THE FRANCISCAN REGULAR OBSERVANCE 1368 - 1447

AND THE DIVISIONS OF THE ORDER 1294 - 1528

VOLUME TWO

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Note: Volume II begins with Part II Chapter III. Notes are collected at the end of each volume.
From the viewpoint of the issue of reform and division, the history of the Franciscan Order in (broadly) the two middle quarters of the 14th century, as we have examined it in the two previous chapters, was rather complex, and in some ways self-contradictory. The phenomenon of Conventualism was, as regards standards of observance, the antithesis of reform; however this very fact made the need for reform particularly evident and urgent - and at the same time rendered it almost impossible for the existing authorities to translate the need into practice (as that would be tantamount to pulling themselves up by their own boot-straps). Conventual though it was becoming, the Order as a whole was taking care that an essentially reformist literature about St. Francis and the early friars should be made widely available; yet it made no concerted effort to model itself according to that literature.

Despite the destruction of the Spirituals as a party and the triumph, in Conventualism, of the laxity they had denounced, their ideals of reform, and even in some cases their organisation, survived in a remarkably authentic form; but these were also gravely compromised by their association with the heresy of the Fraticelli.

The history of reform in the Order in actual practice seems to be a manifestation of these varied and in some respects conflicting tendencies. The question of reform,
and the associated problem of a division of the Order, was indeed raised, on several occasions. The Franciscan authorities showed themselves in general very sensitive to the danger of schism and heresy associated with these issues, and were quick to suppress any move which seemed in the least questionable. On the other hand they permitted the establishment, under John of Valle and Paoluccio dei Trinci, of what historians call the Regular Observance: one of the purest examples of a reform according to the "literal" observance in the Order's history, possessed of a degree of constitutional autonomy, and yet living in harmony with the main body of the friars - a far cry from the passions and hatreds of the 13th century.

1. General Attitudes to Reform and Divisions

That the Franciscan authorities should have been extremely touchy on the issues of reform, divisions and the concomitant danger of heresy is only too natural, in view of the searing conflict between Spirituals and Community. Moreover the issues, far from being laid to rest by the condemnation of the Spirituals in 1317, were kept alive by the Fraticelli de paupere vita; and we have already noted, when considering the Fraticelli, that their leaders tended to be apostate Franciscans. A striking official comment on this situation is found in the General Statutes imposed on the Order by Pope Benedict XII. These lay down certain procedures to be followed with regard to brothers spreading suspect or heretical doctrines, including imprisonment for the obdurate; the starting-point for such a measure is described thus: ". . . certain members of the said Order,
wearing its habit, but withdrawing from its purity and community (italics added) are presuming... with a false appearance of holiness to teach, preach, defend and approve heresies condemned by the holy Roman Church..."\(^3\)

In the long-held opinion of the Franciscan authorities, no author was more likely to engender error and heresy than Petrus Iohannis Olivi, especially through his commentary on Revelation.\(^4\) Therefore, as we have already noted,\(^5\) his works were officially proscribed, the treatise on Revelation receiving particular mention; this decision was recorded in the Farinerian Statutes, issued at the General Chapter held at Assisi in 1354,\(^6\) following the pronouncement of the General Chapter of Marseilles, of 1319.\(^7\) (How the proscription fared in practice we have already sufficiently seen).\(^8\)

One of the hall-marks of the ultimately separatist programme of the Spirituals had been the demand for the observance of the Rule "to the letter" - that is, without the "glosses" represented by the papal declarations on the Rule.\(^9\) The first in the series of the declarations was Gregory IX's *Quo elongati*, issued in 1230.\(^10\) In some ways it was the most significant of all: not only was it the first, it also laid down the lines which subsequent ones were to follow, and can be said to have provided the legal, institutional and theoretical basis for the whole characteristic development of the Franciscan Order in the 13th century, in the course of which the friars moved a good distance away from the way of life actually followed by Francis and his companions;\(^11\) it was for example *Quo elongati*
which introduced the *nuntius* to deal with alms given to the friars.\textsuperscript{12} To cast any doubt on Gregory IX's declaration was therefore an extremely radical step, implicitly involving rejection of the Order's characteristic development from roughly the death of St. Francis onwards; something, one would think, which only the most fiery zealot would contemplate. One discovers therefore with some astonishment that the Order's legislation was not a little concerned with friars thinking in this way: the General Statutes issued in 1346, 1351 and 1354\textsuperscript{13} decreed severe punishment for any brother speaking against the arrangements - which are specified in some detail - laid down in *Quo elongati*.

A more important bull, in the general matter of the Spirituals and their aspiration for reform and autonomy, was John XXII's *Quorumdam exigit*.\textsuperscript{14} This had been the instrument which brought about the suppression of the Spirituals of Provence, by ordering them to submit to their Superiors on two matters they regarded as crucial, concerning respectively the practice of poverty and the shape and quality of the habit - the latter being if anything the more important of the two, since it was from start to finish the chosen badge of the rigorists.\textsuperscript{15} Accordingly the bull was cordially detested by the Fraticelli *de paupere vita*, for example earning the description "damnabile praecptum papae" from the author of the *Decalogus evangelicae paupertatis*\textsuperscript{16} (who, as we discovered, laid exceptional stress on the importance of the habit, even by zealot standards).\textsuperscript{17} The Franciscan authorities were no less aware of the historical
significance of the bull with regard to the issue of reform and schism in the Order, and a row of official pronouncements recalled its provisions and laid down severe penalties for any friar who dared to attack them: the Statutes of Benedict XII (1336),\textsuperscript{18} of the Chapters of Venice (1346), Lyons (1351), and Assisi (1354),\textsuperscript{19} and the encyclical to the Provincial Ministers issued by William Farinier as General Minister in 1349.\textsuperscript{20}

Of the two matters touched on in \textit{Quorumdam exigit}, the habit, it was suggested, was the more acute - and Benedict XII's enactment on the question makes the important assertion that there were still some members of the Order clinging to the old party badge of the Spirituals.\textsuperscript{21} That this for the authorities was synonymous with a threat of schism, which in turn they were supremely determined to avoid, is shown as clearly as one could wish in two clauses of the Statutes of 1346, 1351 and 1354: "Again since our Order...is held to be one and indivisible, the General Minister, in accord with (the entire) General Chapter, forbids that in future any sect be allowed to arise among the brothers...which, by separation of dwelling or of clothing, looks likely to become separate in spirit, especially as such a sect is adjudged presumptuous and rash by the Declaration of the lord Pope John XXII and the lord Pope Benedict XII"\textsuperscript{22} (italics added; the reference is, once again, to \textit{Quorumdam exigit} and its re-enactment in Benedict XII's Statutes). "We forbid on pain of anathema that anyone should by word or deed in any way presume to work towards a division of our Order. If
however anyone should intentionally do the contrary, he shall ipso facto incur sentence of excommunication; and if his guilt is established, let him be imprisoned." 23

As a revelation of the official Franciscan attitude towards separatism this enactment can only be compared with a sentence in William Farinier's encyclical of 1349 to the Provincial Ministers: 24 "If however any brother should assert that it is impossible to observe the Rule spiritually and literally within the Community of the Order, he shall be imprisoned, as a persecutor of the Rule and a liar and hypocrite". There is a reference in this short pronouncement to the whole history of Spiritual and Fraticelli secession from the Order, for, as we have seen both in Angelus Clarinus 25 and in certain Fraticelli treatises, 26 the theoretical cornerstone of secession was provided by the Rule's provision (in chapter 10) for those "unable spiritually to observe the Rule". Farinier's pronouncement was therefore intended to prevent any separatist movement on Spiritual lines arising within the Order. It is easy to understand, even to sympathise with his motive; but that should not blind us to the fact that it was he who thereby became a "liar and hypocrite": for, if words are to have any meaning, we must assert that it was not possible to observe the Rule literally within the community of the Order in the 14th century, Conventual as it was; in point of fact it was barely possible even to observe the Rule according to the easier standard of the papal declarations, for Conventualism amounted precisely to a mass abandonment of those standards. 27 Thus, in order
to believe that his Order had not departed from the literal observance, the General Minister had to resort to deception, of himself and others. It will not be overlooked that, a little later, the same problem confronted the historically minded Minister of the Province of Aquitaine, Arnaldus de Sarnano, and that he solved it in the same way. 28

All these pronouncements taken together point to one conclusion which, given the historical circumstances, will cause no surprise: the Franciscan authorities were extremely - almost, one might say, paranocially - sensitive to any sign within their own ranks of divisive tendencies based upon the demand for a reformed observance, and displayed a ruthless determination to stamp out any such tendency. It is hard to avoid the further conclusion that the prospect of an acceptable reform's being established was but slender.

2. The First Initiative: the petitions of Philip of Majorca

It was only a decade after John XXII's condemnation of the Spirituals that the first attempt was made to revive their programme for the foundation of a reformed Franciscan observance, on the basis of a judicial separation from the Order. In view of the official sentiments just described, this was hardly likely to find favour; and, to make the case still less enticing, the moving spirit was a leader of Beguins and Fraticelli, Prince Philip of Majorca. His proposals duly received short shrift. Since they were addressed to the Papacy, not to the Franciscan authorities,
the execution was performed by the Holy See.

It was suggested before that the turning-point in Philip's life was his meeting, some time around 1311, with Angelus Clarinus. Philip thereafter remained in touch with his spiritual mentor until the latter's death in 1337, and faithful to his teaching until his own death some four years later. It is not improbable that he saw himself as chief promoter and implementer of Angelus's ideas and programme, once Angelus himself was placed under the ban of the Church.

Coming into contact with Angelus meant, among other things, hearing his views on the desirability, so as to establish the literal observance, of a division of the Franciscan Order. These views, along with the rest of the Spiritual ideology, Philip made his own.

The first time he leant his support to their realisation in practice was during the for the Franciscans confused and contentious interregnum preceding the election of Pope John XXII. He wrote to the Cardinals, asking that the Sacred College should take the initiative of establishing an autonomous reformed branch of the Order. The request was not granted, and the new Pope's policy, as we know, ran in the opposite direction. There followed his condemnation of the Spirituals, the springing up of the heresy of the Fraticelli, and the controversy on the absolute poverty of Christ.

It was in the middle of these dramatic and critical developments - in October 1328, not six months after Michael of Cesena's flight by night from detention in Avignon -
that Philip of Majorca in a letter to the Pope put forward his plan anew. The request was, perhaps, classically ill-timed, but this should not hide the fact that it was a classic expression of the Spiritual policy of reform and autonomy. It therefore deserves detailed consideration.

The way of life proposed for himself and his adherents by Philip was that of the literal observance of the Rule, without use of the papal declarations - "regulam simpliciter, et pure intellectam, et sine glossa". This standpoint was backed by the authority of the Testament, textually quoted by Philip, which appears to give it the sanction of Francis himself, and indeed of God: "The Lord himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy Gospel..."; "The Lord gave me simply and purely to say and write the Rule and these words, and thus let them be understood simply and purely without gloss, and observed in holy practice to the end". Thus is confirmed the critical importance of the Testament in shaping and buttressing the zealot standard of Franciscan observance, and we are led back to the unsatisfactory nature of the Order's fundamental legislation - the existence of other compelling documents than the Regula Bullata - as a vital factor in its disputes over observance. Philip indeed took adherence to the Testament to the furthest point, requesting that, "as a guard against any future relaxation", recruits to his band should be required, at their profession, to promise to follow the Testament as well as the Rule.

The literal observance of the Rule was (and is) an
extremely austere standard to aim at; the text of his request gives some precious indications that Philip meant quite seriously and sincerely to do so. Part of what he desired from John XXII was permission "to beg for alms for Christ's sake, and to live on alms and the labour of our hands": no question here of the elaborate machinery of the nuntius evolved in the papal declarations of the 13th century, let alone of the numerous illicit ways of supporting themselves devised by the lax friars of 13th and 14th centuries; the standard is that of the earliest days of the fraternity, reflected in the Rule and Testament. The same is true of Philip's proposed procedure for the reception of settlements. Prerequisite are the permission of the owner of the land or property concerned, and of the local bishop; granted these, the buildings erected must themselves conform with poverty; and the brothers are to stay there only so long as the owner and bishop are willing, living "as pilgrims and strangers" - the very phrase used in both the Regula Bullata and the Testament. The whole conception faithfully reflects that of St. Francis, and the practice of the earliest friars. And beyond that, there is a remarkably close correspondence with instructions given by Francis for the reception of settlements, recorded in the Flowers of the three companions. We cannot be sure that Philip had read the famous collection of stories, but the possibility that he had done is an exciting and important one.

Philip's standards of poverty as set out in his letter were a faithful imitation of those of St. Francis. They
were by the same token a world away from the contemporary practice of St. Francis' Order. This left the would-be reformer in no doubt as to how to fulfill his programme: "Not however in the society of the Lesser Brothers of to-day, nor under the obedience of the Superiors of the Order because of the conflict of purpose between them and us: but in the way that the founders of the Cistercian Order are said to have seceded from the Black Monks, in order the more perfectly to observe the Rule of St. Benedict." Here was the classic Spiritual demand for secession; and we may even be able to guess by whom it "was said" that the case of the Cistercians was comparable: Angelus Clarinus, who used the self-same argument in the Apologia he wrote to Alvarus Pelagius two years later. 45

Having bluntly stated his position, Philip tried, like Angelus and Mortino of Casale, 46 to mitigate to sting: "I am in no way attacking those who have accepted the expositions and declarations of the Popes, because in the path of God one man walks one way, and one another."

It was, one may feel, but a forlorn attempt at conversion.

There is a further point of interest concerning the constitutional arrangement proposed by Philip. He asked for a Cardinal Protector for his Order, to help guarantee its subjection to the Church, and stability in the faith, poverty and humility. This provision is borrowed direct from the Franciscan Rule. 47 This may be taken as yet one more sign of the authentic Franciscan nature of Philip's thinking, and at the same time it may establish a further connection with the Anconan band of Spirituals to which
Clarinus had belonged; for when, in 1294, Celestine V had granted them autonomy as the Poor Hermits, he also gave them a Cardinal Protector. 48

Philip of Majorca's proposal to Pope John XXII was thus an exact repetition of the Spirituals' earlier demands, which John had decisively rejected; it may therefore not unfairly be regarded as an anachronism, with minimal hope of success. The tone in which Philip concluded his petition was not calculated to improve its chances, even though it is impeccably based upon Francis' apparent claim to divine inspiration, recorded, as we have seen, in the Testament: "And just as the way of Christian perfection which I ask for is from the Holy Spirit, the denial of it would be from the Spirit of Evil..."

Thus (we may agree) presumptuously challenged, Pope John responded diplomatically: he temporised. His reply to Philip's request was considerably delayed, until April 1329; and it then took the form of an affable invitation to come to Avignon and discuss the whole matter with him in person. 49

Philip's plans were however moving too fast to be thus arrested. Already in January, it seems, Angelus Clarinus had written to him, advising him to forsake the world (he was still Regent in Majorca) without waiting for the Pope's reply, which would probably be negative. 50 When John's letter came, Philip did not answer. Then in early summer he made the decisive break Angelus had counselled, abandoning his position in Majorca and moving, with his group of Beguin followers, to the court of his sister Sancia,
Queen of Naples, where shortly he solemnly renounced all his benefices. The general feeling of the court, as we discovered, was one of sympathy for the rebel Franciscan General, Michael of Cesena, and hostility to his successor and to the Pope, even if these sentiments were not openly proclaimed. Perhaps the atmosphere of his new home went to Philip's head; probably he was more forthright than other men; at all events he came out, on December 6, with an open and widely publicised attack on John XXII, asserting in a sermon that, the Pope's decrees notwithstanding, the life of the "brothers of the poor life" was the realisation of the Gospel.

The sermon does credit to Philip's sincerity and sense of mission - and he was congratulated accordingly by Angelus Clarinus - but from the angle of his negotiation with the Pope it was almost unbelievably impolitic. On December 12, in a letter to King Robert of Naples, John complained in passing of his brother-in-law's disaffection and of his failure to appear in Avignon; and on January 26 he communicated to Philip the refusal of his request, and also informed the King and Queen of it, at the same time asking them to exercise their influence on their relative.

Neither move had any effect; Philip remained true to the ideals from which, evidently, there was now no separating him, led a life of great austerity, and acted till his death as a focus for the Fraticelli de paupere vita in southern Italy. More surprisingly, he still clung to the notion that, despite all that had happened, his dream of a reformed, autonomous Franciscan family would one day
receive the blessing of the Holy See. No doubt even he realised that there was nothing more to be hoped for from John XXII; however his successor might be a different matter; and so in 1340 his proposal was brought out again and presented to Benedict XII.\textsuperscript{58}

It seems that, in the intervening years, Philip had learnt a little of diplomatic finesse. Rather than launch his petition in his own name, he had it sent in by his brother-in-law the King, who, in marked contrast to himself, was well thought of at the curia; and in addition an ecclesiastical ambassador was employed actually to present the petition, with the specific task of expounding and explaining it to the Pope.\textsuperscript{59} This detail is one of the most important of the affair, for the chosen ambassador was one Paolo dei Trinci, bishop of Foligno, the town whose lordship was held by his own family. His connection with the royal house of Naples is not known; but he was uncle of Paoluccio dei Trinci - the chief architect of the Italian Regular Observance.\textsuperscript{60}

This makes it particularly interesting to know the terms of Philip's petition. Unfortunately the full text has not survived, and we have only the summary of it given by Benedict XII in his answer; but this is enough to show that Philip had not modified his main ideas one whit. The essentials, as recorded by the Pope, were these: St. Francis observed the Regula Bullata to the letter, and wished his friars to do likewise; this is shown in the Rule itself, and in the Testament, which was revealed by God. Philip and others, some of them being members of the
Order, therefore wish, as members of the Order, to follow the Rule to the letter; but "innumerable obstacles" prevent them from so doing. Hence the Pope is asked to allow them to constitute a Franciscan family according to the literal observance, without let or hindrance.

This then was essentially the same petition as John XXII had received, and like his predecessor Benedict XII rejected it. He gave five principal reasons for doing so, and one of these is of particular interest. To grant the petition, he wrote, would undermine the numerous declarations of the Franciscan Rule issued by his predecessors, and that would revive the old hatreds and dissensions within the Order.

There will be no doubt that the Pope's assessment was correct. And on the other side there is nothing to suggest that Philip accepted his decision. On the contrary our last image of him, recorded by contemporary chroniclers, shows him putting into practice the standards he had detailed in his petition to John XXII - wandering barefoot and in the Beguin habit across the south of Italy, denuded of all possessions, begging for his livelihood, and refusing anything not given as alms, in the name of piety. 61

This outcome suggests two reflections on Philip of Majorca's reformist endeavours. First, they were in a sense but the epitome of that survival of Spiritual influence, after the destruction of the Spiritual party, which was examined in detail above; for they express the characteristic Spiritual goals of reform and autonomy in
the purest form, and they do so thanks to the influence of Angelus Clarinus, the most striking case of individual Spiritual survival. And secondly, they demonstrate the unswerving opposition of ecclesiastical authority to any Franciscan reform which sought its goals by way of a division of the Order. One is therefore left, as regards Franciscan affairs in 14th century Italy, with the existence of two opposing forces, the survival of an ideal of reform, and official fear of its probably divisive implication. It is natural to wonder which of the two would prove the stronger. The answer to that question is given by the foundation, the subsequent vicissitudes, and the ultimate consolidation of the Regular Observance.


The early history of the Regular Observance is inseparably linked with the names of three friars: John of Valle, at whose initiative the movement was founded in 1334, and who died in 1351; Gentilis of Spoleto, who between 1350 and 1355 led it into disaster and suppression, and died in 1362; and Paoluccio dei Trinci, who in 1368 succeeded in reviving the extinct movement, and by the time of his death (c. 1391) had made it an established force within the Order.

There has been a tendency amongst historians to treat the three men separately, as the leaders of three distinct phases of the movement. There is some justification
for this approach, even in purely temporal terms - the long gaps between their respective assumptions of leadership in the movement, and between their deaths; but the approach also blurs an important and remarkable truth: that the three friars were raised, so to speak, in the same cradle; for they were inmates together of the friary of Foligno in the late 1320s and early 1330s. There cannot be many movements whose leaders at such widely separate times were in their nurturing so close together; and the origins of the Regular Observance can thus be traced to a short span of years in a single friary, of no particular distinction, in a small Italian town of no great importance. From such unspectacular beginnings can great things develop.

