, *Ceylon*, vol. 2.

CHAPTER VIII

FRANCISCAN MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN SRI LANKA

By Rt Revd Dr Edmund Peiris, O.M.I.

A band of six Franciscan missionaries arrived in Sri Lanka towards the end of 1543. The circumstances which led to their arrival have been dealt with in the previous chapter.

The superior of the group was Friar João de Villa do Conde, renowned for his preaching, his zeal to make Christ known to all, and his holy and exemplary life. His companions were perhaps Antonio do Padrão, Simão de Coimbra, Gonçalo and the Italian, Francisco de Monteprandone.[1] They came to the island full of hope for the conversion of the king to Christianity, but were disappointed. He would not hear of becoming a Christian, though Friar João was prepared to "walk through fire" to prove the truth of his religion. The people, however, were friendly towards the friars, respected their ascetical life, listened to their preaching, and many became Christians. When the king heard of this, he not only went back on his word to leave his subjects free to change their religion, but "even threatened with death-penalty those who wanted to receive Baptism."[2]

One day the king and his household, the Portuguese factor and the garrison of Kotte went to Kelaniya. There the king was shot dead. "Some say that this calamity was caused of set purpose; others say that it was an accident. God alone knoweth which is true." So says the *Rājāvaliya*.[3] Trindade gives more details: "It happened that a number of Portuguese were walking along with their muskets and that one of them without knowing what he was doing put a bullet through the unfortunate King, while at twilight at the hour of the Trinity-bell he was standing at one of the windows of the palace at Kelaniya together with our factor..And though at the time they did not know who had killed him, later on they came to know that it was a mulatto who by chance had fired the musket. He fled to Bengal and from there sent a message saying that it was he who had killed by accident and that therefore nobody should be blamed. The author of the sixth Decada da Asia says that his

name was Antonio de Barcellos."[4] Prince Dharmapāla, the king's grandson, was proclaimed King of Kotte and Vīdiyē Baṇdāra the Regent.

THE STORM

When the news of Bhuvaneka Bāhu's death and the enthronement of his grandson, Dharmapāla, as King of Kotte reached Goa, the Viceroy, Dom Afonso de Noronha, hastened to Lanka, more with a view to extortion than to assisting the new ruler. The unfortunate king and his courtiers were robbed of their valuabes and the palace itself was systematically plundered. Such scandalous conduct, the more detestable as the victim was under the protection of Portugal, was strongly disapproved of by the King of Portugal, who ordered the Viceroy to make due restitution.

To add insult to injury, Noronha, on leaving Kotte, had left instructions to have the king's father, Vīdiyē Baṇdāra, kidnapped and imprisoned. This was done in 1552 but the quarry escaped. "As soon as Tribuly found himself free from prison, as he bore in his heart bitter resentment for the ill-treatment that had been accorded to him, collecting a large number of men, whom his wife had sent to him, he betook himself in the direction of Gale, and all the churches and Christians that he came across he put to fire and sword.."[5]

The Franciscan friars had a monastery not far from the Colombo fortress, and from there some of them had moved south, building places of worship and making many converts, in Panadura, Kalutara, Maggona, Beruwala, Galle and Weligama, all seaports. But, Vīdiyē Baṇdāra in his rage against the Portuguese and the religion they professed, set on fire and destroyed these churches. "He also cruelly put to death those who administered to these churches and many of the Christians they had formed there. He ill-treated them, even tortured them, all of which took place in the year 1555."[6]

"In this persecution of the Faith there gave up their life for it the Fathers, Friar Francisco de Braga, Friar João Calvo, Friar Antonio Padrão, who erected one [i.e. Padram = tablet, memorial] to his name and the Seraphic Order, worthy of eternal remembrance, being torn to pieces by elephants, when they could not make him apostatize by other means. A Religious of the same Order was the Father Friar Francisco Braga, who preaching the divine law to the Tyrant, and seeing that the terrors of hell were of no avail against

him, raised his eyes to Heaven saying: 'O Lord, in confirmation of what I say, make that those who torment me may become Preachers of Thy Gospel.' He had scarcely uttered these words, when two of those assailants, executors of the will of Tribule, began to shout: 'We truly believe in the Faith for which Friar Francisco dies.' In his presence they were immediately beheaded, their blood serving them for baptism, and with them Friar Francisco to whose body the enemies set fire. In this [i.e. fire] also there offered up his life to God in sacrifice Friar João Calvo who, being a man of years and of little strength, succumbed in a short time with the sweet name of Jesus on his lips."[7]

Vīdiyē Baṇdāra made Pelenda, in the Kalutara district, his stronghold, but was driven away by Rājasiṃha, the young warrior son of Māyādunnē, aided by the Portuguese. After taking refuge in the hill country, he fled to the Kurunegala district, where he repaid his host by taking away his life and his principality. Ejected from there he fled to Jaffna, where he was killed in a quarrel.

A CATHOLIC KING

The young king Dharmapāla, being now completely free from the powerful regency of his father, decided to receive baptism with all solemnity, taking the name Dom João, in honour of Dom João III, king of Portugal. The baptism took place in 1557 at the hands of Friar João de Villa do Conde. "This king, Dom João Parea Pandar [i.e. Periya Paṇdār or Mahā Baṇdāra] was a very good Christian and ever after lived under the discipline of the Friars of St Francis and the favour and protection of the Portuguese, who defended him as long as he lived and maintained him on the throne notwithstanding the opposition of Madune, his uncle."[8]

The news of the conversion was received with great joy by the Queen of Portugal, Dona Catharina, who "considered herself fortunate since during her reign so many should have been won over for Christ."[9] Pope Gregory XIII wrote to him: "We are pleased beyond belief with your letter, and with your piety in acknowledging the Catholic Faith and persevering therein with the utmost constancy; for that is the beginning and foundation of all blessings and of that felicity whereunto we were created by God in whose name we embrace your nobility and count you of the same rank and number as all other Catholic Princes."[10]

King Dharmapāla's example was followed by his courtiers and many other people. There were, however, some who, displeased that he had abandoned the religion of his ancestors, went over to Māyādunnē, who stood up as the champion of Buddhism. In spite of Māyādunnē's threats, the Franciscan Friars converted about 3000 in a few months and built twelve churches "where they taught the truths of our Holy Faith."[11]

Taking full advantage of the divided loyalties in Kotte, Māyādunnē attacked the city. "The city of Cotta [Kotte] was besieged five times and in one of them our men were so hard-pressed and in such dire straits that they ate elephants, dogs, cats and whatever unclean animals they could find. During all these sieges our Friars helped, one of them being Friar Simão de Nazareth, who was so highly esteemed for his sanctity that the soldiers said that God supported them on account of his holiness."[12] About the same time, Colombo was often besieged but Māyādunnē was repulsed.

The Portuguese realising the difficulty of fortifying and defending two capital cities induced King Dharmapāla to abandon Kotte and move with his Court to Colombo. From July 1565, therefore, Colombo rose to prominence, but the King, in spite of all his regalia and royal honours, became a puppet king, bereft of subjects and territory, and living on the goodwill of the King of Portugal. The Sinhala people, however, loved Dharmapāla, as he represented the venerable line of their ancient royalty. "The City [Kotte] remained abandoned and disfigured, the buildings and walls razed, given over to wild elephants and other beasts of the forest."[13] The people, Sinhala as well as Portuguese, lamented the fate of the royal city of Kotte.

AN UNEASY ALLIANCE

The Franciscans were the first missionaries in Sri Lanka and had borne the heat and the burden of the day. They came with the Portuguese troops as their spiritual guides and consolers in distress, though at times they became animators in battle. For instance: When the small fleet of Dom Lourenço de Almeida was "driven by contrary winds and finally by a violent storm," he sought comfort from Friar Vicente, their chaplain. At dawn when the storm had subsided, he said Mass and all the sailors heared it devoutly. "..By a dispensation of Heaven, when they least expected it, they came in sight of the port of Gale."[14]

During the rebellion of Domingos Corea, who was posing as "the Liberator of the Chingala Nation," the Portuguese were severely attacked and many were killed or wounded. "While they were in these straits, Friar Gaspar dos Reys heard that they had called for him and that valiant captain, Henrique Aluarez da Silva, who had just been wounded by a bullet, had asked for confession. And although the danger was evident, he went to console him and hear his confession, and while he was doing so, he received bullet-wounds in both his legs, but even this was not sufficient to deter him from finishing hearing his confession. And seeing that he could not move on account of both his legs being broken they placed him on an elephant and tied him so that he would not fall off"; the elephant ran off into a thick jungle and the poor Friar's body was torn to tatters.[15]

The spirit of the Crusaders which had helped the Celtic inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula in the 15th century to drive out the Moors from their land, was still alive among the Spanish and Portuguese discoverers and conquerors of the following century too. The Friars in Sri Lanka were not altogether immune from the crusading outlook. Once when Kotte was fiercely attacked by Māyādunnē's troops and the Portuguese defenders were falling back, one of their Captains marched out of the city with a small force. "At their head came the venerable Friar Simão de Nazareth, with five or six other Friars, who during the height of battle were always in the thick of it, encouraging the troops with the Crucifix raised aloft, and calling upon the Most Holy Name of Jesus, begging Him to help those battling for His Holy Faith. But the fury of the enemy was such that they killed many of those who were fighting at the pass of Preacota [Pita Kotte], among them three of our Friars and twenty Portuguese."[16]

On account of the Padroado or patronage rights conceded to the Portuguese and Spanish Kings by the Popes the co-operation between the two powers, ecclesiastical and civil, was at times too close and the interference of the one in the other's affairs, too great. Says Trindade: "During the conquest of this Orient the two powers, secular and ecclesiastical, were so closely united that rarely did one move without the other being involved, for the secular arm conquered only with that right which the preaching of the Gospel bestowed, and the preaching could only have effect when accompanied and favoured by those in arms. Thus the two powers

always worked in unison and also helped each other in such a manner that when on the one hand the Kings favoured the ministers of the Divine Word, on the other hand the latter interested and exerted themselves in the affairs which pertain to the royal service. This can be seen in the Island of Ceylon, where we can truly say that the Friars Minor cared for the affairs of the King not with less concern than they did for the affairs pertaining to their profession, undergoing many labours and placing themselves in no less grievous dangers to serve the King than they did to serve God, since they held that in this way too they were serving Him."[17]

The relation between God's service and the King's service, as seen by the Franciscan missionaries in this country, is made clearer in the next chapter by Trindade. "Though converting souls and bringing them to the light of Faith is a supernatural work and proper to God, for no man can come to the Son (as He Himself has asserted) unless the Father attracts him, still nobody can deny that the industry, the labour, the care, the diligence of the minister is of importance, for both in the supernatural and natural order, the ordinary way for the First Cause to operate is by means of secondary causes. Consequently we can affirm that when many are converted, in the first place, God must be praised, as being the principal Cause of these effects. Withal the ministers too are worthy of praise, since they were the instruments through whom these effects were realised."[18]

In spite of the close relationship between "the powers, secular and ecclesiastical", the Franciscans had many difficulties from the Portuguese officials, who illtreated the new converts, even prevented others from receiving baptism, and, in their greed for money, made Christianity repulsive to the people.[19] The rebellion of Vidiyē Baṇdāra and his persecution of the Friars and their converts were the result of the avarice of Noronha, the Viceroy of Goa, and the illtreatment meted out to him. "The treatment the Portuguese mete out to the converts is so tyrannical and cruel that it causes amazement. They torment these unfortunates as if they were enemies of the Faith, ordering them to stand in the sun in a circle they have drawn and if they leave the circle, they must pay a fine, or they place a heavy stone on their occiputs with thorns underneath....And all this the Portuguese do in Ceylon to these poor people to make them pay the unjust tribute, which they have imposed, to pay which contributions they sell whatever they have and

after they have nothing left to sell, they sell or pawn their children in order to free themselves from vexations. And this in general over the whole Island, without there being any possibility for redress."[20]