The unheralded origins of the Regular Observance rebound in a particular way on the would-be historian of the movement: comparatively little is known about them. It was only when, under Paoluccio dei Trinci, the movement began to spread and be talked about, that it started to figure at all regularly in official documents and the records of its contemporaries. Prior to that there had been a brief but anxious flurry centred on the person of Gentilis of Spoleto, and this left its mark in contemporary document and chronicle; but for the whole period of John of Valle's leadership, and for the years between Gentilis and Paoluccio dei Trinci, there is next to no contemporary witness. In default of this we are thrown back on the accounts of Franciscan writers of the 15th and later centuries.63 These were numerous and, in many cases, admirably assiduous - two of the 15th century chroniclers
for example make a particular point of deriving information from "old brothers" who were contemporaries, or even eye-witnesses, of events described, and at a quite different level the work of the annalist Luke Wadding (d. 1657) is one of the monuments of 17th century historiography. Nevertheless the witness of the later chroniclers inevitably, for the historian, leaves a certain amount to be desired. For one thing they devoted most of their attention to Paoluccio dei Trinci, with whom the reform movement first so to speak came into the light of day, and preserved only the sparsest information on his two predecessors. Again, one is bound to wonder about the accuracy of the traditions, mostly no doubt in origin oral ones, which they set themselves to record. And in this connection, we have in particular to remember that they were writing from a position in which the reform was an accomplished fact and consequently its founders, particularly Paoluccio, established religious heroes; one is bound to wonder how far their accounts of the heroes' lives conformed to fact, and how far to the stereotypes of pious convention. As a result of all these problems the early history of the Regular Observance has to be put together from assorted scraps of information; much remains uncertain, and even more wholly unknown.

Bearing in mind these considerable limitations, we can return to the trio of friars whom chance brought together in the 1320s and 1330s in the friary of Foligno. The first to arrive, so far as we know, was, surprisingly, the one who was to exercise his influence last, namely
Paoluccio; and he is also, as has just been indicated, the one about whom most is recorded. He was born, in 1309, into what would now be called the Establishment. His family - whose imposing palazzo stands to this day - held the lordship of Foligno and its surrounding contado; this had been acquired by Paoluccio's grandfather Nallo in 1305. His two eldest Trinci uncles - there were nine of them altogether - were bishops, the one of Foligno itself, the other of neighbouring Spoleto; it was the former who in 1340, as we discovered, expounded Philip of Majorca's plan for creating an autonomous reformed family of Franciscans to Pope Benedict XII. Through his mother Paoluccio had connections with the religious Establishment at quite another level: she was an Orsini; two relations on her side were Cardinals in Paoluccio's lifetime, Matteo from 1316 to 1340, and Poncello from 1378 to 1395. Power and pomp were not however Paoluccio's choice: in 1323, at the age of 14, he renounced the world, and joined the Order in his native town. It was as much for his tender years as for his small stature that his confrères called him by the name Paoluccio instead of the baptismal Paolo.

Two years after the pious young aristocrat, John of Valle entered the Order at Foligno: a man of quite different origins, and of whom little is known. His birthplace, Valle, was a small village in the wild and hilly country to the north-east of Foligno; it lay on the borders of the territories of Foligno and Camerino, at the foot of the hill of Brugliano. When he was born is not known.
We are even more in the dark about Gentilis of Spoleto. Nothing is recorded about his antecedents or when he joined the Order. All that can be said is that he was in the friary at Foligno in, and presumably for some time before, 1334.

What of the life in religion led by the three men? The chroniclers indicate that, being birds of a feather, they tended to flock together. Whatever the differences of age and origin between them, this is entirely likely, in view of the connections between them after 1334; it is also a point of some importance, for it entitles us to assume that the ideas and experience of one were in some degree common to all.

In the nature of the case the chroniclers tell us more about the experience and ideas of Paoluccio than of the others, although there is no way of knowing how much of their account refers to the period before 1334. According to them he led from the first a life of great austerity and spiritual fervour. Out of humility he chose to remain a simple lay brother, rather than to be advanced to the priesthood; for the same reason he would undertake the most menial jobs in the friary, working in the garden and kitchen, sweeping out the church, cleaning the altar and lighting the lamps. Humility was accompanied by poverty: his clothes and room were poor, and this scion of the ruling family was to be seen going through the streets of his native town, a small sack on his shoulder, begging from door to door. These were outward manifestations of an intense spiritual life; he
fasted almost perpetually, and "his most delicate food was meditation on the Passion"; so vehement were his prayers that at times he would groan or cry aloud, and so he requested a cell for himself in a corner of the friary, from which he would not disturb the other brothers.

The picture is reminiscent of the life of the Order in its earliest days; and, appropriately, we are told that Paoluccio's religious aspirations converged on a single theme: restoration of the Order's discipline and fervour, through the exact and literal observance of the Rule. As described by the 15th century chronicler, the plan has an undeniable nobility: "Reflecting continually how he had left and despised the world and all things and himself in order to save his soul and follow the footsteps of his glorious father St. Francis, he was greatly grieved in mind since he seemed not to be observing to the full those things he had promised in the Rule".

But if, through his fervour for a reform, Paoluccio was at odds with most of his fellow friars, he is on the other hand said to have laid great stress on obedience; "the will of his Superiors was the guide of his every action". For a friar who really took St. Francis as his model, it could not be otherwise; and the characteristic would of course be but a further manifestation of the humility already alluded to. In fact, humility took him an important step further: so little did he think of himself that he would not presume to criticise others or agitate for reform; his way of
operating was through patience and prayer. The would-be reformer was above all no dissident.

How then did the friars at Foligno react to this unusual young lay brother? According to Jacotilli, his 17th-century biographer, they were all "amazed, and regarded him as a perfect example of holiness". Mariano of Florence, writing in the early 16th century, suggests something very different: that Conventual friars regarded him as bizarre, ("fantastico"), capricious and self-willed. Quite possibly he aroused the two sets of feelings in different people, or even in the same people at different times; the fantastic and the holy were in any case much closer together in the Middle Ages than they are to-day.

As to how John of Valle and Gentilis of Spoleto fit into the picture, little can be said. All we know of the latter is that, like Paoluccio, he was a lay brother. John, in contrast, became a priest; Wadding calls him a man of outstanding sanctity and a zeal for poverty, and indicates that he suffered for it at the hands of his laxer confrères.

So much can be said of the three future leaders of the Regular Observance during their time together in Foligno. It should however be noted that in their religious zeal they were not alone; two other men seem to have contributed to their enthusiasm.

The first was another confrère, bl. Tommaso of Foligno. He had been born in the same year as Paoluccio, 1309, and he joined the Order in his native city in 1332,
choosing, like Paoluccio, to remain a lay brother. His religious aspirations lay in the direction of evangelising the heathen, but, perhaps because they were of the same age, he and Paoluccio seem to have become close friends, and no doubt each supported and strengthened the other in his plans. Tommaso is also said to have been close to John of Valle.\textsuperscript{78}

The second formative influence on the future leaders of the Observance was, from the historian's point of view, infinitely more significant: none other than the outstanding survivor of the Spiritual debacle, Angelus Clarinus.

Admittedly the evidence on this point, given its importance, is not as firm as one would wish - though no weaker than for other aspects of the early history of the Observance. We have to rely on the statement of the 17th century historians Wadding\textsuperscript{79} and Jacobilli,\textsuperscript{80} who both in turn give as their source a now lost work of the early 16th century writer Mariano of Florence. Further, the connection these authors refer to is between Angelus and John of Valle, with no mention of Gentilis or Paoluccio; it is therefore only an assumption - justified by the close relationship we have already noted between the three friars - that in some degree Angelus was, in the words of Wadding and Jacobilli, friend, counsellor and model to them all.

But if the basic evidence for this conclusion is slender, all the surrounding circumstances increase its
probability. As we discovered, Angelus had several groups of followers in the region of Foligno and Assisi; and more than that, he is known to have had contacts in Foligno itself, who, far from being like himself at odds with the Church, were accepted members of religious Orders: Gentile of Foligno, eventually secretary to the General of the Augustinian hermits, and one Accamandolo, of the Franciscans — a confere then of John of Valle and Paoluccio dei Trinci. That Angelus would have lent his support and advice to any movement within the Order which might achieve his own ideals of reform is suggested by all that we know of him and his career, and is confirmed by a remarkable piece of evidence: one of the most important Observant chroniclers of the 15th century, Bernardino of Aquila, happens to mention that shortly before his death Angelus, like his master Francis, left a Testament to his followers, and in it instructed them to return to the Order if ever it should be reformed.

The question of Angelus' participation in the origins of the Regular Observance raises a wider, and more speculative issue: the connection between the new reform and the movement of the Fraticelli de paupere vita in general. Although there is no direct evidence, we can reasonably wonder whether it was pure chance that the Observance was born in the territory of Foligno; for it borders on the region which, in the 1320s and 1330s, became the heartland of the Fraticelli sect, namely the March of Ancona. The greatest fraticelli success was
recorded in the Camerino area, for here, to the ire of Pope Benedict XII, they were patronised in the 1330s by the two nobles John and Gentilis of Camerino, other laymen and clerics, and, most heinous of all, the very bishop of the town; the territory of Camerino actually borders that of Foligno; John of Valle, the founder of the Observance, was born in a village in the border area; and the family of Paoluccio dei Trinci, John's companion and eventual successor as leader of the Observance, had excellent relations with the rulers of the neighbouring territory. If we also recall that Paoluccio's uncle, the bishop of Foligno, was willing to expound the ideals of Philip of Majorca to Pope Benedict XII in 1340, it becomes very hard to believe that the founders of the Observance could have been wholly uninfluenced by the Fraticelli de paupere vita; and the latter's claim, it will be remembered, was to be the true Franciscan Order, on the basis of the quintessential standard of reform, the literal observance.

Whatever the underlying influences at work, the Franciscan chroniclers, terse though they are, leave us in no doubt about the actual inauguration of the Regular Observance. In 1334 John of Valle "obtained from the General Minister the exceedingly inhospitable settlement of Pisquia (Brugliano)...where...he lived in the pure and simple or literal observance of the Rule." He was accompanied by Gentilis of Spoleto and three others, but not by Paoluccio dei Trinci. The reasons for the
latter's absence, given his supposed familiarity with John and endorsement of his aspirations, can only be guessed at; they may have had something to do with his comparative youth (he was still only 25), or his great humility towards his Superiors in Foligno, either of which might render him unwilling to assert himself in a new undertaking. One point however is worth making: Brugliano lay just within the territory of Foligno - the lordship of Paoluccio's own family. Is it possible this was not a coincidence?

For John himself, it was a return to the places of his childhood, which he must have been familiar with in every detail; and inhospitable enough they evidently were, as the chroniclers say. Brugliano is one of a bowl of peaks, to the north-east of Foligno, which surround an extensive high plain lying between Colfiorito and Serravalle. To-day the plain has been drained, and even so it is still boggy in places; in the 14th century it must have been little better than one great marsh. The chroniclers paint a desolate picture of it: insalubrious vapours arose from the swamp, in which the incessant croaking of frogs gave the brothers no peace by day or night; snakes used to crawl up out of the bogs onto the firmer ground of the hillside, and the friars, to their consternation, would find them sharing their huts and even their beds; "no commerce there of men, no wine, no human solace, all without cultivation and wild; the few inhabitants of the mountain uncouth, poor, rough, their clothes the skins of birds and goats, clogs on their feet".92
What led John and his companions to this particular retreat? We can guess that it was the existence on the Brugliano hill-side of the remains of a small chapel and hermitage which, according to Jacobilli, had been built for the Franciscans by the men of Colfiorito after 1273, and had been subsequently abandoned. Here at all events the friars made their simple dwelling, again perhaps with the help of the inhabitants of Colfiorito.

Established in this, their chosen solitude, John and his companions almost disappear from the historical record. According to the chroniclers they persevered in living according to the literal observance of the Rule, in great poverty, austerity and devotion. As far as John himself is concerned, he apparently followed this way of life, remaining at Brugliano, until his death in 1351, and then he was buried at Brugliano.

As to what became of his companions, and whether his initiative was taken up elsewhere, we have but few scraps of evidence; and these are best treated in connection with the next phase of our inquiry. The whole picture of the origins of the Regular Observance, as we have pieced it together, indicates that it is to be regarded as the direct heir of the Spiritual movement. There is the connection with Angelus Clarinus, and the probable influence of the Fraticelli de paupere vita generally; there is the adherence to the literal observance of the Rule, which the chroniclers declare was the policy of John of Valle from 1334 till his death seventeen years
later, and the aspiration of his friend Paoluccio dei Trinci while they were together in the friary of Poligno; finally, there is the whole tone of the life of the future leaders of the Observance in Poligno, and of John and his comrades at Erugliano, which echoes that of St. Francis and his companions in the early days of the Order — the prominence of the lay brothers, the intense spirit of devotion, the humility and austerity, the strong eremitical emphasis. If, then, the Observance under John of Valle was the heir of the Spirituals, where did it stand on the issue of the division of the Order, and how, consequently, was it regarded by ecclesiastical, particularly Franciscan authority?

The most dramatic commentary on those questions was the act with which the Observance was founded: the concession of Brugliano to John of Valle by the Minister General, Geraldus Odonis. For, matter-of-fact though the chroniclers are about it, there should be no mistaking that this was an extraordinary, indeed unprecedented event in Franciscan history. Its effect was to establish, legally, two different levels of Franciscan observance, the literal observance for John and his companions, and (at least in theory) the Rule as interpreted by the papal declarations for the rest. This was the arrangement which the Spirituals had sought to achieve before and at the Council of Vienne, which Angelus Clarinus was still defending in his *Apologia* of 1330 to Alvarus Pelagius, which Philip of Majorca proposed to John XXII in 1328 and to Benedict XII in 1340; and, apart the short-lived
concession of Celestine V to the Spirituals of Ancona,\textsuperscript{100} the petitioners were unsuccessful in every case, and their fiercest opponents were the community of the Order itself. Yet in 1334 the arrangement was actually instituted by the Franciscan General.

Nor was that all. We should be clear that the effect was in some sense a division of the Order - the very thing which, as we saw, contemporary Franciscan legislation seemed determined to avoid.\textsuperscript{101} John and his companions made their home in a settlement which the community of the Order had actually forsaken, no doubt as part of the 13th century drift from the country sites into the towns and cities;\textsuperscript{102} and having once arrived, John himself (we have sufficient information about his comrades) remained at Brugliano for the rest of his life, and was buried there. The general picture is of an absolute difference of life-style between the hill-side hermitage and the urban convents, summed up by the difference between the literal and what we may call the Conventual observance; and the counterpart to these differences was a \textit{de facto} separation in terms of geography and of membership.

All this was the result of an act of the Franciscan General. That is strange enough; it is made still stranger by the fact that the General concerned was Geraldus Odonis, for he is normally regarded as an enemy of Franciscan poverty,\textsuperscript{103} and hence, one would think, hardly inclined to favour a reform. He it was who in 1325
and 1331 proposed that the Rule's prohibition of the reception of money should be abrogated and that Superiors should be empowered to dispense from observance of the Rule at their discretion.\textsuperscript{104} For this reason he can be regarded as symbolically the initiator of Conventualism. Yet he was also, it now turns out, the initiator of the Observant reform. How do we account for the apparent self-contradiction?

A number of explanations can be advanced. It has been suggested that the Minister General simply wanted advocates of a strict observance kept quiet, and what better way of doing it than giving them what they wanted?\textsuperscript{105} Alternatively, it is possible that he felt the need to restore his reputation in the Order and at the curia, damaged by the hostile reaction to his proposals of 1331, and saw the patronage of a reform endeavour as the best way of doing so.\textsuperscript{106} Again it has been pointed out that there was a curious similarity between John of Valle's programme and the Minister's 1331 proposals:\textsuperscript{107} both entailed doing away with the long and complex series of the papal declarations, leaving the friars to take their stand on the Rule alone - with the difference that the reformer intended to observe it to the letter, whereas the General would have it dispensed from, particularly on the point concerning the reception of money.

Whatever may be thought of these suggestions, there is, in the writer's view, one rather less machiavellian theory which deserves to be carefully considered; namely that the apparent self-contradiction in Geraldus Odonis' behaviour does not in fact require to be reconciled or
explained away: that he was perfectly serious and logical both in seeking dispenses from the Rule, and in seeking a reform through the literal observance. Might it not be that, with a realism rare in his day, he saw that the time had at last come to sanction officially different styles of life, and different standards of observance, in the one institute?

It was pointed out\(^\text{108}\) a propos of the development of Conventualism that, in the 14th century context, Geraldus Odonis' plan for dispensing from the Rule was, despite the comments of contemporaries and later historians, both realistic and honest; appropriately therefore it was also prophetic, since eventually it was indeed put into practice (in 1430 - a century after it was put forward). And on the other hand we have noted a tentative but real recognition on the part of the Franciscan authorities - soundly enough based on fact, in all conscience - that the Order was in need of reform.\(^\text{109}\) It is, in the writer's view, not at all impossible that the recognition had dawned on Geraldus Odonis, and that the concession of Brugliano to John of Valle was his response.

Should this be correct, we have to conclude that the Minister General was a much greater prophet than was suggested above; for he had the conception of a Franciscan Order in which there should be room for three officially recognised levels of observance, that of the papal declarations (which he disliked, but could not dispose of), that of the Rule dispensed from, and that
of the Rule to the letter. It took another two hundred years, full of disputes and bitterness, for this conception to be realised, with the foundation of the Capuchins (1528); and even then it was only implemented by means of a division of the one Franciscan family into three virtually autonomous branches. If it be true that Geraldus Odonis entertained the possibility of a Franciscan institute containing a triple level of observance, he becomes one of the Order's boldest and most far-sighted thinkers, and the conventional assessment of him will have to be drastically revised. If this seems a lot to ask, it is worth recalling that we have already, at an earlier stage of this study, found cause for questioning the received picture of the man: it was he who, in the Order's centre of business and administration, the friary of Avignon, used to have an "old legend" read out in the refectory, to prove it a worthy supplement to St. Bonaventure's official biography of St. Francis.\[110\]

However we approach Geraldus Odonis' concession of Brugliano to John of Valle, the importance of the act cannot be doubted: for the first time Franciscan authority gave its approval to the establishment of the literal observance as an alternative standard of life for friars to follow. Slender though the evidence is, it seems likely that this unprecedented event was made possible largely by a vital element in John's behaviour: scrupulous avoidance of any suggestion of a secession from the community of the Order. Utterly different though his
way of life was from that of the majority, and despite a measure of de facto separation, John's reformist initiative from start to finish remained strictly speaking within the bounds of the fraternity.

One apparently small point may be regarded as highly significant in this connection: the fact that John's petition was addressed to his own General Minister. It is striking that the other important requests of similar nature were directed to an authority external to the Order, that of the Holy See, that they were anathema to the Order's own hierarchy, and that they proposed the exemption of their authors from the latter's authority; so it was with the Spirituals and Philip of Majorca, and so it had been briefly enacted by Celestine V. With John of Valle, as historians have been careful to point out, the movement began and remained under the jurisdiction of the normal Superiors; such that, had they wished, they could at any time have put an end to the experiment. In this way, despite the de facto division, the threat of schism and division de jure was avoided; and it may be supposed that that was the crucial bugbear which, as we saw, haunted the Order's contemporary legislation.

There is one other small piece of evidence which suggests that John of Valle saw himself, and wished to be seen, as a full and normal member of the Order, and not in any sense a separatist: the fact that, to judge by the very silence of the chroniclers on this point, he continued to wear its normal habit. We already know that, in the
Middle Ages, the habit to a great extent symbolised the religious, and we have had plenty of opportunity to observe the identification of the Spirituals and Fraticelli with a distinctively short and shabby garment.\textsuperscript{112} Accordingly, as we have seen, it was this very point on which turned John XXII's attack on the Spirituals of Provence,\textsuperscript{113} and much of the Order's subsequent legislation against dissidence.\textsuperscript{114} All the circumstances of John of Valle's reformist initiative suggest that it was heir to the Spiritual movement; but on this one very important point he did not follow them. It is hard to doubt that, whether prompted by conviction or mere prudence, the decision was consciously taken, with a clear understanding of its symbolic significance. Its importance in gaining official approval for John's endeavour was in any case to be amply demonstrated by subsequent events.

It seems fair to conclude that, in the history of attempts to establish the literal observance as an accepted way of Franciscan living, John of Valle's policy marks an important new departure, in that it carefully avoided the threat of a secession from the Order; and we may suppose that it was only on these terms that his initiative was allowed to proceed. Indeed it must seem probable that, as has been suggested,\textsuperscript{115} Geraldus Odonis enquired closely into John's reputation among his confreres, and into the precise nature of his plans, and only granted his request when he had been satisfied on the point in question.

But if John of Valle's willingness to eschew secession was a new and key factor in the situation, we must also
realise that the General's readiness to accept his plan on those terms was equally critical and novel: for there is no reason to suppose that other Franciscan Superiors were willing to endorse similar plans on any terms at all. Indeed the tragedy of the Spirituals had largely been that when, as the Rule's 10th chapter bade them, they had "had recourse to their Ministers" to obtain the literal observance, the response had been, not willing acceptance, but persecution; and it was from this state of impasse (almost, one might say, the meeting of irresistible force and immovable object) that the whole drama of schism and heresy had unrolled. For this outcome to be avoided in the case of John of Valle, it was necessary, not for only one, but for both sides to "give" a little, to evince a minimum of flexibility: John had to show himself less than intransigent in his pursuit of literal observance, and the General, less than obdurately negative towards it. By these small but crucial concessions, as compared with other occasions, a situation of confrontation was avoided, and the first tentative reconciliation was made possible between two otherwise contradictory standpoints.