The Franciscan friars did not look on complacently at the injustices perpetrated by their countrymen against their converts and the people of the country. They protested and resisted. "The poor Rectors of those places [churches] were insulted, offended and what not, only because they wanted to do that which they understood to be beneficial and necessary for the welfare of their sheep."[21] When the Rector of the church of Our Lady in Devinuwara did not allow the Disava of Matara to take a native boy from the church, he came with a group of armed men, made him a prisoner and took him bound to his house. The Rector of the church of Alutgama was taken by the Captain of that fort and given a beating, from which he suffered a long time, "only because he had ordered him to observe the Sundays and Feast days, as was his obligation, which he refused to do."[22] "Much more could be conquered if it wasn't for the injustice, the force and tyranny with which the Portuguese have treated the poor natives. This is the reason too why several times they revolted against them. On these occasions, the Friars Minor suffered great damage, for not only did those who revolted destroy many of our churches, but also took the lives of many who ministered to them."[23]

"These are some of the things which hinder the growth of Christianity in Ceylon, which with very little cost could be remedied, if it wasn't for the great love of money, which has taken hold of all, to acquire which they close their eyes to reason, trample underfoot human and divine obligations, to the detriment of their conscience."[24] The tragedy which overtook Constantino de Sa and his army was considered a "warning for the Captains General, who may in the future rule over Ceylon, to expel such evil people from the Island, for by experience we know their attitude towards us."[25] But there were high officials who opposed the spread of Christianity, even by counteracting a royal decree. "When His Majesty promulgated certain decrees in favour and for the increase of Christianity, among other things he ordered that all pagan captives of other pagans, who were converted and baptized while their lords remained pagans, should be set free. At the request of some pagans

the Captain General drew up a decree, to be published over the whole Island, forbidding anybody to become a Christian without having been examined by him."[26]

THE MARTYRS OF MANNAR

The throne of Jaffna was occupied by Chēkarāsa Sēkaran or Sankili, who had murdered the lawful king in 1519 and had ascended the throne from which he had expelled the legal heir. He had put to death the supporters of the lawful king, who had then fled to India to seek Portuguese help. Martin Afonso de Sousa, a Portuguese general, came with a large fleet and the exiled heir, and forced the *rājā* to become a tributary to Portugal and pay vassalage.

This treaty gave an opportunity for missionary work. The people of Mannar, hearing of the devotion and zeal and personal sanctity of St Francis Xavier and the conversion of their kinsmen in South India, begged him to come over to them and instruct them also in Christianity. But as the saint was too busy at Travancore, he sent to them one of his fellow-workers. As a rule when people embraced Christianity, the King of Portugal claimed to be their protector. The king of Jaffna under whose jurisdiction Mannar was, dreaded the consequences and sent his troops to Mannar to put to death all the new Christians who were not prepared to abandon their Faith. Some fled to India and those who remained in the Island were all killed by the sword, "six hundred men, women and children. They were killed in a place called Patim, which later on, in memory of the event, was known as the Valley of Martyrs. These crimes of this cruel tyrant amazed and were deeply felt by the Portuguese."[27] The massacre took place in 1544.

St Francis Xavier was aghast at the news. He went off to Cochin and thence to Goa to urge the Viceroy to take action against the tyrant. The Saint's motive was not revenge but conversion. "God in His infinite mercy and through the devout prayers of those whom he martyred would cause the *rājā* to recognize his error, and beg God for mercy and do salutary penance." So he wrote to Rome on the 27th January 1545.[28]

The Portuguese half-heartedly got up an expedition to punish Sankili, but it served only to recover the cargo of a richly laden Portuguese ship which had run aground off Jaffna. However, when Dom Constantino de Braganza was Viceroy, "urged by letters of His Majesty, who never ceased to recommend this affair,

he decided to go personally to Jaffnapatao. Having assembled a large fleet.... he left Goa on the 7th of September, 1560."[29] Sankili was subdued and forced to become a vassal of Portugal. The Franciscans now feeling secure, began to go about in Jaffna, preaching and baptizing. But they became the victims of Sankili's partisans, who were plotting to attack the Portuguese. "Arriving at the place where our Custos [Franciscan Superior] and his companions were instructing and baptizing....they attacked them like ferocious lions, killing all of them."[30]

THE HARVEST

The history of Christianity has often demonstrated that massacre is the wrong way to root out the religion of Christ. The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians. The blood of the martyrs of Mannar germinated and all the people living along the coastal districts of the southwest of Lanka, from Mannar to Dondra, forming a whole community, turned towards Christ and sought instruction in His doctrine. "In the year 1556 our Religious [the Franciscan Friars] baptized more than seventy thousand souls of a people they call Careas who live in the seaports of Ceylon. The first to receive Baptism was their Captain, whom they call Patangati [Pattankatti], which means that he is, as it were, their King. We have knowledge of this remarkable man's conversion from a letter El Rey Dom João III of Portugal wrote to our Custos."[31] That the importance of this Pattankatti was acknowledged by the King of Kotte, we learn from the above letter of the King of Portugal. The conversion of Dom João Dharmapāla was also an incentive to further conversions among his subjects.

The rapid increase in the number of Christians made it necessary that another missionary body, preferably with experience in India, co-operate with the Franciscans in Sri Lanka. But the Franciscans were not in favour of it. One of the greatest impediments to the evangelization of mission countries is the inevitable human tendency to introduce personal and private and national considerations even in that work. The Pope had to intervene to prevent the Catholic missions from being identified with Portuguese conquests and to put a stop to the tendency to create ecclesiastical monopolies to the detriment of evangelization. Rome's decision was that the Franciscans were to remain in the parts in which they had

already built churches, and the rest of the Island not yet evangelized was declared the missionary field of the Jesuit Fathers. Thus the territory of the Franciscans extended from Colombo to the Walave; they had also several churches in Jaffna and Mantota, near Mannar.

Another argument put forward by those who wanted another missionary body to be brought in to help the Franciscan friars was that most of the latter did not know the language of the country. The Bishop of Cochin under whose jurisdiction Ceylon was, wrote to the King of Portugal in 1617 thus: "In almost all the churches which the Franciscan Friars have in this Diocese, their Custos has appointed Friars as Rectors and Vicars who do not know the language of the country and hence the souls of the faithful suffer and die without the Sacraments, and I weep and cry and the Custos accommodates his friends and Christianity perishes and Your Majesty pays salaries to those who neither serve nor deserve them."[32]

The friars commented on the above letter: "The only thing we wish to call attention to is that when the letter was written to the King we had in Ceylon many elderly and grave Religious who supported the Christian communities there by their example and virtue. Moreover the number of those who knew the language of the country was great. Some of them were most learned in the language and not only preached and administered the Sacraments with the required fluency, but even composed books in it. But the great desire which the Prelate had was to provide the Secular Priests of his Diocese with the churches watered with the blood of the Friars Minor and this made him say things which were absolutely untrue, as it is clear to anyone, and all know who struggle in these territories."[33]

Friar Antonio Peixoto, the Rector of Matara for over 25 years, is described as "well-versed in the Cingala language" and a good preacher in that language. Realising how fond of music and poetry the Matara people were, he composed and put on the stage many plays in Sinhala on the lives of the Saints, of Christ, Our Lord, and of Adam and Eve. "He also composed verses on the Passion of the Saviour, with which, on account of the lamentations they contained and the melody and tune, he at times had the whole congregation in tears and some of the Gentiles who were present received the Faith and were converted. Furthermore, very often

he defended in public the honour of God preaching His doctrine to the inhabitants, of whom many, in particular those living on the frontiers, refused to be baptized, unless he defeated with arguments the priests of the idols and the *changatars* to the greater glory of the Christian name."[34] It was Friar Peixoto who warned Constantine de Sa about the treachery of Dom Theodosio, a captain of the lascarins, who pretended to be loyal to the Portuguese and devoted to the Captain-General, but at the end proved a traitor and brought about the rout of the Portuguese army, and the death of the Captain-General de Sa.

In the Kingdom of Jaffna, the friars had 25 churches, each served by a friar, who knew the language of the country and preached in it. Some of them were able even to teach the language to others.

GATHERING THE HARVEST

By the end of the sixteenth century, the field was clear for more active evangelical work. Sri Lanka, with the exception of the Kandyan Kingdom, was more or less, under Portuguese rule. The massacre of the Christians of Mannar had turned the minds of the people of the Western coast towards Christianity. King Dharmapāla of Kotte had embraced Christianity openly in 1557.

The Franciscans in their missionary work often preferred what is called the 'vertical' method: make kings, courtiers, and nobles Christians; then their subjects and dependants would follow them as a matter of course. This method is easy, quick and effective, as far as numbers are concerned The missionaries were aware, however, that such aristocratic converts were not always dependable and sincere. "Generally when these kings ask the Viceroy for Religious to preach in their Kingdoms and administer Baptism, they do so only because they are moved by self-interest or human respect and, as soon as the need ceases, they change their minds about becoming Christians."[35] But it gave the missionaries greater freedom to contact the people, preach to them, and admit them to Baptism.

To have quick results and large numbers, the Franciscans adopted a method called General Baptism. The promoter of this was their Provincial, Friar Francisco Negrão, an able writer, a chronicler of the Order, a keen student of the culture and history of the people, said to have been the first European who visited the ruins

of Anuradhapura and measured some of them, and above all a zealous and dedicated missionary.[36] In these General Baptisms the procedure was this:-

> "As soon as he arrived at one of the Rectorates we had in that Island, he ordered the Lord of the village, who belonged to the jurisdiction of that church, to appear and requested him to gather all the inhabitants that were in the village. After all had been assembled Friar Francisco Negrão ordered Friar Antonio de S. Thome, who knew Chingala, to preach to those people the truth of our Holy Faith and the foolishness of their idols. When this had been done, he asked whether they were convinced of the uselessness of their idols and enlightened as to the truth of the doctrine of Christ, whether they wanted to be Christians and be baptized in which case they should remain in the church where it would be administered to them. Those who did not wish to be Christians could freely go, for nobody would be forced to be one. Those who desired to be Christians (generally they were the majority) in a loud voice replied that voluntarily and of their own accord they wanted to be Christians, for they understood that the doctrine of Christ was the true one. At this the ones who refused would go and all those who agreed remained. Then the said Friar Antonio de S. Thome would clearly and in their own language instruct them, beginning with the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity. He would explain this doctrine as clearly as possible, according to the limits of their understanding; at the end he would ask them whether they firmly believed in this Mystery. On their replying that they did, he would explain to them the other articles of our Faith, the ten Commandments of God and the five Commandments of the Church, which they would have to observe and then, since they were adults, he would try to move them to repentance and sorrow for all their sins. Finally having placed them all in order, the Father Commissary [Provincial] would baptize them with great solemnity, performing all the ceremonies customary for such acts."[37]

This Friar Negrão alone "in less than five months brought into the bosom of the Church some seven thousand five hundred souls in thirty-one General Baptisms he celebrated in the Island of Ceylon."[38]

In all this there was certainly neither force nor threat; but the procedure was such that it did not shut out those who would embrace a religion that could bring them material advantages.

The missionaries sometimes held public discussions and even dramatic performances to explain to the people the doctrines of Christianity. At Matara, where the Franciscan Sinhala scholar Peixoto lived, "the night before the Baptism, they staged a play in their own language, composed by the same Friar, who was an excellent poet in that language. They presented the life and death of the great St John the Baptist, his preaching and baptizing. Everything was done with great perfection, explaining in particular the reason why he was martyred, which was because he had reprehended King Herod for having taken his brother's wife, something which is very common among these people too, because the wife of one brother is the wife of all the other brothers as well. The play was staged at night for such is their custom and all the people of the district, both Christians and pagans, attended, for the latter are always anxious to witness similar spectacles which for them is a grand diversion, enjoying as they do poetry, something they hold in great esteem."[39]

When Friar Negrão went to Rome with an account of these General Baptisms, he was praised and honoured. "The Cardinals were amazed and lifting up their hands gave thanks to God when they heard him say that he had brought some seven thousand five hundred souls to the bosom of the Church and that he himself had baptized almost all of them. And the Pope, Paul V [1605-1621] who then occupied the throne of St Peter, honoured him and spoke several times with him."[40] Such publicity was helpful to remove any impression that the Franciscans were not so successful as missionaries in Sri Lanka and that others would have done better.

EXPANSION

(i) In the Kingdom of Kotte

According to a sworn affidavit drawn up by Constantino de Sa, Captain-General of the Island and dated 23rd November 1628, the Franciscan friars had fifty four churches, each with its own minister, and seventy one thousand seventy four Christians, all baptized by the friars, in the Kingdom of Kotte.[41] Of these Christians about a third were to the South of the Bentota river up

to Devi Nuwara or Dondra. In that city, there were 2400 Christians, with a large and beautiful church, with three naves divided by stone pillars. In Matara, too, there were as many Christians with a church dedicated to our Lady of Victories, and described as "one of the great churches of the Island". Here Friar Antonio Peixoto was parish priest, his tenure of office lasting more than 25 years. In Galle, where the Portuguese had a fort, with a Captain, and well protected by walls and bastions, there was a church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, with ministers and quarters. More than two thousand Christians lived outside the fort. Kokgala had a church dedicated to St Joseph, which attracted pilgrims, because of the miracles wrought by the Saint, and the reputation which Friar Pedro dos Anjos, the priest in charge of the shrine, had for sanctity.[42]

The coastal region from the Bentota river to the Maha Oya was a Catholic block with Kalutara, Colombo and Negombo as nerve-centres. There were about 37 churches with a Catholic population of nearly 40,000. Five churches had over 2,000, namely Alutgama, Negombo (Mother of God parish), Hunupitiya, Bolawalana and Navagamuva; and 16 churches had a thousand or more each. The Jesuit Fathers had since 1602 the region to the north of the Maha Oya as their mission field. They built up gradually a well-instructed and compact mass of Catholics up to Puttalam.

(ii) In the Kingdom of Jaffna

After the massacre of the Christians at Mannar, there was a period of unrest in the Kingdom of Jaffna. Mannar came under the protectorate of Portugal but the struggle for independence went on in the mainland. "And though for the time being Christian penetration, initiated by our Friars [the Franciscans], ceased in Jafnapatao, withal, since they had those holy martyrs in Heaven who did not cease to plead with God,..our Friars afterwards were given an opportunity to preach the Faith and plant it in such a manner that it would not be eradicated, but on the contrary grow to such an extent that almost the whole kingdom would be converted."[43] In 1560 Jaffna too became a Portuguese protectorate. Prince Hendaramāna Siṃha or Pararāsa Sēkaran was enthroned king; he favoured Christianity and gave the Franciscans permission to build churches.

The first church was founded in this manner. "A native Christian from the days of the Viceroy Dom Constantino, called Antonio Fernandez, erected in the place where Andre Furtado had settled his army along the beach, a small straw hut, in which he placed a small Cross, of which this devout Christian took great care, decorating and cleaning it every Saturday. At this little house our Friars who came from and went to the Kingdom, always found shelter."[44] Gradually the shed became a church, made of mud and straw, and finally a well-built church dedicated to Our Lady of Victory.

In 1614, the Franciscan Friar who was Rector of the church ordered "an image of Our Lady for the High Altar to be carved from a piece of wood he had brought from Cochin."[45] The numerous miracles and wonders attributed to this image were well-known and recorded. In Trindade chapters 52 to 55, and in Queyroz pages 667 to 685 contain the story of the origin of this image and the prodigies connected with it. It is true that images themselves are not miraculous, but God deigns to hear our petitions through the intercession of a Saint who is represented and whom we honour as a Servant of God.

When the wonders began to multiply around the image of Our Lady, the friars changed the title of Our Lady of Victories to Our Lady of Miracles. The Portuguese venerated this statue so much that in spite of the keen scrutiny to which they were subjected when they were thrust out of Jaffna by the Dutch in 1658, they smuggled it across to Batavia, where they were to be held as prisoners of war. When they were let free, they brought the image to Goa, placed it in a niche in the church of S. Pedro, Piedade, Goa, and established a Confraternity in its honour. In 1932, it was still there well looked after, and there were also six pictures, oil-painted, each depicting a miracle narrated in the historical works mentioned above. With the kind permission of the parish priest, a clear photograph of the sacred image was obtained.[46]

In 1618, Jaffna became a Portuguese possession. The missionaries went about their work under very favourable conditions, especially under the heavenly glow emanating from the miraculous image. Between the years 1624 and 1626 the Franciscans baptized in the Kingdom of Jaffna fifty two thousand, among them all the notables and nobles of that country.[47]

Another factor which contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity in Jaffna was the encouragement the missionaries received from the governor Phelipe d'Oliveira, conqueror of Jaffna. He was a brave and successful general, a just and energetic ruler, and above all a devoted Catholic zealous for the spread of the kingdom of Christ. "If there had been a Viceroy" wrote Trindade, "as zealous for the conversion of the people as Phelipe d'Oliveira, Governor of the Kingdom of Jaffnapatao, there would be few pagans left in Goa, Salcete, Bardez and other parts of this State."[48]

It might be added that the Jesuit Fathers too had in the kingdom of Jaffna 14 large churches, grouped under 'Residences', at which a priest resided regularly, visiting also from time to time mission outstations where there were Christian communities. The number of Catholics attached to these residences was about 41,260.[49]

(iii) In the Kingdom of Kandy

In 1547, two friars entered the Kingdom of Kandy, without any opposition and built a church on a piece of land donated by King Jayavīra Baṇdāra. This church was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The missionaries remained there for some time and converted many. Even the king would have received baptism but for the opposition of Māyādunnē of Sitawaka, his first cousin.

In 1582, the King of Kandy was Karalliyaddē Baṇdāra, who became a Catholic, but died of smallpox at Trincomalee, whither he had fled to escape the hands of Rājasiṃha of Sitawaka. Before his death, Karalliyaddē entrusted his nephew, Yamasiṃha, and his infant daughter, Dona Catharina, to the Portuguese who brought them up with great care. In 1592, Yamasiṃha, who at his baptism had taken the name of Dom Philip, was proclaimed King of Kandy; but he suddenly fell ill and died under very suspicious circumstances. His general, Konappu Baṇdāra, gradually seized the government of the country, and to make his claim to the throne secure, married the Princess, Dona Catharina, "who was then but 10 to 12 years of age."[50]

Konappu Baṇdāra, or Vimala Dharma Sūrya I, as he was known since he became king, was the son of Vīrasundara, Chief of Peradeniya, who was executed by Rājasiṃha I on a suspicion of treachery. To save his life, Konappu Baṇdāra had fled to the Portuguese, embraced Christianity, taking the high-sounding name of

Dom João of Austria, and won the favour of the Franciscan friars. Owing to his military skill he was trusted by the Portuguese. He defeated the forces of Rājasiṃha I, but revolted against the Portuguese, seized power, and became the King of Kandy.

During the short period between the reign of Karalliyaddē Baṇdāra and his nephew Yamasiṃha, or Dom Philip, the Franciscan missionaries had a certain amount of freedom to engage themselves in works of evangelization. But, under the rule of Vimaladharma, they had to face a severe persecution, because they had taken an active part in enthroning Dom Philip and after that his son, Dom João, as Kings of Kandy. Friar Lucas dos Santos, once his tutor in the Franciscan College of Colombo, was led before him "naked, his nose and lips cut off and four or five wounds on his chest and sides" and, on the King's orders, was tied to a stake and shot with arrows till he fell dead.[51] As long as Vimaladharma ruled over the Udarata, the missionaries were kept out of his kingdom.

In 1604, Vimaladharma died and was succeeded by his brother, Senarat. He had been a Buddhist monk and was a man of peace, devoted to letters, a skilled and cautious general, gifted with great foresight and was no friend of rebels.[52] "He was a king who had always been a friend of the Christians and the Franciscan Friars, to whom he had confided his own sons to instruct and educate, handing them over to Friar Joseph de N. Senhora and Friar Francisco Negrão in the days they resided in Candea [Kandy] as arbitrators."[53] After the peace treaty between the King of Kandy and the King of Portugal, on the 3rd of April 1633, the Franciscans began to visit the Christians, who were in Kandy and its neighbourhood, erecting temporary churches of mud and straw, which would serve till the arrival of the order to rebuild them with the same perfection they were in when they were destroyed by the rebels.[54] The Friar who took a leading part in the peace negotiations between the King of Kandy and the Portuguese was Friar Antonio Peixoto, who was well acquainted with the language, the customs and the culture of the Sinhalese people.

IN RETROSPECT

Portugal is one of the smallest kingdoms of Europe. It first became a separate kingdom as a result of the spirit of chivalry engendered by the Crusades, for it had been under the rule of the

Moors, as the Turks of Mauritania were called. The Celtic inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula, supported by the chivalry of Christendom, pushed the Moors out of Spain and Portugal, after several fierce battles. The Portuguese nation thus called into existence began to carry their conquests abroad, and stormed the Moorish stronghold of Ceuta in Africa in 1415. Since Spain and Portugal were staunchly Catholic, they considered it their duty to spread the Catholic Faith in their dominions. The Popes encouraged the enterprise.

The Spaniard looked towards countries to the West of Europe, the Portuguese to the East. They were persuaded that their conquests would promote the spread of Christianity and bring about better understanding between them and their subjects. In 1497, Vasco da Gama crowned the hopes of a century by sailing round the Cape of Good Hope to Calicut in India. In 1505, eight years after Vasco da Gama had doubled the Cape, a Portuguese fleet was forced by winds and waves to the Island of Sri Lanka. After establishing friendly relations with the King of Kotte, the Portuguese built a factory in Colombo, where their chaplain, Fr Vicente O.F.M., set up a chapel in honour of St Lawrence and said Holy Mass. "This was the first church the Portuguese built on that Island."[55] In 1518, a fortress was built in the harbour of Colombo and called the "Fortress of Our Lady of Victories."

Missionary work really started after 1543, when six Franciscan Friars came to the Island on the invitation of King Bhuvaneka Bāhu of Kotte. They had to face insuperable difficulties to make Christianity acceptable to the people. The missionaries had no knowledge of the language, culture and religion of the people of Sri Lanka. The king, who had invited them, opposed the conversion of his subjects to Christianity, because his purpose in getting them to his kingdom was not the spiritual welfare of his people but to have Portuguese aid in his quarrels and fights with his brother, Māyādunnē, of Sitawaka. Another obstacle was the conduct of the Portuguese settlers, adventurers, merchants and soldiers, most of whom represented the fierce and lawless elements rather than the better aspects of Christian civilization and culture. But our missionaries were not beaten back by such difficulties.

The massacre of the Christians of Mannar in 1544 turned the minds of the people living along the south-west coast, from Mannar to Dondra, towards Christianity. The converted formed a whole

community of some 70,000 souls. The churches built by the missionaries to the south of Colombo were destroyed during the rage of Vīdiyē Baṇdāra in 1555. But after his disappearance, and the baptism of King Dharmapāla two years later, the move towards Christianity received a fresh impulse.

The harvest indeed was great, but the labourers were few. General Baptisms, preceded by short explanations of Christian doctrine, often inadequate, helped no doubt to increase the number of baptized Christians; but, to build up Christian communities, something more had to be done. In 1602, the Jesuit Fathers joined the Friars in the work of evangelization, paying special attention to the progress of Christian education. A few years later the Dominicans and the Augustinians too came to the island and took up parochial work.

In 1597, King Dharmapāla of Kotte died, without issue, leaving his kingdom to the King of Portugal; in 1618 the Kingdom of Jaffna became a Portuguese possession; and King Senarat showed himself a man of peace. Such conditions were most favourable for the rapid spread of Christianity, with communities trained to Christian living. But, the Portuguese by their misrule and covetousness, their grandiose schemes to conquer the Kingdom of Kandy also and thus bring under their heel the whole island and its people, even before they had made sure of keeping Kotte, and above all by their disregard of the law of God and His justice, alienated the feelings of the people, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. As a result there were frequent rebellions and revolts, headed at times by Catholics, against the Portuguese.

In spite of all these obstacles and disturbances, the missionaries went on with their work for God and His people. Before the expulsion of the Portuguese from the island, Colombo had the appearance of a Catholic city; it had ten churches, four monasteries, schools and a college, and two charitable institutions. The Kingdom of Jaffna was almost entirely Christian, with its capital far famed for the wonders taking place at the shrine of Our Lady of Miracles. Mannar was a Christian island. The coastal region extending from Puttalam to the Maha Oya, and from Negombo to Alutgama was a compact Catholic block, which neither the penal laws of the Dutch nor their favours for apostasy nor the expulsion of all Catholic priests from the island nor the confiscation of all their churches, schools and charitable institutions, could destroy.