If, then, Geraldus Odonis' attitude was as vital to the reconciliation as John of Valle's, how did he come to it? It was suggested above that he had perhaps perceived the necessity for reform in the Order, and thought that Brugliano might be the starting-point. However it is possible that the catalyst of his new attitude was a
particular and concrete manifestation of the need for reform; namely the challenge — the powerful and sometimes all too successful challenge — which his Order was facing from the Fraticelli.

As we know, the fraticelli claimed, by virtue of their strict observance of the Rule, to be the true Franciscans. We have found that there was some justice in the claim, and that a perhaps surprisingly large number of their contemporaries, whether genuinely or for reasons of expediency, professed themselves convinced by it.117 This was not a situation which the canonically recognised Franciscans could tolerate. One aspect of their response, no doubt, was the part they played in Inquisitorial proceedings against the Fraticelli; but is it not possible that they hit on a far better response: to show that within the Order too the Rule was observed to the letter? If so, there could be no more suitable place to start a counter-attack than the hill-side of Brugliano: as it were an outpost overlooking the very heartland of Fraticelli success, the region of Camerino.118

Plausible though it may seem, there is, as so often, the slenderest direct evidence for such an interpretation. Just a hint may be found in a story recorded by Arnaldus de Sarnano in his Chronicle of the 24 Generals, and by Wadding and others. They recount that in 1340 Geraldus Odonis managed, with the aid of the local population, to drive out a group of Fraticelli who had settled in the Carceri — the hermitage, on the very hill-side above
Assisi, which had been much used by Francis and the first friars; and then "he there established brothers strict in penitence and austere of life" (Arnaldus) - "whom he had selected from elsewhere and there brought together" (Wadding).

Was there any connection between these austere brothers and John of Valle's enterprise? It is impossible to say. The question is given particular point and raises the whole obscure matter of whether, and in what way, the Brugliano initiative spread after 1334 - by the fact that, as we shall see, only ten years later, in 1350, the Carceri was securely in the possession of followers of Gentilis of Spoleto - John's companion in Foligno and at Brugliano, and successor in the leadership of the Observance.

Some connection therefore there may have been between the friars of Brugliano and those whom Geraldus Odonis used in 1340 to replace the Fraticelli of the Carceri. If there was, a revealing light is cast on the General's reasons for instituting the Observance. And even if there was not, we can still note that he had a clear idea of combating fraticelli austerity by the austerity of his own best friars. This idea was bound, sooner or later, to create a favourable official attitude to the Observance.

All in all we are entitled to conclude that Geraldus Odonis' concession of Brugliano to John of Valle marked a new departure in the story of reform and division in the Franciscan Order. The reformer gave promise of working
within the Order, defending its integrity—and the authority of the Church—against the attacks of heretical Fraticelli, and generally, perhaps, of raising standards of discipline; and on these terms the General was prepared to give official approval to the literal observance. So expressed, the conjunction appears logical, even obvious; but, if we bear in mind the long and bitter history of suspicion and conflict which had dogged the issue, we shall assess it as a very great achievement.

The point is made clearly enough by the extreme precariousness of the reconciliation: the old attitudes and suspicions naturally persisted in many, perhaps most quarters, and threatened at the least provocation to sweep away the new accommodation in renewed conflict. A classic illustration is provided by the first hard piece of evidence concerning John of Valle's enterprise during the 1340s. This is a bull of Clement VI, dated 29 November 1343, addressed to Geraldus Odonis' newly elected successor as Minister General, Fortanerius Vassalis. It reads as follows: "It has frequently been brought to the attention of the apostolic see that certain men, who declare that they are members of the Order of Minors and follow the Rule of St. Francis to the letter, are attempting to depart from the practice of the community of the brothers, as regards the habit, way of living, doctrine, and other approved observances of the Order; which things have given rise to disturbances and alarm in the said Order. We therefore have in mind that, by circumspect provision of the apostolic see, a wholesome
ruling shall be issued on these things - to the glory of God and the peace of the same Order - and that meanwhile it is not expeditious to do anything which would seem to give approval to the sect of such men, to the scandal of the said Order; wherefore we hereby strictly forbid you to give any graces or favours to those men, until such time as the apostolic see shall make further arrangements to regulate their position, as it shall judge expedient."

How is this missive to be interpreted? It clearly refers to friars who regarded themselves, and were regarded, as genuine members of the Order - not then to Fraticelli, whom authority, despite their claims to be true Franciscans, treated as apostates and heretics. The friars who best fitted the bull's description were John of Valle and his followers, and this, no doubt rightly, is the general interpretation of historians, including Wadding. 122 There is however one serious problem for this interpretation: the bull's reference to deviations regarding the habit and "doctrine" - both, obviously, very grave matters. John of Valle's own absolute correctness on them has already been stressed; how then are we to understand the allegations reported by the Pope? Two possibilities seem open: either the deviations were simply imputed to the strict friars by whoever had been complaining of them to the Pope, on no better ground than such irregularities normally had accompanied the literal observance; or else some of John's followers were genuinely falling into errors which he himself so
scrupulously avoided (a very real possibility, as later events were to show). Either way we can see that the very survival of the reform movement was threatened by the persistence of old attitudes - the suspicions of heresy and schism ingrained in the community of the Order, the real susceptibility to them of the reformers.

Does Pope Clement's letter throw any further light on the otherwise obscure fortunes of the movement at this period? It may be surmised that the reason for forbidding the Franciscan General to show graces or favours to the reformers was that he had in fact already done so (or at least demonstrated the intention); Wadding and others assert that such was the case. If so, the new General had been quick to endorse the benevolent policy of his predecessor. Secondly, the letter may be regarded as evidence that a certain expansion of the movement begun at Brugliano had been taking place: it is perhaps unlikely that such papal intervention would have been sought and obtained on account of a mere five friars, shut away from the rest of the Order in their mountain solitude. Once again Wadding, the greatest of Franciscan chroniclers, supports this view, asserting (though without this time quoting any source) that John of Valle had disciples "in other solitary places" besides Brugliano.

One other point in the letter, overlooked in the past, should be noted: the Pope's decision was unfavourable to the reformers; but he made very clear that it was an interim one, pending further consideration, and that in
due time a more definitive pronouncement could be expected. This bespeaks a more open mind on the whole question of the literal observance than that of, say, John XXII, or even Benedict XII, indicating a shift of position scarcely less significant than those exemplified in 1334 by John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis.

Nevertheless, in the immediate present, the Pope had called a halt to direct favouring of the Observance. It says a lot for the constancy of the Order's leadership (if rather less for its responsiveness to the voice of authority) that the next shred of evidence on the reform was an official statement of approval, emanating from the highest quarters - the General Chapter. The statutes issued at the Chapter of Venice, in 1346, contain the following paragraph (repeated in the recensions of 1351 and 1354):¹²⁵ "Further, since in our Order there have been and are some brothers outstanding in devotion and the stricter observance of our profession, the Minister and whole General Chapter desire that such brothers be benevolently treated by their Superiors and favourably nurtured in their devotion, according to the unbroken custom of our Order. And, since the Lord says through the Prophet that 'it is good and pleasant when the brethren dwell united' (cf. Psalm 132, v.1), therefore the General Minister with the aforesaid Chapter decrees hereby that henceforth the brothers dwell without distinction in the convents, according to the disposition of the Ministers and custodes. And let it be likewise in the hermitages. The foresaid prelates shall however be vigilant not to send
any brothers to reside in the hermitages, unless firm and proven in regular observance, where this can be done without disturbance."

There are a number of important points here. There can be little doubt that the "strict observance" referred to was that founded by John of Valle. It is identified with the life of hermitages (such as Brugliano), and a clear contradistinction is made to the life of the "convents" - the town sites in which, precisely, Conventualism flourished; the contrast being underlined by the anxiety lest unproven brothers be sent to the hermitages and (one infers) fail to achieve the austere standards there demanded. Thus was the existence of two levels of Franciscan observance given official recognition. However, the two levels found their place within one organisation: it is clear that the regular Franciscan Superiors can send brothers to stay in the hermitages no less than to the convents in their areas of authority, and it is at least hinted that some traffic between the two types of settlement had in fact been taking place. And the Order's highest legislative authority was, on these terms, giving unequivocal support to a movement for the literal observance of St. Francis' Rule. Finally, we have the clearest evidence so far that this movement had indeed since 1334 spread beyond Brugliano. A number of hermitages are by now involved; and the reference to Provincial Ministers, in the plural, may indicate that the Brugliano experiment was being pursued in other Provinces than Umbria.
The general picture thus presented by the Statutes of 1346 is of a steady and harmonious development of the reform. It is as though the old dangers and suspicions revealed in Clement VI's letter of 1343 had been overcome, and the Order was moving towards a consummation of the accord struck between John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis twelve years earlier.

But twelve years were too short to nullify the influence of the past. The encyclical addressed to the Provincial Ministers by William Parinier in 1349, the year after he succeeded Portanerius Vassalis as General, contains the following ordinance: 126 "No brother shall be allowed to reside in the hermitages unless he is willing to conform with the other brothers as regards the habit and unless he adheres to the catholic faith and does not criticise the community of the Order. Nor shall anyone be placed in the new hermitages without my special licence, and they shall be governed according to the regulation which I issued that year at the Portiuncula".

These words convey a sense of undisguised alarm, of reaction to an emergency situation. The General was taking personal and direct control of the reform question; this is shown by the requirement for his own special licence, and even more by the important initiative (of which there is no other record, hence no information as to date) of drawing up regulations for the hermitages. In taking charge he was, like his predecessors Odonis and Vassalis, showing a real concern for the reform issue, and acting as the true leader of his Order on a crucial matter.
But it is fairly clear that he was also doing something else: making a perhaps desperate attempt to assert control over a movement seemingly pursuing the familiar path to conflict and ruin – peculiarity in dress, condemnation of the laxer friars, and doctrinal error.

The General's attempt failed; the very next year, 1350, a chain of events began which was to lead the reform initiative to disaster. Preceding by a further year the death of John of Valle, this development marks overtly the end of his leadership of the Observance, and the beginning of the reform's short second phase under John's comrade of Foligno and Brugliano, Gentilis of Spoleto.

The catastrophe was set in train by a bull of Pope Clement VI, dated December 13. It was addressed in the first instance to the Guardians of four Franciscan hermitages in the dioceses of Assisi and Spoleto, the Carceri, Eremita, Monte Lucó and Giano, and secondly to the friaries of the two dioceses. The bull commends the "laudable purpose" of the eremitical brothers, which it states, had been explained to the Pope by Gentilis, and which it expresses in the following striking and unambiguous terms: "to observe inviolate now and in future the Rule of (St. Francis) in that purity and primal simplicity in which he wrote it and gave it out" – as circumstantial a definition of the literal observance, as it was understood by Spirituals and Fraticelli, as one could hope to find. Then the arrangement is made which Gentilis had evidently requested: "..inclined to your
petitions, we concede in perpetuity to you and to your successors, guardians or vicars and brothers of the said settlements, that you and they can freely, lawfully and unshakeably observe such Rule in such primal simplicity; nor shall any superior or prelate of the said Order presume to impede, perturb or molest you in this observance."

With the literal observance thus authorised and guaranteed by the highest authority, the necessary steps were taken to ensure its continuance in practice: each hermitage was to be occupied by twelve brothers, who could be either already members of the Order, or new recruits from the lay world (the latter provision in effect giving the strict brothers the right to conduct a novitiate); these friars were actually to be selected by the Minister of the Province of Umbria, but — a hard-headed and, no doubt, realistic precaution — if he should refuse or prevaricate, the task should be carried out by the Guardian of the Carceri (which by this provision is accorded a certain primacy among the reformed settlements). A further binding obligation was laid upon the Provincial Minister, that of choosing suitable Guardians from among the friars in the hermitages.

The provisions of the bull deserve close scrutiny, for it had the effect of a bombshell on the relations between the literal observance movement and the community of the Order. There can be no doubt that it marks the end of the era of reconciliation and co-operation inaugurated by John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis: the context which all too clearly it points to is one of discord.
Many commentators, from contemporary friars to historians of the present day, have gone further, asserting that the bull's provisions amounted to a division of the Order; and they have judged its apparent architect Gentilis accordingly. It will be enough to record the assessment of one contemporary whom we have already met, Arnaldus de Sarnano, Minister of the Province of Aquitaine, and author of the Chronicle of the 24 Generals (mostly written about 1368): 128 "In the same year" (for Arnaldus 1352, but this must be a mistake) "a certain lay brother called Gentilis of Spoleto of the Province of St. Francis and certain others, seduced by some fatuous zeal, had the audacity to oppose themselves to the whole community of the Order and attempt to divide it with a great schism." 129 The interpretation was widespread, and it will come as no surprise that, in Wadding's words, "this privilege (Pope Clement's bull) subsequently however gave rise to commotion and discord in the Order." 130

It is most important to observe that Arnaldus' interpretation is tendentious and unfounded; for otherwise we shall misunderstand exactly how the accord between John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis -- as undoubtedly it had done -- went astray, and where responsibility for this turn of events lay. In one sense much of Pope Clement's effort was aimed, not at splitting, but at preserving the unity of the Order: the Minister of Umbria is actually ordered to act as Superior for the strict friars, in the first place nominating them, and secondly choosing their
Guardians; this is the very reverse of an attempt to place them beyond his jurisdiction and set up an alternative authority. We can say therefore that the Pope was taking the necessary steps to keep the reform movement inside the Order, just as John of Valle had done. What else then was he doing in the bull - what in fact made it necessary at all? If we look carefully, we shall see that his aim was neither more nor less than to approve the literal observance of the Rule, and to protect it against any attempt at molestation or suppression - even the one apparent transfer of real authority to the strict brothers, the power to choose Guardians should the Provincial Minister default, comes under this heading. We shall conclude that there is indeed in the bull a restriction on the authority of Superiors vis-a-vis the reform, but it is a restriction of a specific and curious kind; elimination of the power to suppress the reform. To put it the other way, the Pope was ordering the Franciscan Order to allow the Brugliano experiment to continue.

This immediately suggests that the Order was in fact minded to put an end to the experiment; and such indeed was the case, according to two of the more important chroniclers. Mariano of Florence in the early 16th century,¹ and Jacobilli in the 17th,² both assert that the then Minister of Umbria had disbanded the strict brothers from their hermitages and dispersed them among the other friaries - with the result, as Jacobilli points out, that it became impossible for them to follow the
literal observance. There is no necessity - despite Jacobilli's suspicion of diabolic intervention - to impugn the Minister's motives; he may simply have wanted to strengthen the religious life of his Province by mingling the stricter friars with the others, and it has been pointed out that in 1349 and 1350 there might be a particular reason for doing so - the Black Death, which made great demands on the Church's parochial ministry, and also carried off large numbers - perhaps as many as a third - of the friars of the city convents. Whatever the motive, the fact seems to be that the reform movement was faced by extinction, and it was this prospect which prompted Gentilis of Spoleto to seek papal guarantees of its survival.

The point is extremely important, for it leads to the conclusion that the accord established by John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis was breached first by the Community, not by the reformers. It was stressed in the consideration of that accord that it was a two-sided affair, in which the vital contribution of the former was the official approbation - unprecedented in Franciscan history - of the literal observance. Likewise the subsequent development of the reform was wholly based on the Order's acceptance - expressed for example in the Statutes of 1346 - of a dual standard of observance within the fraternity. It was these conditions which the Umbrian Minister threatened by his policy; and it will be noted that Clement VI took the minimal action necessary to guard against the threat: he was careful to avoid an
official division of the Order, his provisions amounting to a formal guarantee of the continuance of the dual standard, and nothing more. In that sense the Pope and the Franciscan lay brother were the defenders of the 1334 arrangement, not its attackers, and the Provincial Minister was departing from the policy of Geraldus Odonis and the two succeeding Generals. It was, perhaps, part of the tragic complexity of the situation that, in acting to preserve the 1334 settlement, Gentilis and Clement were themselves forced in one respect to depart from it. Gentilis required, and received, a formal guarantee, which he obtained from an authority external to the Order, the Holy See; John of Valle never turned to outside authority, and had no official guarantee at all.

Seen in the context just sketched, the bull of 1350 appears essentially ad hoc - the defensive reaction to a specific threat. However this need not rule out the possibility that it should be regarded in another way: as the sequel to the same Pope's bull of 1343. For, although that had not been favourable to the reform, it was clearly stated to be provisional, allowing for further consideration of the issue and an eventual more definitive pronouncement. There is nothing to prevent us regarding the provisions of 1350 - which, as we have seen, merely underwrote the 1334 arrangements, and which were issued "in perpetuity" - as representing the Pope's final and considered decision. In this case the discussions evidently held with Gentilis of Spoleto
would have been but part of the process of deliberation. That this was indeed so is partly confirmed by the contemporary Arnaldus de Sarnano,134 and by Addien,135 who respectively report that "notable men" and "noble men" had supported Gentilis' case at the curia. Placed in this perspective, Clement VI's enactment of 1350 takes on considerable significance; he was, after the eccentric Celestine V, the first Pope to undertake to give the literal observance a permanent and guaranteed place in the Franciscan scene; and, unlike his predecessor, he intended its place to be within the body of the Order, not outside it. This was as revolutionary a conception in the context of previous papal attitudes as that of John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis in the context of Franciscan ones, and we are surely entitled to feel that it was both bold and laudable. It is perhaps pleasing to record such a judgment on a Pope whose press has generally not been of the best.

So far our consideration of the bull of 1350 has tended to stress its continuity (overlooked by many commentators) with the history of the reform since its beginning in 1334. This has some importance, for there is one odd and very striking discontinuity, revealed by the bull itself: it is addressed in the first instance to four hermitages; Erugliano is not one of them. This, taken together with the fact that John of Valle did not apparently participate in Gentilis' initiative (he died
of course the following year), raises the whole obscure question of what might be called the internal development of the movement since its inception.

The bull of Clement VI is a key piece of evidence on the question, since it shows that by 1350 the literal observance movement had spread from Brugliano to at least four other hermitages in the same Province. This is as it were the confirmation of the hints of expansion that we have picked up for the years 1340, 1343 and 1346. On the other hand we have already seen that, as far as his biographers knew, John of Valle did not stir from Brugliano till his death (nor even after, since he was buried there). The natural inference is that the expansion was the work of Gentilis. It is possible that it was undertaken with John's advice, even at his direction - the two men had after all been together for some time, first in Foligno, then at the occupation of Brugliano. Nevertheless the absence of Brugliano from the bull of 1350 remains a puzzle, and cannot but suggest that the approach to Clement VI was in some sense an independent initiative of Gentilis'.

Whosoever the inspiration, expansion meant an increased number of strict friars (John of Valle, it will be recalled, had started out with a mere four companions). One brother who, at some point unknown, attached himself to the reformed group was the former companion of John and Gentilis, and sharer of their ideals, Paoluccio dei Trinci. A casual word of Wadding's would suggest that
at one stage Paoluccio was at Erugliano, hence in John's company;\textsuperscript{136} the evidence of 1355 however places him at the hermitage of Eremita,\textsuperscript{137} one of those in the bull of 1350, and so under Gentilis' influence.

This fact suggests a speculation (it is no more) which may be of some interest. Is it possible that some of Wadding's "noble men" who supported Gentilis of Spoleto's case at the curia were connections of the Trinci family Establishment? This is on the face of it no less likely than that the otherwise quite unknown lay-brother of Spoleto should have been able to interest high status figures in his cause. The point is of some significance, since on one critical later occasion the influence of Paoluccio's family was virtually to determine the whole future of the reform; it may also be borne in mind that Erugliano itself lay within the Trinci domain of Foligno, and that in 1340 Paoluccio's uncle Paolo, bishop of the town, explained Philip of Majorca's programme for the literal observance to Benedict XII. Paolo died in 1348, but it is quite possible that some relation or connection would be willing to speak up for the literal observance.

Be that as it may, it was largely the very expansion of the reform under Gentilis of Spoleto which brought about its downfall. It has already been argued that Clement VI's bull of 1350 was a defensive reaction to a threat from the Community (in the person of the Provincial of Umbria). Further, the provisions of the bull were so designed as to keep the literal observance
within the Order, not to take it outside; nor, despite the affirmations of some commentators, did they constitute a meaningful exemption of the strict friars from their Conventual Superiors: the only power removed from the latter was that of hindering or suppressing the reform. Yet this alone, as Wadding shows, was more than the Community was prepared to tolerate, and its leaders determined on the suppression of the reform: a melancholy commentary, to put it no higher, on the influence exercised by the past, and on the Community's concern for its own authority as against the promise of reform. Wadding's brief analysis clearly reveals these sentiments and their connection with the issue of expansion: 138 "They were afraid that these friars" (the beneficiaries of the bull of 1350) "would be joined by others, and that when their number had increased they would make trouble for the whole fraternity, and thus that from this small spark would arise a great blaze of discord; the more to be feared since already, under Clement V and John XXII, the blaze had been extinguished" - at what cost to the fraternity, no-one doubtless needed reminding.

It is fair to conclude that, by this point, the reconciliation initiated by John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis was defunct, and that the direct responsibility lay with the Community, whose actions and attitudes, however understandable in the light of the past, do not perhaps appear particularly creditable.
And then an extraordinary change came over the situation. Gentilis of Spoleto and his associates destroyed their own position, by falling back into the familiar and fatal pattern of other movements for the literal observance; they made as if to throw off the authority of the Order, and they compromised themselves on the issue of orthodoxy. In so doing they transgressed the clear ordinance of the bull which they themselves had obtained, cast doubt on their sincerity in the discussions which had preceded it, and fully justified the inaccurate construction which the Community had placed upon it. Thus they themselves guaranteed, not the survival of the reform movement, but its suppression.

The fateful nature of this turn of events needs no emphasis, and it is not altogether easy to explain or understand. On the one hand it was the very reverse of the policy followed by John of Valle, Gentilis' close associate at Foligno and Brugliano; and on the other it realised in every point the fears concerning the reform expressed in Clement VI's bull of 1343, and William Farinier's encyclical of 1349. These points suggest two perhaps fruitful approaches: Gentilis' drastic change of policy may be seen as the consummation of his presumed independence of John in the process of expansion during the 1340s and in the initiative which produced the bull of 1350; and secondly, if he became effectively the leader of an independent movement, it is plausible that it should have been gradually infected by the schismatic and unorthodox ideas evidently still rife in the 1340s,
whereas the community at Erugliano remained steadfastly uncontaminated. In this case the movement's actions, no less than the Community reaction to the bull of 1350, can be seen as a reflection of the baleful influence of the past, and the only group who resisted that influence were the friars of Erugliano. One puzzle still remains: was Gentilis already intent on schism when he obtained the bull of 1350, which in no way countenanced such a course; or was it satisfaction in seeing the literal observance guaranteed, albeit within the Order, which prompted the plan to go further, and escape the Order altogether? Possibly the truth lies somewhere in between: we may suspect that schismatic inclinations were always present in potential in a number of brothers, and it only required the small stimulus of the 1350 concession to release them in full force.

In any event the group adopted a distinctive habit, poor and short, similar to that of the Spirituals. There was perhaps a certain logic in this: they had been permitted the literal observance, and such a habit had from the start been its chief symbol. Equally it was, as we have abundantly seen, the sign of setting themselves apart from the community of the Order, and was categorically forbidden by the General Statutes. And, to confirm their separatist intention, the brothers now refused, according to Wadding, to have anything to do with the other friars, and rejected the authority of the General Minister: a plain violation of the terms of Clement VI's bull.
Having thus defied the ordinances of their Order and of the Holy See, Gentilis and his comrades proceeded to flirt with heresy, by receiving into their fellowship men who either were suspected or were known to be the holders of unorthodox opinions. True, their intention — so they said — was quite above board, namely to persuade these men of their errors, and they are reported to have thrown out those who persisted in them. Even so they were technically at fault, for their canonical duty was to report all suspects to the Inquisition, and pending inquiries have nothing to do with them.

It seems likely that we have here a tragic outcome of one of the presumed reasons for the original establishment of the reform: its function as a counterweight to the Fraticelli de paupere vita. The two groups had everything in common, bar their views on the authority of the Church in general and the Franciscan Order in particular; in an important sense they had more in common than the reformed and unreformed members of the canonically recognised fraternity. What could be more likely than that some actual or potential Fraticelli should have wished to investigate this alternative embodiment of the literal observance, and that the strict friars should have as it were welcomed them back to the fold, thinking by subsequent conversion to fulfill their assigned function as combatants of heresy?

This is their one error for which it is possible to have sympathy; and it was the more tragic because it presented the Community with its strongest grounds for the
suppression of the reform.

This course of action was discussed and decided upon at the General Chapter held at Assisi in 1354. It must be said that it was subsequently executed with considerable political skill by the General Minister, William Farinier - the man who, in his encyclical of 1349, had revealed some determination to take upon himself the direction of the reform. We may suppose that, in now acting to suppress it, he had decided to cut his losses. What his feelings were in doing so, and whether in particular he had any sense of regret or sorrow, must be left an open question.

The delegates assembled at Assisi in 1354 first thought to get rid of Gentilis and his followers by laying the whole matter before a full consistory of the Cardinals - essentially the way in which the case of the Spirituals had been disposed of. The prudent General thought otherwise: he foresaw a public scandal, powerful interventions on behalf of the strict brothers, and an outburst of conflict within the Order itself (and no doubt, since all these had accompanied the struggle between Spirituals and Community, he was right). He therefore prevailed upon the delegates (whose impetuous approach presumably reflected their anger over the affair) to leave it to him to dispose of the question with the minimum of fuss.142

He did not disappoint them. First he was assured of the insubordination of Gentilis and his group. Accidentally or by design he had occasion, according to Wadding, to give an order to one of Gentilis' followers.
Gentilis refused to let the friar carry it out, asserting, in contradiction to the provisions of the bull of 1350, that the General had no further authority over his band. Farinier then instituted a secret investigation into the doings of the eremitical brothers, and the story of their consorting with heretics came out. So armed the General privately took the matter to Clement VI's successor in the Holy See, Innocent VI. He laid before him "the dangers of a prospective schism in the Order, and of the graver strife which would ensue than had occurred before under Clement V"; and the Pope readily agreed to the revocation of the concession granted by his predecessor, and the dissolution of Gentilis' congregation.

This was but the first prong of the attack; the next desirable step was to deal with the ring-leader of the separatists, Gentilis. This, Farinier achieved by enlisting the intervention of Cardinal Albornoz, papal legate in Italy and holder of considerable powers both temporal and spiritual. At the legate's command Gentilis and two companions were arrested while on a journey to Rome, and imprisoned in the friary of Orvieto. "Thus imprisoned their commander and leader...it was easy to subdue the rest, and to dissolve the congregation". Those who remained were simply reintegrated into the normal life of the Order. Among them was Paoluccio dei Trinci, and he rejoined the friary of his native town. So, efficiently and silently, William Farinier organised the suppression of an experiment which had begun with John of Valle in 1334.
There can be no doubt that legally he was justified in doing so; and it may be agreed that he was also justified morally. It is plain that the new departure marked by the agreement between John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis had foundered, falling into the old pattern of conflict and schism; and so it was perhaps as well that the quickest possible end should be put to the affair. As to the outcome itself, it is the clearest indication of the knife-edge on which the reconciliation of 1334 rested (and thus new testimony to the wisdom and originality of the reconciliation's authors). Already Clement VI's bull of 1343, and William Farinier's encyclical of 1349, revealed how powerfully an atavistic resurgence of divisive attitudes threatened the new accord. The first divisive breach of the accord was made by the Community; the result was Pope Clement's bull of 1350. In its reaction the Community was again at fault, seeing a schism where there was none, and determining on the suppression of the reform. There then followed the much graver fault of Gentilis of Spoleto: to embrace the very schism which the Community imagined, and which the bull he had obtained in no way authorised. This was an absolute departure from the policy consistently pursued by John of Valle, Gentilis' companion of Foligno and Brugliano, and its effect was decisive: there can be little doubt that the flirtation with heresy was simply a convenient pretext, and that the vital reason for the suppression of Gentilis' enterprise was his attempt to achieve independence of the Order.
And so his congregation was destroyed; on that point the chroniclers are definite. However, the destruction left behind it three rather curious loose ends, and these should not be overlooked.

In a sense the first is purely academic, but it is central and striking enough to deserve mention. It is the actual bull of 1355 in which Innocent VI revoked the concession made by his predecessor to the four hermitages of Gentilis' congregation. This is an untidy and logically distorted document, and the reason is that it contains a fundamental self-contradiction: its purpose and effect is to put an end to the separatism of the strict friars, by requiring their obedience to their Superiors; but it purports to achieve this by revoking a document which gave no brief either to disobedience or to separatism! Innocent, in other words, was fully in agreement with his predecessor, while appearing to disagree. The choice illustration of this situation is his order that in future the friars of the four hermitages should only be chosen by the Provincial Minister, and that the Guardians and other brothers should be subject to him; these were precisely the provisions on which Clement VI had insisted in 1350. And there is one other particular curiosity to note. Innocent's bull was supposedly the revocation of this predecessor's, and accordingly mentioned some of its terms; but it contains no reference whatever to the by far most important provision of 1350: the perpetual guarantee of the literal observance. This is a notable and curious omission.
The second loose end left by the suppression in 1355 of Gentilis of Spoleto's congregation relates to a historical puzzle of a different kind, and potentially of much greater historical significance. Gentilis himself, as we saw, was imprisoned in the Franciscan friary of Orvieto. Eventually, not very long before his death (1362), he was released; and the chroniclers furnish the extraordinary information that he ended his days, reconciled and at peace, in of all places - Brugliano.146

This single piece of information raises an obscure but extremely important issue. If it is already remarkable that the one-time rebel should have been allowed to return to the former scene of his austere life, it seems inconceivable that a dying friar should have existed there on his own. If then others were there, who were they, where did they come from, and what was their manner of life? Is it possible that they were in fact the very same community as John of Valle had founded, and that they had been unaffected by the events of 1355?147 We have already seen that Gentilis appears to have been leading a movement independent of John and of Brugliano, and that he embarked in the end on a policy the very opposite of John's. More particularly Brugliano was notably not included in the bull of 1350; in consequence it was not affected by Innocent VI's supposed revocation of that document, the actual instrument for the suppression of the separatists. It is
therefore possible that Brugliano was quite untouched by the drama of 1350 to 1355, and that the literal observance flourished there, in peace and quiet, both before and after. This would be a conclusion of the first importance, for it has generally been assumed that no part of the literal observance movement survived the measures of 1355; it would also show the Community as both discriminating and just in its treatment of the movement, suppressing the unsound part and leaving the healthy unscathed. On so important a matter no firm conclusion is possible, for lack of evidence, and the picture is the more obscure because it seems certain that by 1368 Brugliano was deserted.

Whatever happened at Brugliano, the literal observance can confidently be said to have survived in one less direct way: in the hearts of all those who had supported the initiative begun in 1334, and more particularly, in the persons of those who had been Gentilis of Spoleto's followers; for as we saw the latter— with an anxiety as to their reception which one can only imagine— were simply re-absorbed into the convents of their Order. These friars were the third loose end left by the measures of 1355, and historically much the most important one. Later Observant writers were to suggest, perhaps rightly, that they were many, indeed that their number grew after the set-back of 1355;¹⁴⁸ but the historian of Franciscan reform will concentrate his attention on a single one of them, the scion of the ruling family of Foligno.
Of Paoluccio dei Trinci's thoughts, on his return in 1355 from Eremita to the friary of Foligno, there is no record. The movement in which he had sought to realise the literal observance had been destroyed, and he can have had few hopes for its revival. All hagiographical distortion apart, it says a great deal for his pertinacity that for the next thirteen years he demonstrably remained faithful to the ideal on which as a young man he had set his heart.

This is the more remarkable in view of the reception which awaited him in the friary. Whatever the case beforehand - and we have seen that the evidence is conflicting - there can be little doubt that after his inglorious return in 1355 he was treated by his confreres with harshness and contempt. Nothing else was to be expected: he was one of the detested schismatics, who had claimed to be better than the other brethren. According to the chroniclers he was not infrequently physically assaulted. After one particularly severe beating his face was black and blue; the lord of Foligno, his uncle Ugolino, happened to come across him in this state, discovered the reason, and promptly took him away from the friary, placing him instead in a tower in his own garden which otherwise did service as a prison.¹⁴⁹

The story may sound implausible; but Paoluccio's solitary residence in a tower for a considerable period is well attested.¹⁵⁰ His biographers assert that he there continued, if anything in intensified form, the way of life which had been his before: a life of vigils and
fasts, of prayer and contemplation, and of constant
intercession with God to restore the Order to a pristine
level of observance. This again may sound like mere
hagiography; but it is on the face of it not at all
unlikely that adversity and suffering should lead a
religious mind - and particularly perhaps a medieval one
- to intensified mortification and spiritual exercise.
Only thus, we may suppose, could Paoluccio's yearning for
the literal observance be both kept alive and satisfied.

Nor was his example without effect. As such heroic
efforts will - and did in the Middle Ages particularly -
his devotion, it seems, began to excite curiosity, and
then admiration (we have already noted a propos of
Paoluccio that in medieval eyes the bizarre and the holy
were not far apart). So great was the effect that
miraculous stories began to collect around him: Mariano
of Florence and Wadding are at pains to recount how the
citizens of Foligno saw the Trinci tower as they thought
on fire; they streamed into the garden to put out the
blaze: but all they found was Paoluccio, suspended above
the ground in spiritual rapture. Our two authors also
observe, rather more soberly, that Paoluccio and his ideal
gained adherents, whom he encouraged and fortified in
person (when they visited him in the tower), by his
prayers, and by the written word. And Wadding also
states in passing that his residence in the tower had the
licence of his Superiors.

The same point is made by Jacobilli. It is,
in one sense, fairly obvious that it must have been so,
despite the story of how Paoluccio first came to his tower; but it is nevertheless a detail of considerable importance. The clear implication is that Paoluccio's austere life apart - the life of the literal observance - had overcome the hostility he first encountered after 1355, and had won the acceptance of his Conventual Superiors; which is to say that, remarkable though it may seem, the situation established in 1334 between John of Valle and Geraldus Codonis had been successfully recreated, in miniature, in the friary of Foligno. This observation prompts a speculation. If ever in his hours of meditation Paoluccio reflected (as surely he must have done) on the fate of Gentilis of Spoleto's congregation, can he have failed to realise that the literal observance would only ever be achieved within the Order, and with the consent of its Superiors?

This is in a sense the vital question with which to approach the events of the year 1368 - the year of destiny for Paoluccio and the literal observance movement. In 1368 Paoluccio's thirteen years of unswerving devotion were crowned with the result which he had prayed for, but which in human terms there was no reason to expect: a fresh start was made with reform, on precisely the same basis as that of 1334. The literal observance was once again officially established within the Franciscan Order, and the necessary permission was given, once again, by the Minister General.

It may well seem astonishing that, after all that had happened, the Order was willing to make one more try to
accommodate the strict ideal; and we are entitled to wonder what considerations moved the General in reaching his decision. The question is well placed. At the concrete, if possibly superficial, level of actual events, his considerations were largely of a political nature: in a friendly sort of way he was the victim of a well-prepared plot mounted by the Trinci family of Foligno. We may suppose that it was the supreme proof in Paoluccio's life of the importance of being well born.

The occasion for the Trinci stratagem was the simple fact that in 1368 a Provincial Chapter of the Umbrian Province was due to be held. The member of the family then holding the lordship of Foligno, Trincia by name, persuaded the Provincial authorities to celebrate the Chapter in the friary of his town. There was nothing unusual about such a request, and Trincia was particularly well placed to make it: as a good member of his family's religio-political Establishment, he had received the title of Vicar of the Church from the Papacy's warrior legate in Italy, Cardinal Albornoz, and indeed only the previous year had been confirmed in the post by Urban V for a further ten years. This same Trincia was cousin to the austere Franciscan living at the time in a tower in his own garden.

The arrangement for the Provincial Chapter ensured the presence within Trincia's headquarters of the Minister of Umbria, Tommaso Racani, and his senior friars. The Minister was a man of some significance, Master of Theology, and an unsuccessful candidate for the Generalship
It would seem however that the Trinci stratagem went deeper than this. The Provincial Chapter of 1368 was presided over by the very man who the previous year had beaten Racani to the Generalship, Thomas of Frignano. Perhaps this was pure chance; but Trincia dei Trinci is said to have been a close friend of the new General's, and it may well have been, as Mariano of Florence indicates, that this had something to do with the General's appearing at a Provincial Chapter.

Certainly the influential gathering gave Paoluccio his chance. According to Mariano's Life he had already done a lot of useful spadework, by his example and encouragement building up a following in the friary, and through it familiarising his Superiors with the idea of a formal establishment of the literal observance. He now, according to Jacobilli's Life, positively implored his cousin to secure a concession from his friend the General.

Trincia went about the job with great skill. As was to be expected, he supplied the physical needs of the Chapter. He was already known as a friend of the Order, but this time he quite outdid himself in the provision of alms and other favours - never the while mentioning Paoluccio - until the good friars were positively overcome with gratitude. Accordingly, once the business of the Chapter was over, a deputation including (as was both proper and natural) the General Minister went to call on Trincia, to give heartfelt thanks for his generosity.

Mariano adds the detail that they were invited to a meal,
and fared particularly well; it sounds like imaginative embroidery, but need not be. In any case the deputation was profuse in its thanks, and added, very naturally, that if there was anything which they in return could do for their patron, they would be delighted.

It was the situation which Trincia had been waiting for— which indeed, it is not too fanciful to believe, the whole operation was calculated to achieve. He had, according to the chroniclers, been carefully primed by his cousin; he replied that whatever he had done had been for the love of God and devotion to the Order; however, since they were asking, he did have just one little favour to request: that Paoluccio might be given the hermitage of Erugliano (which of course lay in the family domain), there to serve God in poverty and austerity with four or five companions. At this point, it is said, the local friars who were in the delegation (were they hand picked?) added their voices to Trincia's, begging that the request be granted.

The General, apparently, made no difficulty about conceding it. The only reflection attributed to him by the chroniclers is that, since Paoluccio was a lay brother, simple and unlettered, there was no reason to withhold consent. This would suggest that he regarded the matter as unimportant.

It was only on his return to the friary that he began to have second thoughts. According to Wadding a number of brothers there immediately pointed out to him the implications of what he had done, and the likelihood
of future discord resulting from it. The more he thought about it, the more troubled he became, calling to mind the upheavals of the past, and with what difficulty the Order entrust to him had surmounted them. The chroniclers assure us that he spent a sleepless night; and the next day he went back to Trincia, and asked him to release him from the ill-considered favour granted the previous day, which "even if the Pope had asked him, he ought not to have granted." (One notes that, however unhappily, the Minister regarded even an oral concession as binding unless renounced by the beneficiary).

But the lord of Foligno was not to be thus trifled with. Up to this point he had been all benevolence; now he received the General's plea with great displeasure, and insisted on the confirmation of the concession already given. Thomas of Frignano was overcome by the display of wrath from his friend and benefactor, and gave way. Thus the literal observance was officially established at Frugliano for the second time.

To modern eyes it may seem extraordinary that historically so important a development should be brought about in such a way. It should however be borne in mind that in the Middle Ages generally - and perhaps especially in the disturbed conditions of 14th century Italy - the secular power was inclined to exert a more extensive direct influence on affairs ecclesiastical than we are accustomed to. The point may be put another way, relating directly to the material of the present study. Trancia dei Trinci was the patron of a particular form of
religious life, embraced by his cousin; in that sense he was no different from the lords of Camerino, his neighbours to the north, or from his contemporary Duke Louis of Durazzo in the kingdom of Naples, who also patronised a form of religious life, and one in most respects identical; the only difference was that the one favoured a canonically orthodox movement, and the others the rebel Fraticelli de paupere vita.\textsuperscript{156}

It is perhaps natural to wonder how far Trincia's attitude had been shared by earlier members of his family, and this raises the obscure but important question regarding a possible Trinci involvement in the reform from its beginning. Paoluccio, we know, had formed his ideals of strict observance as early as the 1320s; moreover his only brother, Francesco (of whom very little else is known), also joined the Franciscan Order, and eventually shared Paoluccio's life at Brugliano.\textsuperscript{157} The fact that Brugliano lay in Foligno territory may itself be significant (it is certain that after 1368 the Trincis were the chief benefactors of the community there); we have noted that Paoluccio's uncle Paolo was fully conversant with the ideals of Philip of Majorca - and presumably had a measure of sympathy for them - and we have speculated whether the "noble men" who supported Gentilis of Spoleto at the curia before 1350 were not Trinci connections. It was Paoluccio's uncle Ugolino who carried him off to the tower in his garden, thereby enabling him to follow the literal observance unmolested. All these pointers add up to an important possibility; that
the crucial factor in the history of the 14th century
Observance should be sought, not in the actions of
friars and their prelates which fill the foreground of
the picture, but somewhere in the background: in the
religious taste of the rulers of an Italian city state.

Whatever be the case for the period from 1334, this
was demonstrably true of the events of 1368; and the
situation invites a further reflection. In examining
Conventualism we discovered that the Franciscan
authorities regarded outside influence as a major threat
to the discipline of the Order; thus the Farinerian
Statutes of 1354 included the following enactment: "We
command on obedience...that no brother, personally or
through an intermediary, shall persuade, or cause to be
persuaded, any prelate, king or prince, commune or town,
or any person outside our Order, that a change ought to be
made in the state of our Order..." The relations of
the Trincis - especially Trincia - with the literal
observance movement must be taken as a classic instance
of what the capitular fathers had in mind, and the long
term result was in fact a drastic "change in the state"
of the Order. It is ironic that the effect of the change,
thus illegally initiated, should have been, not to under¬
mine discipline, but to strengthen it.

Nor should there be any doubt as to the magnitude of
Trincia dei Trinci's intervention in gaining the General's
consent to a fresh start for the literal observance.
The decision was criticised immediately by some friars,
and soon heartily regretted by Thomas of Frignano himself;
and, in the light of the Order's general attitudes to reformist moves, not to mention its recent experience with Gentilis of Spoleto, nothing else could be expected. The full gravity of what he had done was however brought home to the General in a more positive and alarming way; before the year was out he found himself accused of heresy, and suspended from office; and one of the grounds of the charge was the concession to Paoluccio dei Trinci.  