The Catholics beyond the Bentota river up to Dondra, fell away, because they were new converts and the Dutch had tightened their grip on those regions many years before the fall of Colombo. The missionaries could not get a firm footing in the Kingdom of Kandy, because the Portuguese wanted war and King Senarat preferred peace.

The Franciscan friars were the first Christian missionaries in Sri Lanka. From 1543 to 1602, they had to face alone the difficulties of pioneers: ignorance of the language and customs of a new people, the opposition of their rulers, who associated the missionaries with the invaders, and the obstructions from covetous officials, who looked for wealth and honour and pleasure and not the spread of the kingdom of Christ. But, where was ever the dedicated missionary who could be beaten by such difficulties? The great Apostle St Paul, the intrepid announcer of the Good News, wrote thus: "We are in difficulties on all sides, but never cornered; we see no answer to our problems, but never despair; we have been persecuted, but never deserted... Always wherever we may be, we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may always be seen in our body." (2 Cor. 4: 8-10). Christ's words are imperative: "Go make disciples of all the nations, baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always: yes, to the end of time." (Matt. 28: 19, 20).

NOTES

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[1] Trindade, pp. 39-40, note 7.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 48.
[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 56.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49. See *JCBRAS*, vol. XX, no. 60, p. 148 for *Decada*, VI, bk. IX, ch. XVI.
[5] *JCBRAS*, no. 60, p. 161.
[6] Trindade, pp. 97-98.
[7] Queyroz, p. 316.
[8] Trindade, p. 50.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 53.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 54; *CALR*, VI, 27 sq., Queyroz, pp. 329-30.
[11] Trindade, p. 52.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[13] Queyroz, p. 421.
[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 176, 177.
[15] Trindade, pp. 110-11.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[17] *Op. cit.*, p. 133.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[19] Cf. Trindade, pp. 166-70.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 170
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 168.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[28] *Epistolae Xaverii*, vol. i, p. 275.
[29] Trindade, p. 179.
[30] *Ibid.*, p. 180.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[32] *Ibid.*, p. 162.
[33] *Ibid.*, p. 165.
[34] *Ibid.*, p. 127-8. Cf. also Queyroz, pp. 712, 713.
[35] Trindade, p. 73.
[36] Queyroz, p. 12.
[37] Trindade, p. 172.
[38] *Ibid.*, p. 171.
[39] *Ibid.*, p. 152; see also Queyroz, p. 91.
[40] Trindade, p. 174.
[41] *Ibid.*, p. 137.
[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 143.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 181.
[44] *Ibid.*, pp. 186-7.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
[46] *Ibid.*, see Plate IV, and note on p. 667 in Queyroz.
[47] Trindade, p. 235.
[48] *Op. cit.*, p. 237.
[49] See S. G. Perera, *The Jesuits in Ceylon*, chs. xv. xviii.
[50] Baldaeus, p. 27.
[51] Trindade, pp. 102-103.
[52] See *Expedition to Uva*, pp. 34, 35.
[53] Trindade, p. 125.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 126.
[55] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

CHAPTER IX

THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIANIZATION

By Revd Dr W. L. A. Don Peter

We have seen in the foregoing chapters that in many countries, including Sri Lanka, Franciscans were the earliest Catholic missionaries, the pioneers. Not only that, as pioneer missionaries, their work extended over a vast geographical area in the continents of Asia, Africa and the New World. From the point of view of extent of the mission field and the number of personnel engaged in missionary work, the Franciscan order became in fact the foremost missionary order of the early colonial period when Spain and Portugal were active in extending their dominion, trade and influence beyond Europe.

In Sri Lanka the Franciscans were not only the pioneers but even after other orders arrived—the Jesuits in 1602 and the Dominicans and Augustinians in 1606—they continued to be the most numerous and had pastoral charge of the greater part of the country.

The patronage of Christian imperialist powers is by no means necessary for the purpose of introducing Christianity to non-Christian peoples, as evidenced by the fact that about the time when Franciscans were finding it very difficult, though backed up by Portugal, to gain converts to Christianity in Sri Lanka in the reign of Bhuvanekabāhu of Kotte, St Francis Xavier was successfully preaching Christianity in Japan (1549-1551) without any support from a colonial power.

The patronage (*padroado*) extended by Portugal to the Church in the colonies was no doubt an asset to missionary work in certain respects, but it also complicated and marred the pastoral role of the missionary—his attitude towards the colonial peoples and their attitude towards him and the religion he preached. State patronage gave a political colour to missionary work.

I. MISSIONARY IN A COLONIAL SETUP

Being sent and supported by the king of Portugal, the missionaries had not only to fulfil their major role of preaching Christianity as agents of the Church, but also to promote the interests of the king,

sometimes functioning as his agents, and in times of war not merely serving as military chaplains but even taking up arms as occasion demanded.

In spite of the missionaries' political link with Portugal, the people saw a big difference between them and the other Portuguese, whether state officials, soldiers or sailors (the *reinos*), or the permanent civilian settlers in the country (the *casados*). The Portuguese in their dealings with the people were noted for their rapacity and greed, their harassment and exploitation of them, and at times their wanton cruelty. The missionaries, on the other hand, living as they did in their parishes in the midst of the people, were genuinely concerned about their welfare and were often their protectors and defenders. The people saw that, even as emissaries of the king, the missionaries had come for a religious and spiritual purpose and to work for the people at great inconvenience to themselves, sometimes risking life itself, whereas the other Portuguese were interested only in their own gain and profit. The missionaries were therefore more acceptable to the local rulers and the people, and that was the reason why they were employed by the Portuguese authorities as negotiators with the rulers or as hostages or arbitrators, as were the Franciscans in Kandy in Senarat's reign.

The one great purpose of the missionaries, whether Franciscans or others, in coming over to Sri Lanka or other countries, was to spread the Catholic faith, for it was their belief that this was the only true faith and the only means to beatitude in the afterlife. They considered it a great service to fellowmen of other faiths to bring them over to the acceptance and practice of the Catholic faith. That, too, was the motive of the king of Portugal in extending his patronage to missionary activity. But secondary considerations were not altogether absent. In fact it was thought that the Catholic faith, accepted by the indigenous inhabitants, would serve to strengthen the political link Portugal had with them as a subject people.

On account of the belief of the missionaries, as of other Catholics, in the uniqueness of Catholicism, they were prone, at that time, to look down upon other religions and regard them as 'pagan' or 'heathen' and in error. They believed also in the superiority of Western culture and viewed indigenous Eastern cultures with disfavour, especially as such cultures had been strongly influenced by

religions they considered pagan. This attitude has to be taken note of to understand their unfriendly, if not positively hostile, dealings with the local religions. Various restrictions were imposed on the adherents of these faiths with a view to drawing them away from them. Their places of worship were destroyed. While Portuguese officials and soldiers were happy that, in the destruction of Buddhist and Hindu temples which was zealously carried out, they had the opportunity to help themselves to the treasures they contained, the missionaries welcomed and encouraged it as a means of eliminating what they considered to be false.

Although the missionaries had the backing of government machinery to combat the local religions, there is no evidence that conversion to Catholicism was ever made by force. Such conversion is of course of no value. What the first Provincial Council of Goa decreed in 1567, that there should be no coercion in making converts, held good for Sri Lanka as well, and was adhered to. Nevertheless it must be admitted that questionable methods too were resorted to in this matter, such as disabilities and oppressive measures imposed on non-Christians on the one hand, and favours and privileges granted to converts on the other, which led many to accept Catholicism without a genuine conversion, so that they easily fell away when it was no longer advantageous to them to remain Catholics. On the other hand there were also many who were sincere in their acceptance of Catholicism and tenaciously clung to it even when they were persecuted for it, as happened under Dutch rule.

II. FRANCISCANS AND THE NATIONAL LANGUAGES

One of the formidable obstacles the pioneer missionaries, the Franciscans, had to face was their ignorance of the local languages. The early missionaries made use of interpreters, which was not at all a satisfactory method to correctly convey to the people the new religious teachings from the West. Learning the languages directly from the people, as there were no books for the purpose in European languages, was an arduous and unsatisfactory method. There were of course missionaries who in the circumstances followed the easier path of employing interpreters. But there were also others who took great pains to learn Sinhala or Tamil or both, till they were proficient enough not only to carry out their normal duties but even, in the case of some, to produce books.

Of the Franciscans who had an exceptionally good command of Sinhala, mention is made in the records of the period of José de S. Francisco, António de S. Tomé, António Castelhano, Pedro de S. Brás and António Peixoto. Castelhano knew Sinhala so well that on the orders of the Franciscan superior in Colombo he taught the language to fellow-Franciscans in charge of churches in and around Colombo who were required to come for classes to the Franciscan monastery in the city and remain there throughout the week, going back to their churches only on Saturdays. Pedro de S. Brás is known to have written some books for the study of the language. António Peixoto, for many years missionary at Matara, not only taught Sinhala to his confrères but also wrote religious plays and verse in the language and held religious discussions with Buddhist monks.

There were similarly Franciscans proficient in Tamil, working in the Tamil-speaking parts of the country (Jaffna, Mannar, etc.) Special mention is made in this respect of Pantaleão da Madre de Deos, Gaspar dos Anjos, Amador da Madre de Deos, Mateus de Cristo, Francisco de S. António and António de S. Bernardino. It is said that Mateus de Cristo spoke Tamil so well that anyone hearing him would not have thought he was a foreigner. He, as well as Francisco de S. António and António de S. Bernardino, taught Tamil to others. Francisco de S. António, moreover, translated some works into Tamil. But none of the writings of the Franciscans, whether in Sinhala or Tamil, has survived.

Two other Franciscans who were in the country for many years and would have known Sinhala, though it is not expressly stated, were Francisco do Oriente who came to Sri Lanka from Tamilnad, presumably with a knowledge of Tamil, and worked in the kingdoms of Kotte, Kandy and Jaffna, and Francisco Negrão who was in Kandy for nine years and was tutor to King Senarat's children. It is on record that he visited Anuradhapura and wrote about the ruins and also made a list of the kings of Sri Lanka from ancient chronicles.

As pioneer missionaries, the major task of the Franciscans in Sri Lanka, as elsewhere, was the teaching of Christianity to non-Christians, a task the Church has all along considered its sacred duty ever since Christ entrusted it to his disciples when he told them: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all

creation."[1] The missionaries had to begin with the teaching of Christianity to adults. This aspect of their work has already been dealt with in the preceding chapter.

III. FRANCISCANS AND EDUCATION

The Franciscans knew, moreover, that to plant the Catholic faith more firmly in a country and to ensure its continuity, it was imperative that the young, the future citizens, should also be well instructed in the faith. This they took care to carry out.

It was mainly for the purpose of establishing and maintaining schools where the children of the country could be taught Christianity that the convert king of Kotte, Dom João Dharmapāla, gifted to the Franciscans the lands and revenues of Buddhist temples—an impolitic step, however, which brought much trouble to the king. "After having received Baptism, as a favour to Christianity and the orphans of his Kingdom, that they might be baptized, educated and taught, by building schools for them and thus encourage the spread of Christianity, he gave all the lands belonging to the temples to be entirely utilized for the above-mentioned schools and for the upkeep of the orphans."[2] It was the policy of the Portuguese authorities to take over orphaned non-Christian children of the country and bring them up as Christians.

The records of the period do not give us much information as to the number of schools opened and the nature of the education they imparted. We are certain however that whatever may have been the formal education in letters that was provided in them, the main subject taught was the Christian faith and the practice of it. The schools were thus essentially media for the teaching of Christianity to the young. This we see in the two schools of the Franciscans—the colleges of Colombo and Jaffna—about which information is available and which were the leading educational institutions of the Franciscans in Sri Lanka.