The principal accusers were none other than Tommaso Racani, the Provincial of Umbria - who had been present at the Chapter in Foligno, and so had witnessed the negotiation with Trincia - and his predecessor as Provincial, one brother William, now bishop of Narni; and these two were supported in the background by the Cardinal Protector of the Order, Nicola of Bessa. This grouping of personalities suggests that there was more in the move against Frignano than meets the eye: Racani had been his disappointed rival for the Generalship the previous year, and his candidacy had been backed by the Cardinal Protector; both men therefore might well bear Frignano a grudge. On the other hand there is little doubt that some genuine fears underlay the charge against the General. The bishop of Narni, brother William, had the reputation of an implacable opponent of the Fraticelli, and as recently as January 1368 Urban V had created him Inquisitor in, among other regions, Umbria and the Marches. These were both areas of considerable Fraticelli strength; there was every reason to fear that the effect of Frignano's hasty action would simply
be to swell their numbers: that was effectively what had happened with Gentilis of Spoleto - and Paoluccio had been a follower of his. We, with hindsight, know that such fears were quite unfounded; but to contemporaries the General Minister's concession might well seem an act of crass stupidity, and, in consequence, an unpardonable dereliction of responsibility towards his Order.

The matter was, evidently, a grave one, and Pope Urban V referred it to a commission of three Cardinals. They seem to have worked on it in the closing months of 1369, and the outcome was for Frignano a happy one: more than a hundred witnesses made depositions in his favour, declaring his virtues and the "evil counsel" of his accusers, and, in early 1370 in a splendid public ceremony in St. Peter's, he was completely exonerated, and honourably restored to his former office.

It was, no doubt, a personal triumph, and it seems to have paved the way for future success: one of the three Cardinals on the commission was Pietro Rogerio, who the same year was to ascend the papal throne as Gregory XI, and who in 1372 nominated Frignano Patriarch of Grado; six years later Urban VI raised him to the purple.

Nevertheless it is legitimate to feel that Frignano had not cut a particularly impressive figure in his dealings with the Trinci family in 1368. If he was not tricked, he was certainly lured into giving official permission for the literal observance. He did so with an extreme lack of reflection, and, so far as one can tell, without any grasp of the possible implications - without,
it follows, any deep appreciation of the need for reform or commitment to it; and he cannot be said to have improved his "image" by changing his mind overnight, and then being deflected from his new stand by the displeasure of his secular patron. If, then, he was to prove historically one of the greatest benefactors of the reform, it was first by accident, not design, and then actually against his will. He thus stands, with regard to the reform, in a very different position to that assigned earlier to Geraldus Odonis and his two successors, up to the year 1349. It is not the least irony of an involved story that the least convinced General should have been the greatest instrument for the success of the literal observance.

And indeed it may be that, in the long term, the chief beneficiary of the cardinatial inquiry of 1369-70 was not so much the suspect Minister, but the movement he had so unreflectingly launched. If Frignano was exonerated of any heretical intentions, we are bound to assume that the new Brugliano experiment - which, as one of the grounds for the charge, must have been closely looked at - was likewise given a clean bill of health. It cannot but have promised well for the movement that one of the satisfied investigators was shortly to be made Pope and, as Gregory XI, was to display the keenest interest in the cause of Franciscan reform.162

It must be said that the infant literal observance movement was in need of all the support it could get. For
one thing it may very well have felt the backwash of Frignano's suspension from the Generalate, just a few months after the permission to withdraw to Brugliano had been given. Jacobilli - our only source on this point - asserts that Paoluccio was molested by persons unnamed (presumably Umbrian friars), and that, to protect him, his cousin Trincia once again removed him to the tower in his garden. There may be some confusion here with the previous episode of the tower, but the general drift of events seems in itself quite likely: Frignano was, however unwillingly, the de facto patron of the reform initiative, and his chief enemy was in the best possible position to make trouble for Paoluccio, that of Provincial Minister. There is every reason to suppose that the latter's views will have been shared by some of his confreres; for one thing it will be recalled that, when Frignano first broke the news of his Brugliano concession to the friary of Foligno, he was immediately taken to task by "a number of brothers". If, then, Tommaso Racani was minded to lead what we might almost call a counter-revolution against the literal observance, his plan was, as Jacobilli confirms, soon nipped in the bud, for on 29 January 1369 Urban V nominated him bishop of Assisi. It was, perhaps, an opportune way of removing a discordant influence from the scene; and we may guess that, assuming he had indeed been away, it enabled Paoluccio to return to Brugliano.

The fact that Brugliano was the spot chosen for the new reform endeavour should not be passed over without
comment; but it is not easy to know exactly how to interpret it. This was of course the place where many years before John of Valle, the friend of Paoluccio's youth, had been authorised to follow the literal observance, and where he was buried; there also lay the bones of Gentilis of Spoleto, Paoluccio's other comrade of Poligno and in the literal observance. Paoluccio himself had probably spent some time there, under his two friends' tutelage. Brugliano, we saw, had evidently not been part of the separatist movement which Gentilis eventually led; it therefore escaped the condemnation which befell the four hermitages of Gentilis' congregation, and his return thither in 1362 suggests that at that point it was still inhabited; if so, the situation soon changed, for on Paoluccio's arrival in 1368 he found it deserted. Finally, as we know, Brugliano lay within the territory of Paoluccio's family. Any or all of these considerations may have been instrumental in the choice of the place in 1368.

Paoluccio's emotions on his arrival with four or five companions can only be imagined - though it is a reasonable assumption that his heart was light. But he and the ideal he represented were not yet quite out of the wood. The hermitage was as desolate a spot as John of Valle had found it. There was the small chapel dedicated to St. Bartholomew, and what was left of the huts which had served as a home to their forerunners in the literal observance; and, for the rest, the great marsh, the stony and uncultivated hill-side, the isolation. It was
more than Paoluccio's companions could stand, so that one by one they left him, and finally, for some weeks or even months, he was alone. 166

It seems fair to say that this was as critical a moment as any in the history of the reform initiative. The literal observance had finally been authorised within the Order, after seemingly endless vicissitudes, and against all reasonable expectation; now its future depended directly on the behaviour of a single man. It was enough to make even a stout heart quail.

But Paoluccio's experience rendered him capable of meeting the challenge. His life in the Order had been but one long apprenticeship to the literal observance; and he had prepared himself for just such an eventuality as he now faced by his steadfast sojourn in the tower in Poligno. No doubt, after the years of perseverance without apparent hope, it was inconceivable to him to give up just when the cup seemed within his grasp; perhaps indeed, after all that had gone before, he found the test an easy one.

So he remained at Erugliano, in penitence and austerity, and continuing the life of meditation and prayer; and, as had happened before, his constancy eventually won the day for his ideal. The story of what he was doing became known, and it inspired others, of greater strength and determination than the original companions, to join him. 167 From the time of their arrival the movement began to expand, and its future, at least as regards the power to attract recruits, was assured.
The chroniclers speak only in fairly general terms about Paoluccio's life at Brugliano, so that it is not easy to form any detailed picture of what it was that made him known, and attracted others to him. There are however two exceptions to this rule. The Brugliano terrain was wild and stony; its inhabitants had therefore adopted a characteristic type of footwear, wooden shoes fitted with irons, called zoccoli (the nearest equivalent would be "clogs"); these were used even by the women and children. Paoluccio also took to wearing them, partly through necessity - sandals were impractical in the prevailing conditions, and bare feet even more so - and partly because they seemed symbols of poverty and humility. This was something quite new for a religious, and, in the conditions of the time - when, as we know, great attention was paid to the details of attire, and, we may suppose, any novelty excited a rather childlike interest - evidently caused something of a stir: Mariano of Florence writes of the "amazement and devotion" provoked thereby.168

This casts a perhaps unusual light on Paoluccio's appeal to the religiosity of his time; and it raises a further point of some importance. Both Mariano and Wadding record that the zoccoli were adopted with the licence of the General Minister.169 In Franciscan circles, given the Order's past experience, their use was likely to receive only one interpretation: the soi-disant stricter brothers were yet again, by their attire, trying
to set themselves off from the rest. Paoluccio's prior seeking consent was surely intended to guard against the accusation, and to underline his intention of remaining entirely within the Order.

This interpretation furnishes the appropriate context for the other small detail which has been preserved about the figure of Paoluccio after his return to Brugliano. According to Mariano's Life - one of the best and fullest sources - his habit was "very coarse and patched" ("molto grosso et rappezzato"). This phrase connects Paoluccio with all his predecessors in Franciscan living of extreme austerity, reaching back to the Founder of the Order himself; for the habit poor and patched had been their chief external symbol. This meant, among other things, a certain physical similarity between Paoluccio and the Spirituals and Fraticelli. On the other hand there is no contemporary evidence that Paoluccio was ever accused of dressing like those rebels and heretics. This prompts the guess that the habit adopted by his congregation was indistinguishable from that of the remaining friars as to colour and form, but that it was, precisely, of particularly coarse cloth, and frequently mended - both conditions which, in the impoverished environment of Brugliano, would be natural, even inevitable. If this was so, Paoluccio had hit on a brilliant solution to a hitherto unsurmountable problem - one which had played a very large part in the shipwreck of previous attempts to establish the literal observance: how to reconcile the statutory demand, insisted on by
Superiors, for uniformity in dress, with the moral demand, enshrined in the writings of Francis and the stories about him, for accompanying poverty and humility. This feat of reconciliation is perhaps itself symbolic of what, we may suppose, was in the last resort his most powerful attraction to potential recruits: the combination of authentic Franciscan austerity with official approbation.

Some such explanation of his drawing power must in any event be found; for one of the most striking things about the second Brugliano experiment is the speed with which it took hold, once the first uncertain months were past. It was not long before, with the increase in numbers, the settlement had to be extended, both living quarters and chapel, and in the process it seems to have been made slightly more habitable, less rough and ready. The cost was borne — as we would perhaps by now expect — by Paoluccio's cousin Trincia, the lord of the region; and according to Jacobilli he also gave to the strict friars the entire hill of Brugliano, including in particular all the wood which grew there. This was a signal contribution to their physical needs, for it meant a plentiful supply of firewood, and also no doubt to the legal and practical stability of the settlement; and perhaps more than either it was a contribution to their realisation of Franciscan poverty: the arrangement followed exactly a most authentic model, that whereby "mount La Verna with all the land whether wooded, rocky or grassy, without any exception, from the brow of the mountain to its foot" was ceded by the nobleman Orlando of Chiński to Francis and
his followers in 1213.\textsuperscript{173}

The stabilisation of the community at Erugliano was no doubt prerequisite for any further development of the literal observance movement, and boded well for the future. Even so one is unprepared for the extent of the movement's success: it earned its first sign of papal favour in July 1373, a mere five years after its decidedly shaky start;\textsuperscript{174} and at that date it already comprised no less than eleven hermitages.

This is, in sheer numerical terms, an astonishing development, quite unlike anything John of Valle's movement is known to have achieved (the expansion presumably led by Gentilis of Spoleto had accounted for only four settlements by 1350 - sixteen years after John's occupation of Erugliano). On the other hand there is one very striking overlap with the earlier movement: the four hermitages mentioned in Clement VI's bull of 1350, and in Innocent VI's revocation of it in 1355, also figure in the list of 1373 - that is the Carceri, Eremita, Monte Lucó and Giano. The rest, besides Erugliano, were two further hermitages in the Order's Province of Umbria, Stroncone and Montegiove, and four in the Province of Rome - la Scarzuola, and three with a particularly strong association with St. Francis himself, Greccio (where the episode of the Christmas crib took place), Fonte Colombo (where the Rule was written), and Poggio Bustone. The inclusion of Greccio raises a point of some interest: in all probability it had earlier (in the 1330s), like the
Carceri, been in the possession of Praticelli de paupere vita - specifically, adherents of Angelus Clarinus. 175

In these names we can read a spreading of the literal observance southwards and eastwards from its original home; but how this came about in so short a space of time (and Mariano states that it actually took place within three years) 176 is a mystery, which only receives an extra twist from the inclusion of Gentilis' four hermitages. All we can do is accord some truth to those later Observants who thought that the suppression of 1355 paradoxically increased a general desire for the literal observance, 177 and speculate that among the brothers who by 1373 had ranged themselves behind Paoluccio were some who, like himself, had been removed from Gentilis' congregation of settlements in 1355. One thing can be said with certainty: Paoluccio had struck a chord which reverberated far and wide. It is almost as though a considerable element in the Order had been waiting and watching for the opportunity - and the man - to launch the literal observance anew.

There is here a real contrast with the response which John of Valle had met; and there were other differences too. It had been nine years before the Papacy, in Clement VI's letter of 1343, took formal cognisance of his initiative, and then the Pope's judgment had been but a provisional one, and far from enthusiastic; in particular he had forbidden any favours to be given to the strict brothers. Gregory XI responded to the later
movement more quickly (no doubt its larger scale was responsible), and his purpose was to grant it a small, but nevertheless a real and enduring favour.

This was the right, granted to six brothers in each of the eleven settlements named, to choose each from among themselves his own Confessor, who would then have the authority to give them plenary remission of their sins in articulo mortis. It was an essentially spiritual concession, intended to promote the brothers' ease of conscience; but at the same time, because it gave them a measure of spiritual autonomy, freeing them from reliance on any external Confessor (who might well be hard to contact from their somewhat isolated settlements), it was the first small step towards giving them a position of independence within the Order.

Perhaps it was no accident that their benefactor was the man who, three years earlier, as Cardinal Pietro Rogerio had examined the orthodoxy of Thomas of Frignano, and must in the process have been satisfied as to that of the literal observance movement.

Its orthodoxy was further demonstrated by a dramatic incident which took place about the same time - wadding and others place it in 1374, but a case can be made for advancing it to 1370 - and which was undoubtedly of enormous significance for the future of the reform movement: the successful campaign by the strict brothers against the Fraticelli of Perugia. The action itself was simply a continuation of the policy which, we have seen reason to
believe, was already jointly followed by John of Valle
and Geraldus Odonis. Its effect on the Order can be
readily imagined: it was, we may suppose, the one way
in which the traditional identification of the literal
observance with schism and heresy—so recently confirmed
by Gentilis of Spoleto—could be broken, and the
reform's positive advantage to the Order be demonstrated.

We have already seen that the Fraticelli presence in
Perugia was powerful and of long standing. The
chroniclers of the Observance report that they had grown
so bold as to make public mockery of the official sons
of St. Francis: they would pounce on them in the streets,
reveal several layers of comfortable clothing, and, in
the presence of passers-by, jeeringly ask whether that was
how St. Francis had taught them to dress. Thus the
Fraticelli's main claim was substantiated, namely that the
friars did not observe their Rule, and hence were no true
Franciscans. There was, indeed, a good deal of logic in
the argument, and the Perugians saw it; they supported
the Fraticelli and reviled the friars, and in the end the
latter were almost afraid to show their faces. Reduced
to such a pass, they finally hit on the only possible
solution, which had the backing of the Provincial Minister
himself: to call in friars of Paoluccio's congregation,
as a living demonstration that indeed the Rule was
observed, and to the letter, within the official
Franciscan Order.

Exactly how this plan was carried out is not clear,
because the chroniclers disagree. Perhaps the soberest
version of the story is that Paoluccio did not himself come to Perugia, but sent instead a number of his brothers. The Conventual friars provided them with an appropriate dwelling: the hermitage of S. Francesco al Monte, half a mile outside the city, venerable as the abode for many years of St. Francis' companion, the contemplative Giles; by 1370 it was probably, like many other early hermitages, no longer in use. Here they established themselves, living in their accustomed austerity of the literal observance, and gradually their witness won over the Perugians and turned them against the Fraticelli. There may also have been some more outright and dramatic confrontation. Mariano of Florence in particular, giving a more elaborate version of a story already told by Jacobus Oddi in the late 15th century, paints a lively picture of a public disputation between friars and Fraticelli, in which Paoluccio himself, "inspired by the holy spirit", alone was able to speak up and reveal the error of the Fraticelli case: that they claimed to be the true Franciscans, yet disregarded the very first point of the Rule, obedience to the Pope and Church. The somewhat elementary point dumbfounded the opposition, the Perugians at once saw through them, and they were driven from the city in confusion and disgrace; the friars on the other hand rejoiced at their deliverance, and their gratitude to its author was unbounded.

The account may sound fanciful in parts, but there is no doubt of the truth of its essential points, nor of their significance for Paoluccio's movement. The year 1374 was
one of signal advance; and it is evident that the Perugian episode had a good deal to do with it.

In the first place, it gained the movement a new settlement: S. Francesco al Monte, which had been the strict friars' base of operations. This was as it were their reward from their Conventual brothers, and the place was now made over to them formally, in a document dated, according to Mariano, June 8th. The deed was signed by the Minister of Umbria, and thus the reform now had behind it the office which Tommaso Racani had previously pitted against it. Nor was this all: the deed bore a counter-signature - that of the General Minister himself.

This was Leonard Giffoni, and his presence in Perugia at that moment, so propitious for Faoluccio's congregation, was fortuitous. He had been elected General at Chapter in Toulouse the previous year, and he was shortly thereafter required in Umbria in order to conduct a visitation. The reason had nothing to do with the reform movement as such, although, as we have had occasion to discover before, it had everything to do with the issue of reform in general. A scandalous and fierce dispute had broken out between the former (and perhaps unlamented) Provincial Racani, now bishop of Assisi, and his successor Francesco da Fabrica (the donor of the Perugian hermitage to the strict friars), and Gregory XI had instructed the new General to take the matter in hand; this he was eventually able to do, but only by the drastic expedients of deposing Fabrica and expelling twenty leading trouble-
makers to "distant Provinces" (early October 1374). With these matters on his mind, the General took the opportunity of his stay in Umbria to inquire into the movement whose members had brought off the coup of banishing the Fraticelli from their old stronghold in Perugia. He could hardly fail to be edified by what he found - there could be no greater contrast than that between the disciplined peace of the hermitages and the turbulent behaviour of the Conventuals - and he drew the obvious but dramatic conclusion: this reform movement must be spread further afield. Therefore, from Perugia, on July 8th (one month after the transfer of S. Francesco al Monte), he addressed a short but pregnant letter to Paoluccio and "the Guardians of the hermitages or settlements committed to him": they were authorised, for the "necessities or utility of the said settlements", to go, or send their brothers, to any place in Umbria, or in the neighbouring Provinces. It was an important moment in the history of Paoluccio's congregation: for the first time it had won the support of the highest Franciscan authority; more, he was asking it to spread far beyond its birthplace. It was perhaps the realisation of a policy adumbrated decades earlier by Geraldus Odonis, the benefactor of John of Valle, and by his successor Fortanerius Vassalis. Oddly however, Paoluccio's four hermitages in the Province of Rome are not included in the letter, and the Umbrian Eremita is also omitted, and on the other hand a new name appears - a second Montegiove, situated near Perugia.
Between the two marks of favour received by the strict friars from the head of the Order, a new one was forthcoming from the head of the Church, of greater immediate significance than his concession the previous year of a plenary indulgence in articulo mortis. On June 22 Gregory XI wrote from the south of France to the bishop of Orvieto, ordering him to protect the reformed friars from molestation. The phrase used to describe them is interesting: "brothers...residing in certain solitary places...which the saint himself is said to have founded, and there observing the Rule of the same saint to the letter" — the Pope was well informed as to the nature of the strict congregation. Their troubles were being caused by "certain Provincial Ministers, custodes and other officials of the Order of friars Minor of the Provinces of Rome and Umbria". We have no information as to what was afoot, and it is perhaps enough to ascribe the hostility to the persistence of long-established and all too familiar attitudes (the change in attitude at the highest level had only just begun, and could not yet be widely shared). This view has the support of Gregory himself, for he described the Franciscan officials as acting "according to the custom of the said Order, prompted by envy". They were hard words, and the Pope was in fact adamant that the time had come for old views to be buried, and that hostility to the reform initiative must stop. He instructed the bishop to investigate the complaints and, if he found them justified, to give a dressing down to the guilty officials, and enjoin them in
future to treat the strict friars with favour and brotherly love. Otherwise, he wrote, he was minded to deal with the matter himself, in such a way as to make an example of it to the rest of the Order. Gregory, in other words, was now as fully behind the strict brothers as the Order's own General. This was, perhaps, only to be expected, for, since the Chapter of 1373 at which the latter had been elected, the two men had been co-operating closely in the cause of Franciscan reform.185

The year 1374 seems to mark a watershed in the history of Paoluccio dei Trinci's congregation. It had demonstrated its orthodoxy, desire to serve the Order rather than divide it, and real utility, by overcoming the Fraticelli of Perugia; and, in more or less direct consequence, it received marks of support from the local Umbrian authorities, from the General Minister, and from the See of Peter. Up till that point the new movement (and it was still very new) may reasonably be thought, despite its rapid expansion, to have been on trial, except possibly in the mind of the former Gardian Pietro Rogerio. Now the probation and the time of uncertainty were past; no doubt there would be isolated rearguard actions, prompted by the survival of anachronistic attitudes, but for all practical purposes the literal observance movement had been accepted into the mainstream of the Order's and the Church's life, and could look forward to a future of steady development, firmly based on official support.

So the initiative of John of Valle at long last had its fulfilment. And not the least remarkable aspect of
this turn of events was that the concessions of his
Superiors little by little gave Paoluccio what all along
the Order had seemed determined to avoid, and what he
himself seems only reluctantly to have accepted: a
considerable measure of exemption from the normal command
structure of the Order. For his congregation was in
practical terms a distinct body or family within the
Order - a point confirmed by the use from 1375 of the
title *fratres de familia* - and hence required
organisation and authority of its own. To meet the
situation Paoluccio's Superiors simply transferred to him
some of their own normal powers; and thus a new
authority was set up within the Order which, so far as it
went, ran parallel to, and independently of, that of the
Conventuals.

The first small step in this direction had been
Gregory XI's concession to the brothers in 1373 of the
right to choose their own Confessor from amongst themselves.
Some more strictly administrative arrangements are
recorded in a letter of 1375 to Paoluccio from the
Provincial of Umbria (the replacement of the troublesome
Francesco da Fabrica, deposed by the General Leonard
Giffoni in 1374). The letter notes that Giffoni had
conceded "many graces" to Paoluccio, among them, "for the
peace and preservation of the settlements committed to
you", the right not to accept brothers unknown to him
into his "family" until assured of their merit, and the
right to get rid of discordant influences by translation
to other friaries, or by other means. Gifioni had also instructed the new Provincial to back Paoluccio up; he was therefore writing to confirm the General's concession and at the same time added one of his own: if ever he should send a command or privilege to a friar of Paoluccio's congregation, it was only to be put into effect with Paoluccio's express assent. This was, we may think, a considerable renunciation of authority in favour of the humble lay brother of Brugliano; and it evokes a noteworthy historical parallel. Thinking back to 1355, we may recall that Gentilis of Spoleto had refused to allow a friar of his congregation to obey a command of the Minister General's; and this truculent and unjustifiable step had been instrumental in causing the suppression of the congregation. Now Paoluccio was authorised to prevent a friar carrying out an order, not indeed of his General, but still of his Provincial Minister, and the authority was given by the Minister himself. Thus the end of autonomy, which had eluded the approach direct, was freely given to a humble and studiously uncontroversial one.

A further concession was given by the Provincial Minister in the following year, 1376. He empowered Paoluccio to decide in which settlement the friars of his "family" should reside, and to transfer them and, if necessary, expel them, entirely at his own discretion. This was to confer great freedom of action, and with it responsibility. As we suspected with the first privilege of all, that of having a local Confessor, the
reasons were in part simply practical: "nor is it necessary" (wrote the Provincial) "to seek us out in person, so that unnecessary trouble may be avoided". Yet the effect was unmistakable: the brothers were to obey Paoluccio "as though they had personally received our own directives". By the order of his own Provincial, Paoluccio was taking on the powers of a Provincial with regard to the reformed friars.

The process was taken yet further, and also, perhaps more important, made explicit and formal, in 1380. On September 12 a new Provincial of Umbria (in office since 1377) wrote from Perugia instituting Paoluccio his Commissar (Commissarius) over the family of hermitages; and on the same day, according to Mariano of Florence, the Minister General, writing from Assisi, gave him the same function in respect to his own office, at the same time transferring to him his first settlement outside the Provinces of Umbria and Rome, that of Forano in the Marches. If Mariano's story is correct the simultaneous action by the two Ministers can hardly have been fortuitous, and we can probably assume that their import was identical.

The Provincial's commission to Paoluccio began, very properly, by enumerating the settlements belonging to his congregation. The list is initially the same as that given by the General Minister Gifoni in 1374, i.e. it leaves out the four Roman hermitages in Gregory XI's list of 1373, and adds Montegiove near Perugia; S. Francesco al Monte, at Perugia, is included (the reward for the
successful campaign against the Fraticelli); and three new names appear, witness of expansion in the intervening years - S. Damiano and Rocchicciola in the custody of Assisi, and Farneto in that of Perugia. Within the preserve of these settlements, Paoluccio's old powers are confirmed, and new ones are added. His sole responsibility for determining which brothers shall reside where is recalled. Then Giffoni's provision of 1374 is extended: "for the necessities or utility of the friars and their settlements", Paoluccio is authorised to send his friars, not only into the neighbouring Provinces, but "to any place in Italy whatsoever, including the place of the Roman curia" (strictly out of bounds under normal circumstances, according to the Order's General Statutes). Next he is accorded a completely new range of responsibility: to "advise, correct or punish" (to a limited degree of severity; cases for severe punishment were to be sent to the Provincial). And in all these things he is to be obeyed as though he were the Provincial himself.

These powers, and the title which went with them, made Paoluccio officially the Superior, in a fairly full sense, of a partly autonomous religious family. A mere twelve years before he had been responsible in practical terms only for himself, immersed in a solitary existence of austerity and meditation. It was a drastic change in a short space of time, and it would not be surprising if he found it hard to adjust to, and scarcely felt equal to his new position. This would account for the friendly but uncompromising terms in which the Minister couched his
commission. "I enjoin upon your devotion, dearest brother Paoluccio, on the merit of salutary obedience... that you receive the office and charge of this my commission without any excuses whatever, and that you execute it with diligence, according to the grace which God has given you". It cannot but have endeared him to the Order that, far from wishing to establish an independent position of authority, as Gentilis of Spoleto seems to have done, he had almost to be dragooned into so doing.

Paoluccio was, however, too good a Franciscan to disobey. He directed his family conscientiously until his death in or around 1391; and the extent of his independent authority steadily increased the while.

We need not here follow the process, for the essential had already been accomplished by 1380. In an extraordinarily short space of time the literal observance movement had been transformed. In 1368 its position had been one of extreme precariousness: it had come into being through a skilful piece of manipulation by secular authority, existed in the person of a single friar, and faced the obstacles of a hostile Provincial Minister and the unfavourable attitudes ingrained by past history. By 1380 it had gained the warm support of successive Provincial Ministers, of the General Minister, and of the Holy See; and it constituted, within the Franciscan Order, a distinct family, of stricter observance than the norm, enjoying a considerable degree of autonomy.
Such was the Regular Observance movement (as later it came to be called), as established by Paoluccio dei Trinci. Two years before it reached the position just sketched there began, with the outbreak of the Great Schism, the period which was to transform the movement into something quite different from Paoluccio's creation. The Schism opens a new chapter; this therefore is the moment to review the history of the literal observance movement begun by John of Valle, in the light of the other 14th century developments we have studied.
We discovered in the first two chapters of Part II that Franciscan history in the middle quarters of the 14th century manifested conflicting tendencies for and against a revival of the literal observance movement. The reform issue in practice, examined in the last chapter, can be seen as a working out of these tendencies, and furthermore answered the question as to which would finally prove the stronger. On the one hand any movement which sought to ensure strict discipline by means of active secession, as the Spirituals had done, was vehemently opposed; and on the other hand the one movement which, like the Spirituals, adhered to the literal observance, but which manifested a firm intention of remaining within the Order and indeed defending it against external critics, was actively promoted by Franciscan and papal authority, with the paradoxical result that, almost against its will, it achieved a large measure of that autonomy which others had striven for and which they had been refused.

A number of aspects of this picture merit some slight further comment. First, we must recognise how sketchy it is; large and important areas are altogether blank. Thus we are ignorant of the details of John of Valle's life before he came to the friary at Foligno, of his dealings with Geraldus Odonis, and of his subsequent life
at Brugliano. As little is known of the origins of Gentilis of Spoleto and of his life under the literal observance up till 1350, including the (we suppose) growing independence of John and leadership of expansion. The events of 1350 to 1354 are better attested, but even here we are in the dark on vital points, particularly the circumstances of the strict friars' attempt to separate from the rest of the Order. The life and activities of Paoluccio dei Trinci are relatively much better documented, but important gaps nevertheless remain - the nature and extent of his experience of the literal observance movement under John and Gentilis, the extent of his family's involvement in the movement before 1368, and how his congregation was able to expand so rapidly between 1368 and 1373. Particularly towards the beginning, therefore, the empty areas of our picture are surely larger than those which are filled in, with obvious implications for the accuracy of the whole.

Nevertheless certain features seem clear enough, and of these none is more important than the fact that between 1334 and 1380 something unprecedented was achieved by and within the Franciscan Order: the co-existence of two levels of observance within the one institute, on a basis of mutual support. The magnitude of this achievement is perhaps best measured by the fact that it had never been attained in the period of Spiritual-Community tension, despite the indisputable virtues of many friars on both sides, and the enormous energy that had been devoted to the whole question. It marked, therefore, a break with
the past, a new beginning, and can reasonably be regarded as one of the outstanding creative achievements of the Order's first two hundred years. This is to make a significant claim for a period which is generally regarded as the darkest in medieval Franciscan history.

Given the unprecedented nature of the position which had been attained, it is important to understand it in some detail, and in particular to grasp the sense in which Paoluccio's congregation remained inside an undivided Order. It is not strictly true, as historians sometimes suggest, that it was "wholly under the jurisdiction of the normal Superiors". On the contrary we have seen that, in certain specified areas, the strict friars in Umbria were genuinely exempt from the authority of the relevant Superior, the Provincial Minister, and subject in his stead to the authority of Paoluccio; thus up to a certain point a new line of authority had been created, which ran parallel to, and independently of, that of the main body. That this was compatible with the unity of the Order was due to two features of the arrangement: first, Paoluccio's powers were limited - there were still things, such as impose severe punishments, which he was not authorised to do; and secondly, his limited powers were his by explicit delegation from the Provincial Minister - he acted as the latter's vicar among the strict brothers, or, as it was put in 1380, as his Commissarius. The nearest analogy would seem to be a political one; we might say that Paoluccio's congregation was like a territory granted limited self-government, but much less
than full independence. A comparison with the final aspiration of Gentilis of Spoleto, and that of Philip of Majorca, is also instructive: both men sought, not partial, but complete self-government, and they sought to achieve it, not by the grant of the parent body, but by respectively simple arrogation and the ordinance of the Holy See (historical parallels might be respectively the practice of a "U.D.I.", and a declaration of the United Nations).

We can thus say that legally speaking, in the case of Paoluccio's congregation in Umbria, a limited, but nevertheless real division of the Order had taken place; up to a certain point the strict brothers constituted an autonomous family within the larger body. This legal division was reinforced - and in the writer's view considerably reinforced - by two further considerations of a more practical nature, the different levels of observance of the two groups of friars, and their actual physical separation. The two considerations are contained in a single contrast, that between the large and wealthy city convents, and the remote and impoverished hermitages, Brugliano being the classic instance. Very little is in fact known, in a detailed way, of the mode of life followed in the hermitages, but it is at least clear that it was one of considerable hardship and deprivation; and on the other hand, as we have seen, a good deal is known of the lax and sometimes scandalous behaviour that characterised the Conventual bulk of the Order. It is inconceivable that any one community could, in a
sustained way, have accommodated both modes of life; so they were followed in separate settlements, characteristically a considerable distance apart from one another.

It might be objected at this point that, far from being unprecedented, such a state of affairs represented a return to the most authentic Franciscan tradition—that of the founder and his earliest followers. Certainly they had known a distinction between settlements which were to serve as a basis for the work of evangelisation and hermitages devoted to the pursuit of the spiritual life; in fact, as we have seen, several of the Observant hermitages had strong links with Francis himself. Here was a real difference of life-style, and the difference is emphasised by the fact that Francis left, besides the various versions of the official Rule, a separate "mini-Rule" for the conduct of the hermitages. Even so, it can reasonably be argued that the differences between the 14th century strict friars and Conventuals were greater than anything St. Francis envisaged, or would have approved. For one thing we must suppose that the "mini-Rule" constituted supplementary directions for the conduct of the hermitages, over and above the main Rule, which remained the fundamental document to which all the friars were bound; there was here no recognition for quite different levels of observance, such as characterised the two 14th century groups of friars. Secondly, St. Francis' conception was that the hermitages should, in greater or lesser degree, be used by all the brothers, as places of retreat and spiritual refreshment.
between tours of more active duty. It will not be supposed that wealthy and worldly 14th century Conventuals were much attracted by the thought of a stay at Brugliano.

It is fair to conclude that by 1380 had occurred a real, and really unprecedented division of the Franciscan Order into two distinct families. The situation makes it apposite to recall a phrase of the General Statutes of 1346, 1351 and 1354: "Again since our Order... is held to be one and indivisible, the General Minister...forbids that in future any sect be allowed to arise among the brothers...which, by separation of dwelling... looks likely to become separate in spirit..." (italics added). The Observance enjoyed "separation of dwelling"; it is the more remarkable that, evidently, it was not suspected of harbouring a separatist spirit.

This point may call to mind how it was that the establishment of the literal observance within the bosom of the Order had been brought about. The arrangement was one of very fine, indeed almost miraculous balance; for it depended on a large, perhaps an exceptional measure of good-will on both sides, that of the rigorists and that of the authorities. The matter can best be presented - in accord with the political analogy already used - as a treaty between the two parties. The authorities undertook to approve the literal observance, to promote it, even to give it a degree of autonomy, on condition that it forswore the attempt to become fully independent, whether by appeal to an outside authority or by mere arrogation,
and instead defended the Order from external enemies; and the strict friars undertook to remain faithfully within the Order, on condition that the authorities gave them approval, support, and the degree of self-government necessary for them to order their affairs satisfactorily. This was, schematically, the accord which had first been established between John of Valle and Geraldus Odonis in 1334. If either party departed from its side of the agreement, the arrangement would collapse; and one cannot but suspect that that could come about extremely easily. It would surely take a very average level of human perversity for Conventual Superiors to feel implicitly criticised and threatened by the literal observance movement, to resent it, and hence to obstruct rather than promote it, and equally it would be the most natural thing in the world for strict brothers to feel themselves superior to the Conventuals, say so out loud, and seek to throw off their partial dependence on them; and yet either reaction would be enough to release the old pattern of conflict and destroy the new accord. It is possible that both reactions had been responsible for the disaster which overtook Gentilis of Spoleto between 1350 and 1355.

It is evident, then that the harmonious relations established by 1380 between the literal observance movement and the Franciscan hierarchy were balanced on a knife-edge. In fact, it may well be that they were made possible at all by a single factor: the physical "separation of dwelling" already mentioned. For the most
delicate balance achieved depended on an absence of irritation (or as we might now say, "provocation") from either side: the authorities had to refrain from antagonism and obstruction towards the reform, and the reformers from criticism of their laxer confreres, and any attempt at self-assertion. It seems fairly clear that these conditions could only be met because, instead of being thrown on top of one another in the same buildings, the two parties were accommodated in quite separate settlements. Seen in this light it was providential for the Observance and the Order that Umbria was a Province of many hermitages, reaching back to the days of St. Francis, and subsequently abandoned; for it was this fact alone which made possible the physical separation of the two groups of friars. One cannot but wonder what would happen if the reform movement, having filled up all the available empty settlements, should by further expansion enter into competition with the Conventuals for the remaining friaries, or if it should secure a foothold in any of the very many Provinces in which there were no conveniently abandoned hermitages available to accommodate the strict friars. The inevitable assumption is that there would be no lack of "provocation" from both sides, with disastrous consequences for the hope of harmony between them. It is then not too much to say that the 14th century Italian Observance had to be eremitical: without the physical fact of its remote and separate settlements it could not have prospered and reached an understanding with the rest of the
Order. This is perhaps the most important comment on the sense in which, with Paoluccio dei Trinci, the Franciscans were "one and undivided".

Its eremitical character, then, was crucial for the very existence of the literal observance movement. It was also a part of the movement's essence. For, as we have just seen, it establishes an affinity with the life of St. Francis and the first friars, also in part men of the hermitages, and in this point we touch the well-spring of the movement: its aim was to recreate as nearly as possible the way of life of the Founder and his companions. This was the reality behind the convenient shorthand term of papal letters and the chroniclers, "literal observance".

That original Franciscan way of life was, at the start of this study, characterized under four headings: poverty, humility, simplicity and prayer. From such information as is available we can see that the life of Paoluccio and the strict friars was a realization of the same four characteristics.

Of their poverty, little is known in detail—only the quality of Paoluccio's habit, and the gift of Erugliano mount by Trincia dei Trinci; but we have had abundant general indications of the austere circumstances in which they lived. As regards their humility there is more to be said. The submissiveness of Paoluccio's congregation to the Order's Superiors—so vital to its survival, and so different to the final attitude of Gentilis of Spoleto and his adherents—was a signal manifestation of the virtue. It was also, we may suppose, the reflection of
one of the most strongly marked traits of Paoluccio himself. As a young recruit in the friary of Foligno he had already been distinguished by absolute obedience to his Superiors; and if Jacobilli is to be believed he was accustomed to go begging through the streets of his native town - which, for a member of the ruling family, was surely - as St. Francis had intended - as severe a test for humility as for the spirit of poverty. And at the other end of his life, as we have seen from the evidence of 1380, he was apparently unwilling to accept the position of authority within the reformed congregation which his Provincial was determined to thrust upon him; in the First Rule St. Francis had written "And let all the brothers not have any power or dominion, least of all amongst themselves". 7

At this point humility merges with simplicity; for one of the reasons why Paoluccio probably felt himself not called to authority was that he was only a lay brother: and, in the first days of the Order, the lay brothers (and clerics in less than full priestly orders) had been as it were the guardians of Franciscan simplicity. 8 According to the chroniclers the Italian Observance as a whole had a marked non-priestly character 9 , and this is in fact one of the most striking signs of its kinship with the original Franciscan fraternity; for it was as early as 1239 that the non-priestly element had been shut out of the mainstream of the Order's life, through severe restriction of their future recruitment, and their exclusion from all office. 10 The latter point in passing emphasises how remarkable it
was that Paoluccio, the simple lay brother, should have been given an office of considerable power over the reformed friars.

The non-priestly complexion of the literal observance movement had a corollary, equally reminiscent of the simplicity of the early days, equally at variance with the whole tenor of subsequent development: a lack of emphasis upon studies. For one of the great learned Orders of the Middle Ages this was indeed a new departure; but, given the overall setting, it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise: a hermitage such as Brugliano was no more able to sustain the physical demands of specialist theological and pastoral study than the circle of huts of St. Francis' Portiuncula. The result was that by 1380 Paoluccio's followers had acquired a new name: *fratres simplices.*

Their lack of learning, in connection with their physical setting, had in turn its own consequence, which forms the one respect in which the Italian Observance departed from the example of St. Francis: it seems to have set little store by the active apostolate. This is a discrepancy of real importance, but a number of considerations are needed to put it in perspective. It may be thought little short of miraculous that, on the almost non-existent resources of such a place as the Portiuncula, Francis and his companions were able to mount any acceptable sort of apostolate at all. The same achievement might well be beyond anyone else; and in any
case there was no reason for the handful of strict friars in the mid-14th century even to attempt it: the active apostolate was (theoretically) the chief function, indeed almost the only raison d'être of their Conventual brothers. This division of function was made the sharper by the other elements of division between the two groups which have already been investigated.

Finally, St. Francis had made explicit allowance for some of his followers to pursue a purely contemplative life. This brings us back to the fourth characteristic we identified in the primitive Franciscan life, prayer. All our evidence, both about Paoluccio dei Trinci, and about the movement he led, indicates that the life of prayer was almost their hallmark. The biographers assert it of his early life in the friary of Poligno, of the period of his solitary residence in the family tower, and of his early days at Brugliano from 1368. The chroniclers make the same point about his congregation generally, and their report is backed up by other evidence: by 1380 Paoluccio's hermitages had in Franciscan circles come to be called loca devota, and their residents, not only fratres simplices, but also fratres devoti. It should also be borne in mind that, under the heading "prayer", we originally included not just the activity of praying, but a whole intense and characteristic spirituality - one that in particular embraced the other Franciscan virtues of poverty, humility and simplicity. We have seen how these were re-lived by Paoluccio and his
congregation; it is fair to conclude that their "devotion" consisted not just of praying, but of St. Francis' spirituality in the fullest sense.

This point enables us to attempt a characterisation of the literal observance movement eventually led by Paoluccio dei Trinci. We can perceive, through all the uncertainties of the evidence, that it was, as nearly as possible, a re-creation of the pristine, authentic Franciscan experience. It is thus a perfect instance of the classic pattern of religious reform, the return to origins: a response, in the formulation of the chief English historian of the medieval Orders, "to the glimpses seen and the echoes heard across the years of the voice of Francis, and to the ever-reawakened longing to return ad patrios montes et ad incunabula nostra."15

Seen in this light, the Italian literal observance movement was, like the life of St. Francis, first and last a spiritual endeavour. This enables us to guess at a third and most important reason why it had to be strongly eremitical: not just that conflict with the Conventuals was avoided thereby, nor that this was one strand in the original pattern, but because that was the only way to find the strength necessary for great spiritual effort. There may be a tendency for religious achievement to be preceded by more or less prolonged and intense asceticism and solitude. This was the case with Francis himself, in the uncertain period when he was seeking his own true vocation,16 and, at quite a different level, it was true
of the creation of the "new Orders" in the late 11th and early 12th centuries; it may well have been true of Paoluccio and his fellows. Paoluccio's life in particular (the only one about which we have any real evidence) was a story of much isolation, discipline, and spiritual concentration; these could only be satisfactorily achieved in a hermitage (or a tower otherwise used as a prison); and - we may speculate - only through these could the original Franciscan experience be re-created in a world which seemed largely to have forgotten it.