The college in Colombo—the College of St Anthony—provided education not only to orphan boys of the country but also to children of Portuguese residents, of mestizos, and of prominent local inhabitants. Several princes of Sinhalese or Tamil royal families were also educated in the college, some of them before they were sent to Goa or Portugal for further study. Among the princes or sons of chieftains educated in the college were Konappu Bandāra

who became king of Kandy as Vimaladharmasūrya, Dom João of Kandy who was ordained priest in Portugal and lived there, Nikapiṭiyē Baṇdāra of Sitawaka who also went to Portugal and was admitted to the University of Coimbra but died before commencing studies, Dom Constantino of Jaffna who became a Franciscan in Goa, and his cousins Dom Phelippe, Dom Francisco and Dom Bernardino.

The college in Jaffna was attached to the friary and the Church of Our Lady of Miracles, which were in the Portuguese fort. This was the principal church of the Franciscans, and the friary the headquarters of the order, in the kingdom of Jaffna. The college was a smaller institution than that of Colombo.

The colleges were for the most part residential institutions as their purpose was not merely to impart instruction but also to train the students to a Christian way of life. It was from these institutions that candidates for the priesthood and the religious life were recruited. We are told in fact that "from these boys, educated by the Friars, some became priests and others, who were the sons of Portuguese parents, became Religious."[3] It was in these schools, too, that future collaborators of the missionaries as catechists and teachers of religion were trained. Furthermore, they imparted a Christian education to those who were going to be the leaders in civil or political life, as were the princes, sons of chieftains, and children of prominent families. In many respects these were schools very much similar to the Franciscan College of the Magi in Bardez, Goa, where too some Sri Lankan students, mainly deposed kings and princes, received an education.

Apart from a religious and moral education for which the students were required not only to learn Christian doctrine but also take part in various religious exercises, they were taught also Portuguese language and literature. Portuguese was in fact the medium of instruction. Being the language of the ruling power and of administration and the key to Western knowledge in the colonial context, Portuguese acquired a position of importance in education. Although as yet there was no printing in the national languages, the students had the opportunity to make use of printed texts in Portuguese, which was a new and novel experience for them.

Another subject to which great attention was paid was Latin. Not only was it the language of the Church but also a much valued classical language. As such it was given a prominent place in the

curriculum of colleges or grammar schools in Europe. It was so also in the colleges established by the Franciscans in Sri Lanka. In speaking of the education given to princes, it is expressly stated that one of the subjects they were taught in the Colombo college was Latin.

One more subject which received special attention in the colleges was music, mainly religious music. This was because there was much singing, especially in Latin, in Catholic religious services. As a training for the future, the students were required to sing at religious services, for which regular classes of religious singing were held in the colleges. The students were also taught to play musical instruments. From what we know of the Franciscan College of the Magi, these would have been the organ, the harp and the violin.

In addition to the colleges of Colombo and Jaffna, there is mention also of a "College, Church and Seminary"[4] of the Franciscans in Hewagam Korale and of "a College for orphan boys"[5] in Mutwal. How many other colleges were opened by the Franciscans we cannot know for lack of information. Apart from the education imparted in these institutions, there was also religious instruction to children at a parish level in the large number of parishes established by the Franciscans in the kingdoms of Kotte and Jaffna.

IV. EDUCATING PRINCES

While providing education to children, the Franciscans were also called upon to educate members of Sinhalese and Tamil royalty who had either come to the Portuguese for protection from their enemies, or sought Portuguese assistance against their rivals, or had been deposed by the Portuguese.

Prince Dharmapāla of Kotte who was going to succeed his grandfather Bhuvanekabāhu was given an education by the Franciscan superior himself, João de Vila de Conde. Later, as king, Dharmapāla gratefully refers to Friar João as "my father and master."[6] He remained devoted to the Franciscans throughout his life. With him were educated also by Friar João two other princes, Bhuvanekabāhu's children by a junior queen.

A natural son of Bhuvanekabāhu taken away as hostage by viceroy Afonso de Noronha in 1551 was baptized as Dom João and educated by the Franciscans in Goa, and later taken to Portugal where he continued his education in the monastery of the Franciscans in Lisbon. Subsequently he returned to Goa and lived

there with an allowance from the king of Portugal. Queen Dona Catharina (consort of João III) commends the Franciscans for "the education and learning"[7] imparted by them to Prince João.

Prince Yamasiṃha, nephew of Karalliyaddē Baṇḍāra, king of Kandy, and Yamasiṃha's son were baptized at Goa, the former as Dom Phelippe and the latter as Dom João, and educated by the Franciscans. In 1592 Yamasiṃha was set on the throne of Kandy by the Portuguese but died the same year. His son Dom João, then twelve years old, was acclaimed king but was ousted by Vimaladharmasūrya. Educated at the Franciscan college in Colombo and later at the College of the Magi in Goa, Dom João proceeded to Portugal where he was ordained priest and lived at Telheiras, in the suburbs of Lisbon. There he built a church (which still stands) and a monastery for the Franciscans as a mark of gratitude to them for looking after him from his childhood and for the education they had given him.

Vimaladharmasūrya (Konappu Baṇḍāra) who overthrew Dom João and became king of Kandy had himself been educated by the Franciscans in their college in Colombo after he had fled to the Portuguese when his father was put to death by King Rājasiṃha of Sitawaka. Though he had even become a Christian as Dom João d'Austria and fought with the Portuguese in the defence of Colombo against Rājasiṃha, later as king of Kandy he turned against the Portuguese and championed Buddhism. Among the Portuguese he put to death were several Franciscans including Friar Lucas dos Santos who had been his teacher in the college in Colombo.

When Sitawaka was subdued by the Portuguese in 1593, Prince Nikapiṭiyē Baṇḍāra, a boy of eleven or twelve, who had been proclaimed king of Sitawaka, fell into the hands of the Portuguese who brought him to Colombo where in the Franciscan college he was baptized as Dom Phelippe and given an education. With Prince Dom João of Kandy he was later sent to the College of the Magi for further studies and from there to Portugal where he was enrolled as a student of the University of Coimbra, but soon afterwards took ill and died in the Franciscan monastery of S. Francisco da Ponte and was buried there.

King Senarat of Kandy, whose consort was Kusumāsana Dēvī (Dona Catharina), entrusted the education of his children to the Franciscans who were in Kandy as hostages or arbitrators after he made peace with the Portuguese. One of the princes tutored by

the Franciscans was Rājasiṃha who succeeded Senarat as king in 1635; another was Vijayapāla, Prince of Matale. Subsequently he fled to the Portuguese to escape his brother Rājasiṃha, proceeded to Goa, became a Christian, and lived there. Kusumāsana Dēvī's other children, by her first husband, King Vimaladharmasūrya, also received an education from the Franciscans in Kandy. Prince Mahā Astāna met with an early death. The Princesses Sūriya Mahadassin and Antanassin became Senarat's queens after Kusumāsana Dēvī's death. Sūriya Mahadassin died in 1617. Antanassin who continued as Senarat's queen was a well educated and accomplished lady who could even write good verse in Portuguese. The Franciscans mentioned as having been tutors to the royal children in Kandy are Eleutério de S. Tiago, Francisco Negrão, José de S. Francisco and José de Nossa Senhora.

When the kingdom of Jaffna was brought under Portuguese rule, the heir to the throne, the late king Hendarmāna Siṃha's son, who was six or seven years of age, was entrusted to the Franciscans by the captain-general Constantino de Sa de Noronha. The prince was brought to Colombo and baptized as Dom Constantino. With him were baptized his cousins, the princes Dom Phelippe, Dom Francisco and Dom Bernardino. After education in the Franciscan college in Colombo, they were sent to the College of the Magi in Goa for further education. Dom Constantino became a Franciscan and held responsible posts including that of Guardian of the monastery of the Magi. It is reported that Dom Phelippe too was ordained a priest. Dom Constantino's sisters, Dona Izabel and Dona Maria joined the Convent of St Monica in Goa—the first Sri Lankans known to have become nuns. Dona Maria (Mary of the Visitation) was elected prioress of the convent in 1682 but died the same year.

The education given to princes was more or less the same as that provided in Franciscan colleges. Besides Christian doctrine and ethics, they were taught Portuguese language and literature. Latin too was one of the subjects generally taught. Furthermore, they were imparted a knowledge of the manners and customs of royalty in the West. The instructors presumably drew inspiration from the *Miroir* literature of the Middle Ages produced for the specific purpose of instructing princes, some works of which genre had been composed by Franciscans themselves.

It was thus by the Franciscans that for the first time in Sri Lanka's history students of the country, whether princes or others, were given an education in Western disciplines and in the Western manner. For the first time they learnt European languages and had an acquaintance with their literature (Portuguese and Latin) and were introduced to the culture with which they were identified. Sri Lankans were thus able to familiarise themselves with and even imbibe Western thought, ideas and attitudes.

V. RELIGIOUS CULTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christianity brought with it not only a religious faith but also a culture, which was twofold, namely, the general culture of European society as influenced and moulded by Christianity during the course of many centuries, and the specific religious culture of the Christian faith.

Portugal's contact with Sri Lanka marked the beginning of Westernization of Sri Lankan society which has gone on ever since under the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British, and is still going on today. We will not discuss here Portugal's cultural influence on secular society in Sri Lanka. The cultural contribution of the Franciscans was more in respect of the other aspect of culture, namely, Christian religious culture.

The religions of the country, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam, had their own religious culture, formed by such contributory factors as the religious language and literature of the respective faiths, the methods or systems of worship, the rites and ceremonies, religious architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, etc., the status and way of life of ministers of religion, and socio-religious manners and customs.

The Franciscans in bringing Christianity into the country, brought also with it and introduced into Sri Lankan society the religious culture identified with Western Christianity. This was a culture which in certain respects resembled and in many respects differed from the culture of the local religions.

Christianity brought a new architectural element into the country. The churches built by the Franciscans in the kingdoms of Kotte and Jaffna were reproductions in smaller scale of European churches. They were a type of new religious building different from what had so far existed in the country. The erection of crosses to indicate

the presence of a church close by or as a wayside shrine was also introduced by the Franciscans. Various articles not known to religious services of the local religions but needed for Christian worship, especially for the celebration of the Mass, were brought from Goa or Portugal—church ornaments, vestments, chalices, missals, altar stones, altar bread and wine, etc.

As in Buddhism and Hinduism, the use of images was a notable feature of Catholicism, but they were images representing personages so far largely unknown to the country—Christ, the Virgin Mary, Christian saints, and angels. The images were generally sculptured in wood and initially brought from abroad, but later on quite a number was produced in the country itself. Some of the images, regarded as miraculous, were popularly venerated in the country, such as those of the two Franciscan shrines of Our Lady of Mondanale in the kingdom of Kotte and Our Lady of Miracles in Jaffna. Along with images, another feature characteristic of Christian churches of the time was the reredos or ornamental screen at the back of the altar elaborately carved with images and tracery.

Buddhism had its religious and scriptural language, Pali; Hinduism Sanskrit; and Islam Arabic. The Franciscans brought into the country a new religious language, Latin. This was a language both taught by them in their colleges as a classical tongue and widely used as the language of Catholic religious services, especially the Mass. The ordinary Catholics did not of course understand the language, but because of its constant use in religious services they became familiar with it, and knew the meaning of frequently used prayers, hymns and formulae, just as Buddhists, even if they had not learnt Pali, knew the meaning of common religious recitations.

With Christianity came also its own religious music which, unlike in Buddhism, was an important adjunct to worship. There was singing not only in the local languages and in Portuguese but much more in Latin, especially when the Mass was sung. Local choirs were trained by the Franciscans in their parishes so that the people could assist at sung services. For such singing, musical instruments, especially the organ, had also to be provided and persons trained to use them. It is mentioned that the main church of the Franciscans in Colombo had even a pipe-organ.