One other thing of course was necessary: that Paoluccio and his adherents should know what the original Franciscan experience was. How had this come about - how did they come to "see glimpses" and "hear echoes of the voice" of their Founder? The answer to this question ties in the story of the Italian Observance to the second great trait we identified in 14th century Franciscan history; for there can be no doubt that the intermediary between the first friars and the 14th century reformers was the movement of the Spirituals. Thus the Observance can be regarded as the most striking manifestation of the survival of Spiritual ideals after the destruction of the party as such; and in this sense, despite certain vital differences of attitude, it was the bearer of a tradition that stretched back unbroken to the days of St. Francis himself.

The most important single guarantee of this assessment
is the part played in the origins of the Observance by perhaps the greatest of all Spiritual leaders, Angelus Clarinus. Nothing concrete is known about his involvement, and indeed the evidence for the bare fact is scanty enough; but there is no reason to reject it. We have to conclude that Angelus was partly responsible for John of Valle's move to Brugliano in 1334, just as directly as he was largely responsible for Philip of Majorca's approaches to John XXII in 1328 and Benedict XII in 1340. Behind the two movements, similar in their ideals, so different in their outcomes, stands the same figure. And as we saw on an earlier page, Angelus, who joined the Order around 1260, was not only acquainted with many Franciscans of the second generation, but knew at least three of the surviving intimates of Francis himself. It is thus the sober truth that between the literal observance movement established in 1368 and the saint who died in 1226 there lay an unbroken line of personal contacts. This is not, surely, the least remarkable circumstance of the story.

The role of Clarinus is the most striking instance of the connection between the Italian Observance and the Spiritual movement; but there is a good deal of less specific evidence. There is, first, what might be called a collateral branch of Angelus' influence, running from Philip of Majorca to his ambassador to Benedict XII, Paolo dei Trinci, uncle of Paoluccio. And beyond this there is the whole tenor and the geography of the Observance. Its ideal, as we have seen, was the same as that of the Spirituals, to live as like Francis and his
companions as possible. The Spirituals had been primarily an Italian phenomenon, with a particular stronghold in the March of Ancona; the Observance began on the borders of the March, and developed in neighbouring Umbria. The double coincidence makes it impossible to see the Observance other than as the outcome of a long-established tradition of zealotry.

This being so, it is important to underline the differences of attitude between the Observance (under John of Valle and Paoluccio dei Trinci) and the Spiritual party in its eventual form. The former, by virtue of the two-sided accommodation between zealotry and Franciscan authority on which it rested, was not forced to choose between the literal observance and obedience; the latter was, with the result that it fell prey to rebellion and heresy. This we may regard as the essential tragedy of the Spirituals, for which it is only possible to have sympathy. There is nevertheless an important consequence to be drawn: because the Observance - with the partial exception of Gentilis of Spoleto's group - was, through more fortunate circumstances, able to avoid disobedience and revolt against the Church, its realisation of the literal observance was in some respects purer and more authentically Franciscan than that achieved by the Spirituals. Indeed it was perhaps the first corporate realisation of literal observance without accompanying blemish in the history of the Order after St. Francis. This would be one more point in favour of a usually derided epoch of Franciscan history.
The question of obedience raises a further important issue bearing on the connection between the Observance and earlier zealotry, namely the relation of the Observance to the Fraticelli de paupere vita. For, as we have seen, the latter were no less than the former the outcome of the Spiritual movement, and the two groups had an identical ideal; the only difference lay in their attitudes to the legitimacy of the Church in general and the Franciscan Order in particular.

As might be expected, these circumstances gave rise to a somewhat complicated relationship between the two groups, compounded of attraction and repulsion - a "love-hate" relation in short. We have seen reason to believe, on the one hand, that John of Valle was intended by his General as a counter-weight to the Fraticelli; and, on the other, that he and the other founders of the Observance cannot have been uninfluenced by the aberrant sect. Somewhat later, Gentilis of Spoleto and his congregation accepted recruits of suspect belief - almost certainly Fraticelli - in order to convert them from their errors, but the preponderant influence seems to have gone the other way, with the would-be reformers taking the Fraticelli line of separation from the Order; and this was no more than the fulfilment of Fraticelli tendencies already scented by Pope Clement VI in 1343 and the General Farinier in 1349. It was only with the confrontation at Perugia in or around 1374 that the relation between orthodox and heretical literal observance was finally resolved, and the movement launched by Paoluccio
dei Trinci showed itself, what it was to remain, the foremost opponent of the Fraticelli. Students of human nature will not be surprised that, after the equivocal earlier relationship, the heretical literal observance found its fiercest opponents in the movement most like to it.

The import of the foregoing arguments has been to show the Italian Observance as determined by large currents of history - the mutual attraction and repulsion with the Fraticelli, and, more important, the tradition of zealotry stretching back through the Spirituals to the time of St. Francis himself. It would give a false impression if we did not record that it was determined just as much by personalities. There was, first of all, the remarkable circumstance that the three figures who dominated the movement for some fifty-five years (1334 - 1390) happened to be together in a formative period in the friary at Foligno. Secondly, we have to recognise that, so far as we have any record, one figure stands out above all the others, namely Paoluccio. His was a remarkable personal story. It was characterised above all by a life-long and single-minded devotion to an ideal, and secondly, by endurance in the face of adversity and apparent failure. It is not too much to say that, in the period from the suppression of Gentilis of Spoleto's congregation to the return to Brugliano in 1368, these qualities made Paoluccio the only known bulwark against the extinction of the literal observance movement begun by John of Valle.
All the information we have about him suggests that, whatever embroideries may have been added by the piety of later generations, he well deserved the title of Beato which custom has given him. 21

It is not to qualify this judgment if we wonder how much of what he carried through was original to Paoluccio, and how much was borrowed from others. As has already been noted, the state of the evidence is such that we have almost no detailed knowledge about John of Valle and his enterprise. Even so it is possible to see that vital aspects of Paoluccio's policy - the literal observance itself, the care to remain within the Order, the opposition to the Fraticelli - were practised by his predecessor. It seems quite possible that, were the evidence less fragmentary, we should discover that John's was the creative role, and Paoluccio's that of fulfilment. If so, John's historical standing would be enhanced, but Paoluccio's would not be diminished.

It is not only among the strict brothers that the history of the Italian Observance reveals men of true stature. The essence of that history was the recognition of two levels of observance within one institute; and it will not be forgotten that the outcome depended on certain Franciscan Superiors, no less than on their reform-minded subjects. It seems fair to say that by and large the Franciscan authorities emerge from the story with credit. So far as can be seen Geraldus Odonis and his two successors Vassalis and Farinier took the initiative in
encouraging the literal observance movement. In so doing they acted as worthy heads of their Order, giving the lead in abandoning the conflicts of the past and making a fresh start (a lead which evidently had to be pushed through against the resistance of more conservative friars, and is particularly remarkable in view of the Order's severe legislation regarding any sign of divisiveness). Subsequently it fell to Farinier to suppress one part at least of the movement; we have found however that he was justified in doing so, both legally and morally, and he certainly completed the business with dispatch, and the minimum upheaval in the Order. The one exception to the list of worthy Generals was Thomas of Prignano, whose contribution to the reform in the light of history seems paradoxically the greatest; his support was initially unreflecting, and subsequently unwilling. He was however followed by a figure in the tradition of Odonis, Leonard of Giffoni, who after the confrontation with the Perugian Fraticelli gave Paoluccio's congregation all the support of his office.

Leonard of Giffoni was aided in this policy by Pope Gregory XI; and this fact reveals another type of ecclesiastical contribution to the literal observance movement, the backing of the Holy See. Gregory's action was in the sharpest possible contrast to that of such predecessors as John XXII and Benedict XII. It had however been foreshadowed by Clement VI, who in 1343 displayed an open mind on the subject, and in 1350 made the attempt (unsuccessful, as it proved) to guarantee for all time
the security of the literal observance within the Order.

The policy of Popes and Generals was one thing, but it could always be wrecked by obstruction at a more humdrum level of authority, where decisions were actually put into practice. We have therefore to record the vital contribution of three successive Provicials of Umbria who, whatever their other failings — and two of them had to be deposed — were admirably faithful in implementing their Superiors' favourable policy towards Paoluccio dei Trinci's congregation. On the other side we have to record the opposition of Tommaso Racani (discredited as far as his attack on the General Minister was concerned, and adroitly removed from the immediate scene by Urban V), and of the other unnamed Umbrian and Roman Superiors denounced to Gregory XI in 1374; nor should it be forgotten that the series of events leading to the suppression of Gentilis of Spoleto's congregation was probably set moving by the Provincial, taking it upon himself to disperse the strict friars from their hermitages. On balance, if the dealings of the Franciscan Superiors with the literal observance were representative of the Order's authority structure as a whole, we should have to conclude that it was in reasonable working order.

This, given the general reputation of the 14th century friars, is paradoxical, and should prompt us to ask why there was so much ecclesiastical support ranged behind the literal observance movement. There would seem to be one obvious answer, and this takes us back to the first great trait already identified in the Order's life at the time,
the spread of Conventualism. Discipline on the whole was undoubtedly in a deplorable state. A number of Superiors accordingly did deplore it, and call for improvement; their calls went unheeded; what alternative was there but to turn to the one movement which realised a reformed ideal, and so might be capable of communicating it directly to others? There is some evidence that the recognition of the desperate need for reform grew in the course of the 14th century, and it is fairly clear that it came to some sort of head under Pope Gregory XI and General Leonard of Giffoni — who between them gave the literal observance its most powerful impetus. The gradually growing sense of the urgency of reform finds a perfect counterpart in the much faster expansion of Paoluccio's movement than of John of Valle's, and this may be taken as further evidence of the connection between the two developments.

We can conclude that both main traits we have already observed in 14th century Franciscan history - the collapse of discipline, and the survival of Spiritual influence - were crucially involved in the early history of the Italian Regular Observance. Apart from this, three points stand out about the movement. It was based on the literal observance - in other words, on the simple desire to live as like St. Francis and his earliest followers as humanly possible; it derived this ideal of life directly from a rigorist tradition which went back through the Spirituals to the time of St. Francis; and it succeeded in so to
speak domesticating this ideal within an essentially undivided Order. It has already been observed\textsuperscript{23} that, with the outbreak of the Great Schism, a new era opened for the Observance, in which Paoluccio's movement was transformed. It was notably on the three points just mentioned that the transformation took effect.
PART III

THE THREE-CORNERED DISPUTE: c. 1378 - 1447/1528
The Franciscan Regular Observance of the 15th and early 16th centuries was, although known to historians by the same name, different in several vital respects from the movement led by Paoluccio dei Trinci. It was more widespread geographically, being found eventually throughout the whole of Christendom; thereby the original Italian reform became only one part of a much broader movement, and not necessarily the most prominent one. And more important, the geographical change brought with it change in kind. It will be argued that, regarding one aspect of their nature as reform movements, all the non-Italian sections of the Regular Observance were of another order than Paoluccio's congregation; and we shall see that a significant part of the non-Italian Observance also held quite different ideals and aspirations, including a different attitude to the issue of the division of the Order. Indeed, during the first half of the 15th century the Italian Observance itself gradually changed its nature, in key respects abandoning its own traditions in favour of contradictory ones developed elsewhere. In short it is hardly too much to say that between the European Observance of, say, the 1430s and Paoluccio's Observance of the 1370s there were greater differences than similarities.

Of these two phases of the Observance - as they can reasonably be called - it was the later one which was definitive,
or in other words historically more lasting. Furthermore it was during the second phase that the dual issue of reform and division, which is at the heart of this study, reached its logical culmination, provisionally in the years 1446-7, and for all time in the events of 1517 and 1528. In these two senses the second phase of the Observance can be regarded as more important than the first, particularly for the present work.

What then were the origins of the second phase of the Regular Observance? It was in all essentials the creation of the period of the Great Schism. By the end of that apparently unpromising time in the Church's history the geographical increase of the Observance beyond Italy was firmly established (though far from attaining its eventual proportions); and in the new areas of reform the departures from the pattern set by Paoluccio dei Trinci, regarding the aspirations and very nature of the reform, and the issue of the division of the Order, had taken on clear and indeed definitive form. Thereby the stage was set for the dénouement registered in 1446-7 and 1517/1528, and the events of the intervening years should be seen as no more than the working out of a situation fixed in its fundamentals by 1417. This is to present the period of the Great Schism as the turning-point in the history of the Regular Observance, and thus perhaps its most important moment.

Our study of this decisive period will begin with a sketch of the geographical aspect – the development of a Regular Observance movement outside Italy. This will be largely as it were an external matter, concerning primarily the establishment of reformed friaries, their places, dates and numbers, but it will
provide the necessary framework for a more interior and surely more significant study, that of the nature and aspirations of the new, extended reform; and in turn this study will introduce the topic in which reform came to a head in practice, the division of the Order.

One preliminary matter may be touched on concerning all three aspects of the investigation: the state of the sources. The essential point is that they are decidedly uneven. In each area of study there are parts which are remarkably well documented, and others that are almost wholly obscure. The gaps are perhaps no more than we should expect from what was after all a period of origins — we have already met the same situation regarding the beginnings of the Italian Observance under John of Valle — but we cannot avoid the consequence of patchiness and imbalance in the picture which results. However, if the ideal of a comprehensive and even account must be renounced, we are fortunate that the significant points of the story can be very fully established from the islands of high documentation.

Before proceeding to the reform in its three aspects it may be as well to recall the outlines of the Order’s history over the period, in so far as it was directly affected by the schism in the Church.¹ The essential fact is that, being a single, international body, the Order reproduced within itself the divisions of Christendom, which in turn, as is well known, tended to follow national configurations. From 1378 therefore the Franciscans were split into rival Roman and Avignonese obediences, each behaving as though it alone constituted the Order, and otherwise
carrying on as normal, as it were; thus each had its own line of General Ministers, held General Chapters, issued decrees - and denounced the acts of the other. Broadly speaking the Franciscan Provinces in France, the Spanish peninsula, Scotland and the Kingdom of Naples were Avignonese, and the rest were Roman. However in detail the picture was less tidy than this. A perhaps surprisingly large number of Provinces did not fit neatly into either obedience, and suffered the fate of being contested, more or less seriously, by rival Provincial Ministers; among them were Santiago (lying partly in Romanist Portugal), Aquitaine (with the English and therefore Romanist enclave of Guienne), Strasbourg, Milan, Genoa and Umbria. Furthermore the friars were subject to fluctuations of national policy on the Schism, perhaps the most notable being the two French withdrawals of obedience from the Avignonese Pope Benedict XIII, in 1398 and 1408.

The year 1409 introduced a further and major complication into the scene. The Council of Pisa met in a praiseworthy attempt to reunite the Church under a new line of Popes acceptable to all parties, and merely succeeded in adding a third obedience (soon admittedly larger than either) to the existing two. As before the Franciscans followed in step, gaining a Pisan obedience, but not quite losing the Avignonese and Roman. The Pope elected at Pisa, taking the title Alexander V, was himself a Franciscan, so it was the more natural that his following within the Order was soon much the largest of the three; only the Spanish Provinces remained faithful to Benedict XIII, and half a dozen Italian ones to his Roman rival Gregory XII. So matters stood
until the position was eventually resolved, for both Church and Order, at the Council of Constance (1414-1417).

Such was the background against which arose the movements which were to transform the Regular Observance and thereby affect decisively the future of the Franciscans.

1. External Outline of the new Reform Movements

The new reform movements of the Schism period arose in two areas, France and Spain; to be more precise, in the Provinces of Touraine, Franciae (northern France, including Paris), and Burgundy, and of Santiago, Aragon and Castile. It has been asserted that there were also contemporary reforms in Hungary and Bosnia, but the evidence for this is minimal; and even if it were the case it would add nothing to our story, for there is no further information available about the supposed reforms. We shall therefore be confining ourselves to reform in France and Spain - a phenomenon, it will be noticed, primarily of the Avignonese observance.

Taking the six Provinces concerned as a whole, there is considerable doubt as to the date and location of the earliest reformed settlement. This is mainly due to the confusion, particularly as regards chronology, in which the origins of the Spanish movements are enveloped - chroniclers of later generations regarded it as a matter of honour to claim primacy for their respective Provinces, and filial zeal tended to get the better of historical accuracy. If, however, we adopt the more sober dating of the magisterial modern study of the Spanish reforms, we shall conclude that the first home of the new movements was in
France. This was the friary of Mirebeau, in the Province of Touraine. Even here we cannot date precisely the introduction of the reform, but it would seem to have been shortly before 1390 - a group of French Observants, writing in 1415, placed it "25 years ago and more". According to the same witnesses the impetus came from three brothers of the Province, who requested their General Minister to grant them a friary in a quiet and secluded spot, where they might live according to the purity of the Rule. The General directed them to the Provincial of Touraine, John Philippi, and it was he who made the grant of Mirebeau; he also nominated one of the three Guardian of the settlement, and removed its former residents. Before long zealous brothers joined the new community, and the reform was under way. Initially, however, its movement was slow. For more than a decade there is no sign of any further reformed centres being established, and the community of Mirebeau itself has left no trace in the historical record. We can only suppose that it pursued a devout way of life in peace and quiet, that knowledge of it gradually spread in the outside world, both lay and clerical, but that it excited neither great antagonism nor great enthusiasm.

In the meantime things had started happening in Spain, and the initial pace of development was somewhat quicker. The first move would seem to belong to the Province of Santiago; and two possible dates can be assigned to it. The eighteenth century chronicler of the Province places it in 1388, recounting that the Provincial Minister in that year resigned his office and withdrew to the remote hermitage of Valderrago (or Robledillo) to lead a
life of great austerity, subsequently gaining the sanction of Pedro de Luna, legate of the Avignonese Pope Clement VII and in due course his successor with the title Benedict XIII. The story is not confirmed by any other source, and cannot be accepted with any confidence, as its author has been found in general a decidedly unreliable witness. The first unimpeachable evidence comes in the year 1392, and takes the form of a bull of the Roman Pope Boniface IX (one recalls that the Province of Santiago was split between the two obediences). In this three friars of the Province, Gonzalo Mariño, Diego Arias and Pedro Díaz, are authorised, as they had requested, to "lead a solitary life" in a hermitage which, it is clear, had yet to be established, whether "by pious grant of the faithful or in another lawful way" by contrast with Mirebeau and the first homes of the Italian Observance, a new settlement founded specifically for reforming friars. This new hermitage, it is expressly declared, is to remain "under the customary obedience of the Superiors of the said Order".

It would seem that the initiative in Santiago was shortly followed by developments in Castile. In 1394 a citizen of Cordoba, Martín Fernández, through the good offices of the king and queen secured the permission of Pope Clement VII to found a Franciscan settlement in wild and mountainous country, to the north of his native town, where he was himself living in retreat from the world; and the place, appropriately called S. Francisco del Monte, was made over to the Order, represented by the custos of Seville, in October of the same year. However, despite the harshness of the surroundings, the first residents of the new
friary found it too wealthy and comfortable for their liking, and almost their first action was to set about constructing another settlement more in harmony with their evidently rigorous tastes: they did the work themselves, using only the simplest materials readily to hand, sleeping on the ground, and going without anything they could not themselves make, apart from clothing; there were strict disciplines of silence, and of abstinence - it is said that the brothers ate no cooked food, surviving on the plentiful wild produce of the region. Their original benefactor, Fernández, was understandably put out by this cavalier reaction to his generosity, and accused the friars of going beyond their rights; but by his own act of concession he had renounced jurisdiction over his gift, and so the transfer of the settlement to its new site went ahead without impediment, and with the knowledge and permission of the Order's Superiors. The involvement of the latter throughout the proceedings has led the modern historians of the Spanish reform movement to deny that S. Francisco del Monte should be assigned to it, but on this one point it seems hard to accept their reasoning; the austere life of the place merits the title reform if anything does, and as to the jurisdictional point we have just seen that Boniface IX's permission for the establishment of a reformed hermitage in Santiago included the stipulation that it should remain under the customary obedience of the Order's Superiors. Reform, therefore, was not necessarily incompatible with a normal chain of command.

Following the foundation and rebuilding of S. Francisco del Monte, the last five years of the century brought significant developments for the reform in both Santiago and Castile, evidence
of the greater initial momentum of the reform in Spain than in France. In Santiago fr. Gonzalo Mariño, one of the three friars named in Boniface IX's bull of 1392, began to establish himself as the chief driving force behind the new movement, spreading it to the hermitage of Herbón in 1396 and to Puertomarin in, probably, 1397, and perhaps to one or two further places by the end of the century (the basis of this calculation being the fact that in a bull of 1407 the number of his foundations is given as seven, without any further information as to dates); the new settlements, like the first one, were of Roman obedience. And in Castile, in 1397 or shortly thereafter, Peter of Villacreces, having postponed his plans until, to satisfy his brother the bishop of Burgos, he had achieved the degree of Master in theology, withdrew with one companion to the desert cave of S. Pedro de Arlanza, and undertook a life of pronounced austerity and devotion. It was the beginning of the so-called Recollectio Villacrenciana - one of the most significant branches of the Spanish reform, and important to the historian as the best documented of all. On both counts it will demand a good deal of our attention later.