Thus we see that the Franciscans, as pioneer Christian missionaries in Sri Lanka, brought into the country not only a new faith but also the religious culture that went with it—a culture that has since been in existence in this country for over four hundred years. It is noteworthy too that many items of that culture bear Portuguese names which have become indigenized as Sinhala or Tamil words, and are being used to this day. The following are some examples:

Sinhala	Tamil	Portuguese	English
altāra	altāru	altár	altar
tūmba	tōmpai	túmba	bier
katisāl	kattirisāl	castiçál	candlestick
kālis (pātra)	kālisu	cálice	chalice
kurusa	kurusu	crúz	cross
osti	osti	hóstia	host
sorōla	carōlai	charóla	processional litter
konta	kontai-mani	cónta	rosary
kantāru	kantāri	cantár	sing
supilis	cuppilīsu	sobrepeliz	surplice
turibala	turivil	turíbalo	thurible

The presence in the country of the Franciscans themselves as preachers and ministers of the new faith was itself a new experience for the people. So far they had known as ministers of religion only the yellow-robed *bhikkhus*, or Buddhist monks, and the priests of the Hindu temples. Franciscans in their grey robes were now seen in the country, in towns and villages, living in the midst of the people, very much like the *bhikkhus* of the local Buddhist temples.

The colour of the robes and the mode of dress may have been different, but the new arrivals, the Franciscans, resembled the *bhikkhus* in many respects. They were members of a religious fraternity or order as the *bhikkhus* were of the *Saṅgha*. They were ascetics who lived a celibate life and practised poverty as the *bhikkhus* did. *Bhikkhus* in Sri Lanka did not live in monastic seclusion, but residing in each temple singly or in groups, functioned as preachers and teachers of the *Dhamma* (Buddhist doctrine), and as counsellors to the laity, and were engaged also in educational and sometimes social activities for the benefit of the laity, in the same way as Franciscans in charge of parishes (as most Franciscans in Sri Lanka were) looked after their flock. One big difference,

however, was that the Franciscan priests had also to perform acts of worship, mainly the celebration of the Mass, whereas in Buddhism there was no such worship.

We have seen in this brief survey of missionary activity of Franciscans in Sri Lanka that they were the pioneer Catholic missionaries in the island, that in spite of the various problems they had to face —problems political, cultural, linguistic, etc.—they planted in the country a religious faith hitherto unknown to it, and that, in spite of some methods used by them which were questionable, and conversions that were sometimes not genuine, the new faith took deep root in Sri Lankan soil and has endured.

NOTES

For a more detailed account of what is given in this chapter, cf. W.L.A. Don Peter, *Education in Sri Lanka under the Portuguese*, Colombo, 1978.

[1] Mark 16: 15.

[2] Paulo da Trindade, *Chapters on the Introduction of Christianity to Ceylon*, tr. Edmund Peiris and Achilles Meersman, Chilaw, 1972, p. 56.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

[4] Fernão de Queyroz, *The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon*, tr. S. G. Perera, Colombo, 1930, p. 539.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 714.

[6] Trindade, p. 65; Queyroz, pp. 315, 327.

[7] Trindade, p. 53.

CHAPTER X

THE FRANCISCANS' SURVIVAL AFTER EXPULSION

By Revd Fr Jos. Claude Lawrence, O.M.I.

In the terms of surrender that the Portuguese deputation from the beleaguered fort of Colombo handed in to the Dutch on 11 May 1656 there was provision that the "inhabitants" of the city, whether "Burghers" or "blacks", who agreed to abide under the authority of the Dutch government, would "with regard to their religion be allowed a church with priests and clergy and shall enjoy every freedom in the performance of divine worship." (Baldaeus, reproducing art. 7 & 9, pp. 240, 241).

The Dutch Governor and his Council (on behalf also of "His Imperial Majesty of Ceylon"—the King of Kandy) replied accepting the surrender, provided it be made before midday of the 12th. They moreover drew a line of distinction between the "Burghers" (Portuguese civilians) and the "native inhabitants of the Island". The latter "were to be left at the discretion of His Excellency the Governor."

The deadline of midday of the morrow did not allow the harried and famished Portuguese garrison to enter into further negotiations on this or any other point. With the surrender the next day, the Portuguese civilians ("Burghers") all opted for the alternative to "pass over to the coast of India." Thus the article (No. 7) allowing them a church and clergy in the city did not come up for implementation. In consequence, all the Catholic priests had to quit. For the "inhabitants" ("blacks") it marked the beginning of the period of religious deprivation and duress, under law and statutes, that would occasion the heroic ministrations of Ven. Fr Joseph Vaz and his Oratorian disciples.

For the Franciscan friars, the pioneers of our evangelization in the 16th century, it meant unconditional departure along with the Jesuits, the Dominicans and the Augustinian missionaries who had joined them in the field onwards from 1606.

This is where the present study takes up in an effort to track and trace the "survival" of the Franciscans in the durableness of their signposts.

LINKS WITH THE PAST

Signposts...landmarks...monuments! The ideas flow in quick succession, for they are linked logically and, even more, follow the progression of our longings. In the present instance, it would seem beforehand that there is a well-founded hope for the fulfilment of this longing.

When the Dutch took over, noticing the stately edifices of Colombo city, they remarked that the Portuguese had built as though they were going to stay here for ever. There may have been a touch of gloating irony in this remark of the victors, a good dose of Netherlands' jealousy towards an Iberian nation they "patriotically" considered incapable of their own material achievements; but, wittingly or not, it places on record the solidness and architectural finish of the Portuguese constructions.

Outstanding among these were certainly the religious edifices: churches, clergy residences, the Jesuit College, and the "Misericordia" charitable institution. Spread out along the western coast and across the Jaffna peninsula, there were Catholic buildings to match those of the city. Not all of these were due to the Franciscans. In fact, it looks (from accounts) that the later-comers, the Jesuits, Dominicans and Augustinians, fresh in the field and by tradition more inclined to set up stably than the friars who had begun as the "roaming" companions of the Poverello of Assisi, brought with them new standards of architectural magnitude and finish.

What happened to all these structures? How far have they come down to us in our day? For one thing, we know that with the capitulation of the Colombo garrison, all public property of the Portuguese was treated as "alien" and confiscated by the Dutch. This applied to our religious edifices as well. Here and there as it suited them the "East India Company operating in the Island" passed them on to the ministers of their own "Reformed Church". Records and tradition point out to one or the other of these churches as still surviving though much transformed since then. Such, for example, in the city itself are those of Milagiri and Wolfendaal. In general, however, it can be said that once these Catholic buildings passed out of the hands of our missionaries, they were not only lost to the possession and use of our people, but gradually lost sight of.

The following anecdote (with apologies for the personal reminiscence) illustrates the situation typically. As late as 1923, seminarians on holiday at Urany (Kankesanthurai) scouring the neighbourhood on their regulation "walks" would occasionally make a halt at some ruins near Myliddy. These were said to be the remnants of an old Franciscan friary and among the crumbled walls of coral stone grey with age and exposure there were actually "relics" in recognisable bones. Obviously here, as in their old "houses" (Convents) of Europe, the friars had their domestic funeral vault—a structure above ground.

Thirty years later, when the Basilica of Our Lady of Lanka was under construction at Tewatte (Ragama) a gesture was made of embodying in its foundations tokens of our history. The ruins of Myliddy naturally came to mind as a definite and substantial contribution for the Franciscan period. On inquiry, however, we learned that in the interval the plot had been acquired by some persons for their private use and nothing remained of the ruins.

So things have happened; but one cannot help being surprised that a period of Jaffna's history marked by such enthusiasts of the past as Fr Gnanaprakasar, Fr Jesuthasan and even the hermit-founder of the Rosarians at nearby Tholagatty, should have allowed it to happen.

With regard to monuments, then, this is the bleak and forlorn landscape today. Apart from edifices, could there not be other "memorials" more fortunate in surviving the chances of changing times? Proverbially, bronze is more lasting than stone; and so, in fact, some church bells of the Portuguese period have outlived their belfries. Bishop Edmund Peiris has listed three at least identified beyond any doubt by the date and inscription that form part of their very moulding and cannot in consequence be erased. Where they nest, however, at present, these bells can be reached and their history discovered only by the favoured few. For Lanka at large their message is lost, since one hangs mute (that of Cayman's Gate, Pettah) and the other two peal unannounced.

STATUES: MEMORIALS OF A LIVING FAITH

We are better off with statues; not that these are more numerous, but that they are still within reach of the people's devotion. Rightly

so, since it is popular piety that has saved them through the centuries conferring on the poor wood of their carving a durability greater than that of granite or bronze.

Bishop Edmund Peiris has mentioned that of Our Lady of Miracles now in a chapel of Old Goa. Fr Gnanaprakasar has substantiated a claim for "Concenthi Matha" of the Jaffna Cathedral. Can definite proof be carried beyond early Oratorian times for the Madonna transported at a later date to Chilaw from Kammala and now venerated at the Cathedral as Our Lady of "Carmel"? The case is perhaps stronger for St Anthony at Wahacotte. Where the people's devotion is in peaceful possession of its heritage with nothing to contradict it, but on the contrary every historical indication to confirm it, is with St Anne's, Talawila, and, uniquely, the Madonna of the Holy Rosary at Madhu.

Unique and typical. This little statue so treasured today, increasingly accredited with miracles and favours from the last century, is held (and by prescription proved) to be the one that was at Mantai chapel in Portuguese times, and on the coming of the Dutch was carried away by the little group of faithful, accompanying them as they moved from place to place in the Vanny till they settled for "Silena Maradamaddu" where Fr Vaz and his disciples traced and "incardinated" them as the headquarters of Mantota mission.

To our point in the present ramble is the historical corollary that for the origin of Madhu's Madonna certainly Portuguese is equivalent to Franciscan.

Significant in itself to the subject, this detail opens the way for the main trail of our discourse. Popular devotion, we have said, was what has saved for us this memorial of our Franciscan first evangelization. How many reflections this remembrance stirs up and stimulates.

In the first place, it is to a group of the faithful that we owe the transportation of the Madhu Madonna—that saved it, when at the outset of the Dutch takeover, all our churches passed out of our keeping. Article 2 of the Terms of Surrender (1656) had made provision that "the Clergy shall be permitted to take with them all the images they might wish to remove" and that in any case "images shall be regarded with all reverence."

In their hasty withdrawal from the island, our priests were naturally obliged to leave behind them all but the principal statues. It must charitably be supposed that honouring their promise, the

new occupants regarded these images "with all reverence". This would have obliged them to refrain from any direct and open desecration but certainly not to keep them as objects of veneration contrary to the tenets of their Reformed Church. In consequence, all our statues of Portuguese times disappeared, except those that the faithful were able to hide in their families.

This sets us thinking. If in their century and a half of missionary work the friars, with the Jesuits, Dominicans and Augustinians helping them for the final fifty years, had been able to establish fully-organised Catholic communities at key-points with native priests or at least trained lay-leaders, our churches and their possessions might have been treated as belonging to the local body. At least, the new Government would not have been able to write them off as "alien property", duly subject to confiscation.

All this is, of course, too rosy a dream. Under the Portuguese regime, the "Mission" was "protected by sponsorship" and so the initiatives of the missionaries themselves were controlled and curtailed. The Government would never have recognised the right of the converts to own and run their own community centres. In fact the missionary had continually to protect the bare civic and human rights of his people. With courage, perseverance and tact they had finally obtained from the rulers official recognition for one of them as "Father of the Christians" to represent and safeguard such rights.

As to why they failed to recruit and train a local (indigenous) clergy is a subject by itself and would require a lengthy discourse of its own. Just here, we have to take cognizance of the fact and realise what a tremendous handicap it meant for the survival of the Franciscans' work once they themselves had been expelled from the island. That survival, in fact, could only be brought about by the survival of Catholic groups, blessed enough to keep together and keep the faith in tenets and practice. The blessing Sri Lankan Catholics enjoy today is that, precisely across the intervening 325 years, the faith and devotion received by our forefathers from the Portuguese missionaries have come down from generation to generation. One today in the faith of those days, the Catholic community in Sri Lanka is of the same line and strain even in human relationship—bluntly, by blood.

Certainly, and thanks be to God for it, there have been transfusions by the entry of new persons and groups into the circulation.

However, the main body, and therefore the body as a whole, keeps its original identity. This is the surpassing privilege of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka: it is one by Grace and nature with that of the "Ceylon" of our first evangelization.

Keeping things in due historical proportion and perspective, we can say that the very survival of the Church in our midst bespeaks the survival of our first Franciscan missionaries.

The sign and symbol of this historical identity can be the Sri Lanka Martyrs of Mannar (1545) of our earliest beginnings. It is true that they were Xaverian—the spiritual children of the Jesuit saint. To keep this point in view is to safeguard our dearest documents of the historicity of our Martyrs (namely the contemporary letters of St Francis Xavier). However, with greater generosity today than those distant disturbed times allowed, we can extend to them the sponsorship of the sons of St Francis of Assisi who were then the accredited pastors of the island whole and entire.

CONTINUITY IN THE HANDS OF OTHER MISSIONARIES

Other Missionary Institutes must also come in for their share in our unbroken story of the faith. In a manner and measure all its own, this applies to the Oratory of St Philip Neri (of Goa). It was indeed a decisive moment when the Ven. Fr Joseph Vaz, followed in due course by his fellow-Oratorians, bravely and skilfully slipped in to the rescue of our fathers. It is no exaggeration to affirm that outside of some other but equally signal intervention of Divine Providence, the knots of faithful left behind by the Portuguese missionaries would have been completely liquidated.

In fact, suddenly deprived of their priests and churches, and without structures to carry on by themselves, the local Catholics went panicky. Numbers fled to different spots in the realm of the Kandyan king. Those who stayed on were in a state of shock where they failed to make an open stand even in compact agglomerations. They did not even go "underground" (in a collective, snap-organisation way). Without guidance, they yielded to the pressures of penal laws and social disabilities to the extent of feigning acquiescence by entering themselves and their children on the Dutch Reformed registers. It was only individually or as a family that in secret they kept their Catholic faith and most available devotional practice of the Rosary.

This situation had endured for thirty years or so when, outmanoeuvring the Dutch patrols set to prevent the entry of any Catholic priest, Fr Joseph Vaz, suitably disguised, sailed into the port of Jaffna on one of their own sloops (1687). It was, as the saying goes, "high time" indeed. For, normally speaking, how much longer would the Catholics have been able to hold out true to their faith even under subterfuges of practice, whether scattered in Kandyan territory or huddled together in the shadow of the Dutch forts? That within the limitations mentioned they had till then, proscribed by law, discriminated against in daily life, unaided by pastors, persevered for thirty years stands to their merit before the Supreme Judge of consciences and redounds to the credit of the Portuguese (Franciscan) missionaries who had initiated and educated them in the faith.

Was it not this hard-fought fidelity even with its human failings that wrested for them from God's mercy the prodigious intervention of Fr Vaz's apostolate that would ensure a spiritual revival, an adequate emergency organisation and a reinforcement of new converts that would bring the Church, through a further century of persecution, intact and vigorous?

With the dawn of "Emancipation" under the British (by Maitland's proclamation, 1806), new opportunities, but also new dangers would face that Church. Within a short time, the Oratorian Institute would be suppressed in Goa (1834); recruits from that country would be of their own choice and type, supplemented by random volunteers from Italy and Spain exiled by anti-clerical laws. By then the Church in this island would be at the crossroads, experiencing a crisis of growth. Maintaining continuity with the past, it would have to adjust itself to the era that had been hatching in the West while the Dutch had kept our people peeling cinnamon and trapping elephants. With the British there came an opening on the new world of industry and commerce; but the key was English education.

It was at this stage (mid 19th century) that Divine Providence sent us a new brand of missionaries: the Sylvestro-Benedictines from Italy and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate chiefly from France but with a good sprinkling of Irish and Corsicans. Complementary to each other, both together, those missionary bodies would pilot the local Catholics through the transition so that losing nothing worthwhile of the past (least of all their native origin and

language) they would move honourably into every avenue of profession and employment, faith apace. By the end of the century, the Jesuit Fathers, successors of those banished in 1656, would return to the field.

Thence onwards it is contemporary history, almost current chronicling and we are entitled to pause and take a deep breath, except to make this last remark: as the 19th century missionaries took over from the late Oratorians, there was no rupture. The local Church progressed beyond what had been thought feasible till then, but on harmonious lines.

The Catholic Church in Sri Lanka today is identical with that of our Franciscan origin. In proof of it, we leave the reader with an emblematic picture: brown-robed St Anthony of Padua (really of Lisbon, Portugal), of the Order of St Francis, revered by Narēndrasiṃha, King of Kandy, wisely eyed at a distance by the Dutch and knowingly nodded to by the British. Within the Church he has always held his own. Simple with sinners, and astute with scholars, he can guarantee our future, just as he has supervised our past.

CHAPTER XI

THE SPIRIT OF FRANCIS LIVES ON

By Revd Dr W. L. A. Don Peter

The mystical experience of a man born eight hundred years ago at Assisi in the Umbrian hills of central Italy gave birth not only to a new religious order but also to a fresh manifestation of the spirit of charity of the Gospels. The asceticism of that man, Francis Bernardone, was not to be inward-looking but oriented towards service to fellowmen. His was to be an all-embracing charity extending even to dumb creatures. The order he founded became in effect the vehicle for the diffusion of his spirit of charity throughout the world and for the carrying out of humanitarian and pastoral activities under the impetus of that charity. Unlike the Benedictine monks of the previous six centuries, the sons of Francis were to go out to the people in poverty and simplicity and facing all manner of hardships for the purpose of helping them along on their way to God.

We have seen in the preceding pages how, historically, the disciples of Francis, imbued with his spirit, have, since his time, in the course of many centuries, served fellowmen in a multitude of ways. And they are doing so still.

The Europe into which Francis and his order were born had been Christian for centuries and therefore Franciscans in European countries were engaged for the most part in the pastoral care of Christian peoples and in educational and scholarly activities. They figured prominently in the universities of medieval Europe and there were many among them noted for their learning, as were Bonaventure, Alexander of Hales, Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Adam Marsh and Roger Bacon. It was by being engaged in such occupations—pastoral, educational, scholastic, humanitarian—that the Franciscans in Europe strove after the ideal of fraternal charity set before them by their founder.

But they were at the same time not unmindful of the non-Christian peoples outside Europe. Francis himself was ardently desirous of making Christ known to them. This desire on his part and on the part of his disciples, as of other missionaries, sprang

from the belief, as already noted in an earlier chapter, that Christianity was the only true path to blessedness in the hereafter and therefore one who truly loved his fellowmen should above all help them come to a knowledge of Christ and his teachings.

It was actually with the colonial expansion of the Catholic nations, Spain and Portugal, from towards the end of the fifteenth century that missionary enterprise on a large scale became possible, as a result of the discovery by them of new lands on the one hand, and on the other the establishment by them of their supremacy over African and Asian lands of non-Christian peoples. The active interest taken by the governments of Spain and Portugal to spread the Christian faith in their colonies was another factor that greatly contributed to proliferation of missionary activity at this time. Franciscans were in the vanguard of this missionary movement and played a very prominent part in it.

It was in the context of this colonial-cum-missionary venture that the introduction of Catholicism into Sri Lanka by the Franciscans took place. We have seen how they carried out their work, first single-handed for sixty years (1543-1602), and thereafter for another half a century with the assistance of Jesuits, Dominicans and Augustinians. But their labours and those of other missionaries came to an end when the Dutch came on the scene and joining hands with the King of Kandy (Rājasiṃha II) and his forces fought the Portuguese and captured the territory held by them. Colombo capitulated to the Dutch in 1656 and Jaffna in 1658, and with that Portuguese rule in Sri Lanka came to an end.

All the Catholic missionaries were banished from the country by the Dutch who, fearing that Catholicism might remain a link between the local Catholics and the Portuguese, with possible political repercussions detrimental to them, began to persecute the Catholics. Thereafter there were no Catholic priests in the country for about thirty years, until the Indian Oratorian from Goa, Fr Joseph Vaz, came into the island secretly and in disguise to minister to the local Catholics. After about ten years he was joined by other Oratorians, and it was these Indian missionaries from the Oratory of Goa who served the Catholics of Sri Lanka in the critical days of the Dutch persecution until after the British occupation of the country in 1815 and the restoration of religious freedom to Catholics it became possible for European missionaries to come to Sri Lanka again. Jesuits—one of the religious orders

of the Portuguese period—came back to the country in 1895 and are with us still, but there have been no Franciscan missionaries after their expulsion from the country by the Dutch.

We know, however, of a solitary Franciscan who worked in Sri Lanka for a short period about the middle of the nineteenth century —Fr Felice Zoppi da Cannobio.[1] An Italian from Lombardy, he had learnt Chinese in Rome and in 1851 left for China as a missionary, but because of a civil war in that country had to stay in Hong Kong where he busied himself with pastoral work. But when he seriously fell ill there, he decided to return.

On the way back, however, he stopped over in Sri Lanka, and undertook missionary work in Kandy. The most noteworthy feature of his labours in Kandy is that he opened a school for boys which eventually grew into St Anthony's College. He is known to have opened a school for girls as well. He thus has the distinction of being the father of Catholic education in Kandy and on that account has a place in the educational history of Sri Lanka.

He could not, however, remain very long in Kandy either, as he fell ill again. In 1857 he left for Italy, having been in the island for only about four years. On recovering his health, he proceeded to the United States where he laboured for seven years. He returned to Italy in 1865 and retired into the monastery at Orta. There he died on 3 August 1866 at the age of 42.

In this lone Franciscan too, who briefly appeared in Sri Lanka two hundred years after the first Franciscans had left, one could unmistakably identify the spirit of Francis which made him volunteer, in spite of recurring ill-health, to serve his fellowmen in the various parts of the world where his zeal took him.

After Zoppi we do not hear of Franciscans in Sri Lanka until in our own times a couple of Sri Lankans themselves, both already priests and veteran pastors, were drawn by the spirit and ideals of Francis to join his order.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that in the Portuguese period a Jaffna prince became a Franciscan—Friar Constantino de Cristo. It was after three hundred years since then that the order again had Sri Lankans joining it. A Rome-educated priest, Francis M. Goonetillake, who had served the diocese of Kandy as a zealous pastor for several decades, went to Assisi and was admitted to the order in 1960.

Six years later another priest, Fr Michael Lanza, who prior to taking holy orders had had a distinguished career as a teacher at St Joseph's College, Colombo, joined Fr Goonetilleke in Assisi. The latter died in 1967, but Fr Lanza, after his religious profession, returned to the island in 1969 and started to work for the revival of the Franciscan order in this country—a very welcome and praiseworthy venture indeed.

Fr Lanza obtained from the then Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Thomas Cooray, the quasi-parish of Talangama, which is only two and a half miles from Kotte, the capital of the ancient Sinhalese kingdom, where the first Franciscans who arrived in 1543 commenced their work. With Talangama as his base, Fr Lanza began to look round for recruits with the intention of establishing in due course a local Franciscan friary.

Several young men have since come forward to join the order and have been sent to the Convento Porziuncola at S. Maria degli Angeli in Assisi for their training. It is interesting to note that it was at the old Convento at Porziuncola, parts of which still remain, that Francis spent his last days.

Fr Lanza was unfortunately prevented by ill-health from continuing to be actively involved in the friary project and, as he wished to retire, two friars from abroad, Fr Ulrich Zankanella from the Austrian Province of the order and Fr Mario Ito Takashi from the Japanese Province, were sent to Talangama. In the meantime one of the Sri Lankan recruits, Nicholaspillai Peter, completed his training in Assisi and returned to the country and was ordained priest at Talangama itself on 15 February 1981.

Frs Zankanella and Takashi had to leave the country on the expiry of their visas and Fr Peter took charge of Talangama. Though retired, Fr Lanza continues to be keenly interested in the project he initiated and it is his ardent hope, as also the hope of many others both in this country and abroad, that a friary of Sri Lankan Franciscans will become a reality before long, so that, even with three hundred years intervening, and however belatedly, the link with the early Franciscans, the founders of the Church in this country, may be established and Franciscan activity continued into the future.

Just as there were men, young and old, in Assisi and its neighbourhood who joined Francis and formed the nucleus of the future religious order, so there was in Assisi a young girl, Lady Clare, who

was herself attracted to the way of life of Francis and his companions. Much against the wish of her parents, she left home one night and was received by Francis who in the presence of his disciples sheared her hair and gave her a tunic of coarse cloth as her habit.

In spite of continued opposition from her parents, she stuck to the life of poverty and simplicity she had chosen. Other women joined her, and Francis gave them a small house adjacent to the church of S. Damiano, on the outskirts of Assisi. He appointed Clare their superior and gave them a rule. Thus arose the women's branch of the Franciscan order. Its members, taking the name of the first female disciple of Francis, Lady Clare, have come to be popularly known as 'Poor Clares'.

By and by more convents were established throughout Italy and in other European countries. The Poor Clares generally are not engaged in active work for the people as are the friars, but live a cloistered and ascetical life. Though they are thus detached from society, the Franciscan spirit of charity characterizes their life as well, for the very purpose of their seclusion and asceticism is to help their fellowmen by the powerful spiritual weapons of prayer and penance.

Although no friary of Franciscans has yet been established in Sri Lanka since the early Franciscans left the country in the seventeenth century, we have had with us, for the past thirty years, a convent of Poor Clare nuns. The convent is at Tewatte, Ragama, in the precincts of the National Basilica.

This convent is a daughter institution of the Poor Clare convent of York, England. It was as a result of the acquaintance of the present writer, then a student in the University of London, with the Poor Clare convent at Arundel, and subsequently with the convent at York, that the foundation of a convent in Sri Lanka was undertaken, and in 1953 eight nuns from the York convent arrived in the island for the purpose.

Soon there were Sri Lankan girls willing to follow in the footsteps of Lady Clare and embrace the ascetical life of the cloister, though a difficult one. The number increased steadily and it was possible, in 1965, at the request of the Bishop of Sandhurst in Australia, for three of the English and five of the Sri Lankan nuns to go to Bendigo, Victoria, to found a new convent there.

Today the Tewatte convent is fully Sri Lankan. Its nuns, following the example of Francis, live a life of poverty and detachment, but not without the spirit of joy that filled the heart of Francis. The Franciscan tradition is thus being kept alive in Sri Lanka by these modern female disciples of the saint.

It might be mentioned here that another St Francis of a later date, St Francis Xavier, the first Jesuit in the East and the greatest Christian missionary Asia has known, who was a friend of the first Franciscans in Kotte and was himself keenly interested in the furtherance of Christianity in the island, had a sister, Magdalena, who was a Poor Clare and died in 1533 in Gandia as abbess of her convent, when Xavier was still a student in the University of Paris.[2] Her saintly life and her death at a critical moment in his life would have been one of the factors that brought about a change in his own life that eventually turned him into a Jesuit, missionary, apostle and saint.

Another order of nuns, founded many centuries after Francis' time but inspired and guided by his spirit and ideals, is the Institute of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the members of which have been active in this country for almost a century now.

The institute was founded in India in 1877 at the request of Pope Pius IX by Mother Mary of the Passion (Helene de Chapottin), who had earlier been Provincial of the Reparatrice Sisters in India. Soon afterwards the institute was affiliated to the Franciscan Order. The first convents were at Ootacamund and Coimbatore. The institute's objective was to combine the contemplative life with missionary activity. Unlike the Poor Clares who are cloistered, the Franciscan Missionaries are engaged in various social activities, translating into concrete reality the spirit of charity that characterized the life and work of Francis.

The institute has been remarkably prolific and quickly spread from India into other countries. Today it has convents in every continent and in many parts of the world. In fact there are few countries in which it is not represented. Prior to the Communist domination in China, there were some forty convents in that country alone.

Franciscan Missionaries of Mary came to Sri Lanka in 1886 to staff the General Hospital in Colombo. Later they undertook also nursing at the Leprosy Hospitals at Hendala and Mantivu and the hospital in Mannar. They have been involved in education as well,

in which field their Convent of Our Lady of Victories at Moratuwa stands out as one of the leading schools for girls in this country. They had also schools at Hatton, Nuwara Eliya and Batticaloa which were taken over by the government in 1960, along with other Grade III schools.

After the government's decision of 1964 not to employ nuns in state hospitals, the Franciscan Missionaries have ventured into other fields of social work. Today they are engaged in various types of work, in the service of estate labourers, lepers, prisoners, scavengers, veddhas, fishermen, children and youth. The Franciscan spirit of charity that animates them has in this way led them on to the assistance especially of the destitute and the underprivileged.

The religious orders or institutes with Franciscan connections about which we have spoken because of their association with Sri Lanka had had their origin in other countries. There is however a Franciscan institute which came into being in this country itself—the Congregation of the Franciscan Brothers of St Vincent de Paul.

It owes its origin to the efforts made by an Italian secular priest, Luigi Piccinelli, to found a local religious congregation for men. He had come as a missionary to Sri Lanka in 1870 and taken charge of the Kalutara mission the following year. It was at Maggona, which was within the territory assigned to him, that the first recruits of the projected congregation settled down. After several experiments by others who took over from Piccinelli, the congregation was canonically established on 20 October 1891 by Christopher Bonjean, the first Archbishop of Colombo. The congregation reached maturity when in 1935 the first General Chapter was held and its own Superior General with councillors was elected.

In 1949, however, the congregation broke up into two branches on the basis of language. Fourteen Tamil-speaking members left to form a separate congregation—the Congregation of the Franciscan Brothers of Mary—under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Kandy and with its centre at Matale. On 4 November 1949 the new congregation was affiliated to the Franciscan Order.

The original congregation with its headquarters at Maggona was amalgamated with the Third Order Regular of St Francis in 1982.

Right from the beginning the Franciscan Brothers were mainly engaged in teaching. During the period when there were two categories of schools in the country on the basis of the medium of instruction, namely, English schools and vernacular schools, the Brothers, who were only vernacular-educated, were a boon to the Church in the area of vernacular education. Other teaching orders of Brothers who had come from abroad, the Christian Brothers and the Marists, confined their activities mainly to English schools, which for reasons political, social and educational were of a higher status. Work in the vernacular schools which were attended by the poorer and rural children matched with the poverty and simplicity of the Franciscan Brothers who unobtrusively and with great dedication gave their services to vernacular education as far as their numbers, which always remained small, permitted. They also readily gave their assistance to priests in their parishes. In more recent times they have undertaken catechetical and social work in addition to teaching. In the history of the congregation, they have proved themselves worthy disciples of Francis and it is hoped that their numbers will grow so that the Church in Sri Lanka will have even in greater measure the benefit of their service.

We have so far spoken about various religious institutes that kept the spirit of Francis alive in Sri Lanka during the past century although there were no Franciscans in the country. We have now to add that there was also an institution to bring even lay Catholics into the Franciscan family. This is known as the Franciscan Third Order Secular or the Secular Franciscan Order.

It would be relevant in this context to mention briefly here the various branches of the great Franciscan family. The men disciples of Francis formed into a religious order which came to be known as the First Order. This too in course of time branched off into three main divisions—the Order of Friars Minor (O.F.M.), the Order of Friars Minor Capuchins (O.F.M.Cap.), and the Order of Friars Minor Conventuals (O.F.M.Conv.). In any case the members of all these branches are Franciscan friars and belong to the First Order. The branch for women disciples of the Saint which came into being with Lady Clare at the head is known as the Second Order.[3] Then there is also a Third Order which has two sections—the Third Order Regular and the Third Order Secular. To the first belong institutes of religious, men and women, who have adopted or adapted the Franciscan rule and strive to follow

in Francis' footsteps. The Third Order Secular enables priests, non-Franciscan religious, and especially lay Catholics, both men and women, married and unmarried, to be integrated, while remaining as they are, into the Franciscan family and to live, in imitation of Francis, a life built on the principles of the Gospel.

Many illustrious men and women in the history of the Church have been members of the Third Order Secular—kings and queens, popes and cardinals, founders of religious orders, politicians, men of learning and letters, poets, artists, musicians, etc. To mention a few well-known laymen—Dante, Giotto, Christopher Colombus, Leonardo da Vinci, Vasco da Gama, Thomas More, Michelangelo, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Murillo, Luigi Galvani, Alessandro Volta, Frederick Ozanam, Rossini, Garcia Moreno, Gounod, Coventry Patmore, Contardo Ferrini and Francis Thompson.

The Third Order Secular was established in this country in three places—Colombo, Kandy and Jaffna.

The Colombo fraternity was inaugurated in St Philip Neri's Church, Pettah, in July 1911 but transferred to St Lucia's Cathedral, Kotahena, where it was officially erected on 11 August 1912 by Fr J. B. Meary, O.M.I., who had been appointed its director by the Archbishop of Colombo, Antony Coudert, O.M.I. The fraternity was attached to the Franciscan province of Bellary, South India.

To cater to the needs of members using Tamil as their mother tongue, a Tamil section of the fraternity was erected on 19 November 1964.

In Jaffna, Brother Groussault, O.M.I. made a trial start to form a fraternity with four young men on 25 December 1934. As the attempt was found fruitful, Bishop J. A. Guyomar, O.M.I. of Jaffna encouraged it and recommended aggregation to the Franciscan Order. Accordingly Fr Hyacinth, O.F.M. Cap., Superior Regular of the Diocese of Agra, issued a Certificate of Aggregation on 23 September 1935 through Fr S. G. Hilary, O.M.I., parish priest of St Mary's Cathedral, Jaffna. The Third Order continues in the Diocese of Jaffna with its headquarters in the cathedral parish.

The Kandy fraternity was started by Fr Lanfranc Assauw on 14 November 1886 with thirty four members. It was still flourishing in 1930 but has eventually declined.

The Third Order Secular in this country has generally not had many members at a time. Nevertheless it has served the very useful purpose of giving specially lay Catholics the opportunity to participate in Franciscan spirituality. Whatever their walk of life, the members have been greatly benefited by the spiritual aids provided by the Third Order to live a life of simplicity and charity in imitation of Francis and in keeping with his Gospel insights.

To sum up, we have seen in the preceding pages that although there were no Franciscans in Sri Lanka after 1658, the spirit of Francis has lived on in the men and women, both Sri Lankan and foreign, who, drawn to follow in his footsteps, have, while seeking to live a deeply Christian life, in the spirit of the Gospel, also exercised fraternal charity in manifold ways for the good of the people of this country for almost the past one hundred years, just as the first Franciscans who brought the Catholic faith into our land had done in their time.

NOTES

[1] See A. Camps "Father Felice Zoppi da Cannobio, OFM, in Sri Lanka: 1853-1857. Pioneer of Catholic Education in Kandy," *Don Peter Felicitation Volume*, Colombo, 1983, pp. 11-17; A. Meersman, "Non-Portuguese Franciscans in the Padroado Mission of Sri Lanka," *ibid*, pp. 185-187.

[2] See Georg Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier, His Life, His Times*, vol. 1, Rome, 1973, pp. 172-175.

[3] Like the men's order, that of women members too later broke up into several branches, some following a modified rule approved by Pope Urban IV in 1263 and therefore known as Urbanists, some adhering to the original observance restored in the fifteenth century by St Colette and called Colettines after her, some retaining their name of Conceptionists who, founded in 1484 by Blessed Beatrice of Silva, had adopted the rule of St Clare. The nuns of the Tewatte convent are Colettines.

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THE MYSTICAL experience of a man born eight hundred years ago at Assisi in the Umbrian hills of central Italy gave birth not only to a new religious order but also to a fresh manifestation of the spirit of charity of the Gospels. The asceticism of that man, Francis Bernardone, was not to be inward-looking but oriented towards service to fellowmen. His was to be an all-embracing charity extending even to dumb creatures. The order he founded became in effect the vehicle for the diffusion of his spirit of charity throughout the world and for the carrying out of humanitarian and pastoral activities under the impetus of that charity.

Franciscans became the earliest Catholic missionaries in many parts of the world outside Europe. Their work extended over a vast geographical area in the continents of Asia, Africa and the New World. From the point of view of the extent of the mission field and the number of personnel engaged in missionary work, the Franciscan order became in fact the foremost missionary order of the early colonial period when Spain and Portugal were active in extending their dominion, trade and influence beyond Europe.

With the coming of the Portuguese to Sri Lanka in the early sixteenth century, Franciscans too came and planted in its soil the Catholic faith.

What they planted grew, and the Catholics of Sri Lanka, surviving persecution under the Dutch and increasing in number under the British and since independence, today have nine dioceses, all of them headed by Sri Lankan bishops, and in a population of fifteen million count over a million and are at the same time the most numerous by far of all the Christian denominations in the country.

This book recounts the story of the founding of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka by the Franciscans.