By 1400 the French and Spanish reform had been in existence for perhaps twelve years, and would seem to have counted some seven settlements, one in Touraine, two in Castile, and perhaps four in Santiago: no doubt a sound record, but far from spectacular. In the remaining 17 years of the Great Schism something very much more robust grew out of those apparently hesitant beginnings. 1400 brought the foundation of the hermitage of Llerena, by virtue of a bull of Benedict XIII,
and 1401 that of another hermitage, S. Francisco del Monte de Villaverde,16 both in Castile. In 1402 we witness a geographical extension of the reform impulse. The first reformed house was founded in the Province of Aragon (the traditional date of 1388 or 1389, given by Wadding and others, would seem to be mistaken).17 This was the hermitage of Santo Espíritu del Monte, "in the wilderness of the territory of Murviedro", erected by the Queen Doña María de Luna at the request of two friars whom she regarded highly, Francisco Eximenis and Bartolomé Borras, and with the authority of the Avignonese Pope Benedict XIII.18 And in the same year Benedict's rival Boniface IX was instrumental in an attempt to establish the reform in the part of Aquitaine under English domination: permission was given to one Peter of Villanova (not to be confused with the Spanish reformer Villacreces) and other friars to observe the Rule "as ordained by St. Francis and approved by several Roman pontiffs" in one or two houses, whether new or already existing.19 It would seem that nothing came of this initiative — and Peter of Villanova reappears in 1408 to be made a papal chaplain by Gregory XII20 — but the fact that it was made at all is not without interest.

The next two years brought significant development in France and, probably, Castile. In France, after 14 or more years of existence in the single house of Mirebeau, the reform movement began to spread. A new friary was founded in 1404 at Bressuire in the Province of Touraine with the authorisation of Benedict XIII;21 and the five brothers who moved in accepted the interesting stipulation that if the community should ever come to abandon its observance of the Rule, those guilty might be removed
and replaced by others of greater zeal. And in the same year there is the first clear evidence of reform outside Touraine. The friars of Séez, an ancient foundation in Normandy, in the Order’s Province of Franciae, evidently made their own decision to adopt a stricter way of life, and wrote to the Minister General for permission and advice; his reply survives as the evidence for what had taken place. It is possible that a new spirit was stirring elsewhere in the Province at the same time, for a bull of Benedict XIII of October 1406 called for the establishment of reform in the friary of Hesdin, and entrusted the task to the Guardians of Amiens and Péronne — an indication that, at the least, they were already known not to be antagonistic to the work of improvement. (It seems that this never led to the positive step of formally accepting the reform movement. Amiens makes no further appearance in its annals; Péronne was still wavering in 1408, and in 1415 the French Observants declared that it had been denied them by Conventual obstruction; the troubles it had occasioned were remembered as late as 1446.)

In Castile, meanwhile, in 1404 Benedict XIII established canonically the position of the hermitage of S. Miguel del Monte, near Alcocer, in which a group of reformed friars was evidently already living, and it may have been about the same time that yet another hermitage, La Rábida, was founded, under the leadership of fr. John Rodríguez, even though official authorisation from Benedict XIII was not forthcoming until 1412. It would also seem to have been about this time — and in any case not later than 1404 — that Peter of Villacreses founded the hermitage of La Aguilera, important as the first permanent settlement of
his congregation, the place where he began to build up a stable group of disciples, and in these senses the cradle of the entire Recollectio Villacreciana (the reformer's sojourn in the cave of Arlanza had been brought to an end, at a date unknown, by the admiring but importunate attentions of his brother the bishop of Burgos and of the king and queen, and it had been followed by a first but impermanent foundation, that of the hermitage of La Salceda).  

Up till 1406 the French reform had undoubtedly been overshadowed by the Spanish, and to the unprejudiced observer its very future might seem in doubt. But in 1406, without warning, and for no very obvious reason, it entered upon a phase of dramatic, not to say hectic development, and in less than four years had been transformed into an irreversible movement. The number of reformed settlements trebled at least, important steps were taken to knit them into a constitutional unit, and the reform acquired in potential a whole new department, that centred around its one outstanding female representative, St. Colette. Over all presided the figure of Pope Benedict XIII.

It will be best to trace the numerical increase of the reform chronologically, so far as possible, and including initiatives whose outcome was negative, or is uncertain. First to be mentioned is Laval (Touraine) which, founded in 1396, evidently accepted the reform some time between August 1404 and April 1407. On 11 October 1406 Benedict XIII gave permission for the foundation of a reformed friary at Mantaria (Touraine), and on the 24th he issued his order for the reform of Hesdin — forcible if necessary — to the Guardians of Amiens and Péronne.
there is however no sign that either bull was put into effect. In February 1407 the aged constable Olivier de Clisson made arrangements in his will for the foundation of a reformed house at Clisson (Touraine); in April it was the turn of the Duke of Brittany to obtain papal approval for a similar new foundation at Redon (Touraine), and for the reform of one other existing friary— to be named by himself— with the stipulation that suitable friars should be chosen for both by the General and Provincial Minister, who would be responsible for enforcing strict observance, expelling any backsliders, and replacing them by more satisfactory elements drawn from Mirebeau, Bressuire or Laval— an indication of cohesion within the reform.34 In the event, however, the bull was evidently not acted on; licence for a foundation at Redon was obtained anew from Martin V in 1418,35 and we do not know what became of the plan for the reform of an already existing house. In July 1407 Benedict XIII approved a further aristocratic foundation, and this took effect: that of Cholet (Touraine), the work of Marie de Montalais. There followed a pause, and then, on a single day, 9 April 1408, the Pope issued three further bulls of reform. Two were for new foundations by members of the local nobility of Touraine, at Fontenay-le-Comte and Olonne, and names and places apart they were as carbon copies of one another;36 but only the first seems to have been put into effect. The third bull was addressed to the Minister General and ordered the expulsion of the existing community from the friary of St. Jean d'Angély (Touraine), and their replacement by friars willing to observe their Rule, "like the brothers of the house of Bressuire"; this at the request of
the local populace, scandalised (so they reported) by the evil goings-on of the friary.\textsuperscript{37} Three weeks later, on 30 April, it was the same story. This time it was the inhabitants of Loches (Touraine) who were scandalised, indeed put in fear for their own spiritual well-being, by the behaviour of the local Franciscans; once again, at many points in the same words, Benedict XIII instructed the General to expel the offending community and replace them with worthy brothers like those of Bressuire.\textsuperscript{38} And later in the same year local pressure was again instrumental in forwarding the ideal of stricter living: it was with the support of the magistrates and the diocesan that, in August, the Guardian of St. Omer (Province of Franciae) took his community over to the side of the reform, expelling those who opposed the change.\textsuperscript{39}

The course of reform at St. Omer was, as we shall see later, to be far from straight; it was the sign of a marked deterioration in the climate for the French movement. August was the month of the second and definitive withdrawal of France's allegiance from Benedict XIII; there followed the preparations for the Council of Pisa, and, in June 1409, the election of a Franciscan, not of the reforming party, as Pope Alexander V. Surprisingly, perhaps, the new Pope in September gave licence for one more reformed foundation in the Province of Touraine, that of Amboise;\textsuperscript{40} but a fortnight later, with the issue of his bull \textit{Ordinem Fratrum Minorum},\textsuperscript{41} as far as the reformers were concerned hard times began.

In retrospect, it was the end of a honeymoon. In the first fifteen and more years of its existence the reform had gained,
with certainty, three friaries; the four years from 1406 added eight, and licences, not actually implemented, for a further five. No less important, the growth in numbers was accompanied by a realisation of common identity, and from apparently scattered initiatives produced a self-conscious movement. The first sign of this may be seen in the similarities of wording, and cross-references from one friary to another, which we have already noted in some of the papal bulls. And taking the point an important step further, the crucial matter of the actual observance of the reform was defined in similar or identical terms in all the bulls from the foundation document of Bressuire onwards, up to and including that for Amboise, issued by Alexander V: at the centre, therefore, the reform was grasped as a whole, and the conception survived, not merely a change of Popes, but the change from one papal administrative machine to another. This was the back-ground against which, in 1407 and again in 1408, Benedict XIII was able to make a number of constitutional arrangements for "Bressuire, Mirebeau and certain other houses" which both bound them together as an entity and also set them apart from the rest of the Order. (The level of observance defined in the series of bulls, and the precise arrangements made in 1407 and 1408, are important matters, to which we shall return).

It was in the midst of these developments that a vocation which had been maturing in seclusion for many years finally came to fruition, and St. Colette entered on her active career of Franciscan reform, with profound consequences for the story of the Regular Observance. The back-ground to this turn of events and, more important, the title of a great reformer of the Poor
Clares or Franciscan Second Order to a place in the history of the male First Order, require a more than passing consideration.\textsuperscript{44}

Colette was born at Corbie in Picardy in 1381, and from an early age - four years, so she told one of her subsequent biographers, Sister Perrine\textsuperscript{45} - showed signs of a remarkable piety, her one problem being to find it an appropriate form of expression. On her parents' death she renounced her possessions; she entered in turn a house of Beguines, a Benedictine Community, a convent of Poor Clares;\textsuperscript{46} but in none did she find satisfaction. Then, in 1402, she first came close to what she was looking for: she undertook the life of a recluse; and, having joined the Franciscan Third Order, was immured in a little cell built between two buttresses of the church of Notre Dame at Corbie.\textsuperscript{47} Here her vocation clarified and developed, and by the spring of 1406 she had fixed on the plan for a reform of the Poor Clares, and was evidently known to and in favour with the curia of the Avignonese obedience; for on 29 April Benedict XIII issued a bull at her request - the first of many, and in a sense the first milestone of her public career - authorising her to found a convent of reformed Clares in the diocese of Amiens, Paris or Noyon\textsuperscript{48} (without going into detail we can observe that the convent would be "reformed" by virtue of accepting a notably strict Rule, that drawn up by St. Clare herself, and confirmed by Pope Innocent IV but two days before her death in 1253 - the saint setting such store by it that she hid the original in her clothes and took it with her to the tomb, to be brought to light again in 1893 - whereas the normal Rule for the French Clarisses of the period was a
mitigated version approved by Urban IV in 1263). 49

At this point Colette was still a recluse; but by the summer of 1406 she was ready for the final dramatic move on which there would be no going back: she abandoned the life of a recluse, and emerged from the cell which, in the normal course of events, would have been hers till death. The necessary authorisation for this grave step was signed by the Apostolic Nuncio, Cardinal Jean de Chalant, on 1 August; 50 and thereupon Colette set out to meet the man with whom she was already in touch, and who was best placed to discuss her plans, help her resolve them, and put them into effect, Pope Benedict XIII. An interview took place at Nice, followed by a certain amount of debate within the curia; then the Pope brought matters to an unheard-of conclusion by himself receiving Colette into the Order of St. Clare, placing the veil on her head with his own hand—there was no question of novitiate or other formal preparation—and on the spot instituting her Abbess and Mother of the reform and all who should join it, with the promise of all the support he could give her. 51 He was as good as his word; on the same day, 15 October 1406, he authorised her first projected foundation, which was subsequently fixed for Hesdin; 52 this failed, so in April 1407 the Pope gave permission for a second attempt, this time at Rumilly in the diocese of Geneva; 53 this again came to nothing, and it was not till January 1408 that, at Besançon, the reformed family of Clares found its first permanent home; Benedict established it, transferring to it the permission previously given for Rumilly. 54

Thus, in brief, did St. Colette begin her reform of the
Franciscan Second Order in France. Wherein, it may be asked, lay the connection with reform of the First Order, which is the concern of the present study? First and most obviously, nuns required male assistants, not only as chaplains, but often as their representatives in ecclesiastical and temporal affairs; and it was most natural, if not inevitable, that for Franciscan nuns these should be found among Franciscan friars. Thus in the bull issued on October 15, the very day of Colette's profession, the Pope authorised her to nominate representatives to take care of the business of establishing and building her first convent, and these were to be either the deans of Amiens and Noyon (dioceses where the foundation was projected), or else Franciscans, chosen by herself, against the wishes of their Superiors if necessary; and further, it was laid down that, once the community was in being, the abbess should nominate as its chaplains "two upright and suitable brothers of the said Order of Minors." 55

From the start, therefore, the existence of this new, reformed branch of the Poor Clares was bound to that of the friars. There could be no blinking the issue which immediately arose: must not the friars be reformed too; how else indeed (it might be asked) could "upright and suitable" chaplains be found? The logic seems irrefutable, and was accepted as such by Pope Benedict XIII. On October 24, 1406 he named Hesdin as the location of Colette's first foundation, specifying that it should be erected close to the Franciscan friary; 56 it was on the same day that, as we have already seen, he instructed the Guardians of Amiens and Peronne to see to it that that friary
was reformed. In the event neither the female foundation of Kesdin nor, so far as we know, the male reform was actually accomplished; however the principle that the female reform required a male counterpart, illustrated so early, was to remain normative and receive concrete expression in the foundation of so-called Coletan reformed friaries; and it is the first reason why the work of St. Colette cannot be omitted from a study of the reform of the First Order in France.

There is a second reason, less obvious, but much more significant in some ways: in certain respects Colette can be seen, not merely as an instigator, but actually as herself a product, of a current of male Franciscan reform. A first justification for this view is found within her biography, in the crucial role which — we can dimly perceive — was played in the formation of her vocation by two particular members of the First Order. Of these the earlier was Jean Pinet, Guardian of the friary of Kesdin — the very place where Colette planned her first foundation — and custos of Picardy in the years leading up to her entry on her reforming career (he died not long before her journey to Benedict XIII at Nice). In her biography Sister Perrine records hearing Colette say that it was this friar who put an end to her total uncertainty regarding her vocation and its expression. It was in fact he who, having talked things over with her, advised her to become a member of the Third Order and a recluse; and, once this step was taken, he continued to visit her, providing spiritual consolation, and more concrete advice on both spiritual topics and "all practical matters she was contemplating"; it was with his advice and
consent that she took her vital decision, no less practical than spiritual, to leave her recluse's cell. He was in short her "first and outstanding Confessor"\(^60\) at a critical period of her life, and we need not doubt that, as her earliest and most important biographer, Pierre de Vaux, assures us, his influence remained with her always. In what direction, then, did this tend? Pierre de Vaux, who was himself Colette's principal Confessor towards the end of her life, describes his predecessor thus: "a man of especial goodness and honest life, gifted with great prudence, distinguished in wisdom and the knowledge of God; a true observer of his Rule, although few or perhaps none such were found in that country at that time; for there were not yet any reformed convents of the Order of Friars Minor in that Province ..."\(^61\) The final phrase represents but a trifling inaccuracy in the conditions of medieval historical knowledge - after all in 1402, when Pinet seems first to have met Colette, there was only one reformed house, Mirebeau - and it simply emphasises the characterisation "true observer of his Rule" which, as a fellow friar, de Vaux was well qualified to give. It is hard to resist the conclusion that Pinet must be regarded as a reformer in a fairly specific sense; which, given that he was both Guardian and custos, raises important questions about our knowledge of the spreading of the Mirebeau initiative, in the Province of Franciae and particularly at Hesdin itself. More important for our immediate purpose, it may tell us a good deal about the origin of Colette's reformist vocation; and when in a different source we read that Pinet "frequently visited" her in her recluse's cell and "diligently informed her
about the regular life," it becomes impossible to doubt that the Guardian of Hesdin played a large part in forming her ideals.

A secondary role in the same process seems to have been filled by another Franciscan, Henry de Baume. He succeeded Pinet as Colette's Confessor, and held that office for some 34 years, until his death in 1439 (to be succeeded in turn by the biographer Pierre de Vaux). His concern was thus primarily the translation of Colette's ideal into reality, and in this process he was her chief adviser and assistant; indeed in a practical sense he could be regarded as the principal architect of the work. Even so, we should not overlook the fact that he was in touch with Colette before she embarked on her active career, and had a hand in her decision: according to one source the step was taken "with his advice and consent"; a story which receives some confirmation from the intriguing text of the letter Colette sent him immediately before her move: "My Father as soon as you have read and seen these letters, come quickly to Corbie, for we must go to our blessed Pope". According to her chief biographer, Pierre de Vaux, it was only at the very end of her time as a recluse that Colette became clear and resolute enough about her purposes to put them to paper, so it is possible that at that significant moment she was influenced by Henry de Baume. This possibility lends particular interest to a brief but extremely important assertion (apparently passed over by other modern writers) made about 1492 by Sister Rufine, a member of Colette's congregation: according to Henry himself, as reported by Sister Perrine and others, his home immediately before coming into contact with Colette had been none other than the friary of
If this is true — and in view of the witnesses cited the probability seems high — it gives us our most specific evidence of a current of reform flowing from the male to the female Order. Earlier we saw that Benedict XIII admitted St. Colette to profession, and created her Abbess, without a moment’s formal novitiate. It has been argued that for this reason she must be regarded as auto-didacte, self-taught. There may be greater justification for seeing her as the pupil of the French school of masculine reform which had its starting-point at Mirebeau; as, indeed, its outstanding product.

This assessment does not depend on the facts of biography alone, indispensable though they are to give it a firm basis. There is further and perhaps clinching evidence in what we can discover about Colette’s own conception of her mission. The essential point is that she would seem to have been as interested in the reform of the Franciscan friars as in that of the nuns among whom, by her sex, she was bound to live: thus by conception and in intention she no less than the friars of Mirebeau or Bressuire was a reformer of the First Order, and so in her own right due a place in the present study. It is true that this view has been contested, and it must be granted that in strict canonical terms the notion of a nun empowered to reform an Order of men makes no sense. Nevertheless the evidence of the biographical sources is hard to deny.

Pierre de Faux is the chief witness, and he touched on the issue at a number of points. In one sense the key episode was Colette’s encounter with Benedict XIII, for it was here that her mission officially took shape; and Pierre is clear and precise
about her programme on this occasion. He writes that she sought two things above all from the Pope: first, permission to enter the Order of St. Clare; second, the "reparation" of the First and Second Orders of St. Francis.70

This is unambiguous, but by itself does not, perhaps, take us very far. However the same biographer enables to fill in some significant back-ground. All the accounts we have of Colette suggest that, in the manner of the times, dreams and visions played a large part in her spiritual experience, including what might be called her processes of decision-making. One very important vision took place during her spell as a recluse.71 In this the state of the whole world was laid out before her, both ecclesiastical and lay, and she was shown all the sins, great and small, of all sorts and conditions of men, and further all the punishment and torment with which they had been or yet would be visited. She was terrified and appalled, and the horror of it was something she never forgot. Her immediate reaction was something like despair; then she began to pray constantly for the conversion of the wretched mortals whose spiritual fate she had glimpsed; and it was noted that for the rest of her life one of her outstanding characteristics was an exceptional gentleness and love towards sinners, the more marked by contrast with her detestation for sin itself.72 It may be, therefore, that in the vision and its lasting effect on her consciousness we grasp one of the well-springs of her religious activity. And for our present purpose the vital point is that she eventually identified the reform of the First and Second Orders of St. Francis as the means to
realise her programme of conversion of sinners. This illumination also came to her in the form of a vision, and it is noteworthy that thereupon the state of despair seems to have left her: she had found an adequate answer to her spiritual distress. What she saw was the figure of St. Francis, together with the Virgin Mary and a company of angels, presenting herself, Colette, before Christ, "humbly requesting that she be given him for the reforming of his Orders, and of the above-mentioned poor sinners and transgressors, whom she had seen ... in the first vision". If there is any substance in all this — and to the present writer it seems an entirely credible account of how, psychologically, a vocation might be fuelled — then it is clear that Colette could not have restricted herself to reforming the Second Order alone; the universality of her programme required the involvement of the friars as well.

There are a number of other, perhaps lesser pointers to her interest in the reform of the First Order. Not surprisingly, it took the humble and — Pierre de Vaux asserts — shy and self-conscious young recluse some considerable time to accept the notion that she had been chosen by St. Francis for a work of universal application. Accordingly, she first formulated a less exalted role for herself: she would do no more than make a personal journey to the Pope, and implore him to take charge of the work of reforming the Orders of St. Francis; all she would ask for herself would be his permission to "have a small room next to one of the convents" to be reformed by him, where she would devote herself to the service of the nuns she could not, as yet, feel worthy to join. The psychological truth of this
story, representing a sort of half-way-house between the decision to become a recluse and the emergence of the full-fledged reformer, seems utterly convincing; it is the more striking that— the point which matters at present—already she was thinking of the reform of the Orders (in the plural), not of that of the Clares alone. Years later, when her career was well under way, it was still the same. The evidence comes this time from Sister Perrine, a point of some importance since, writing as a nun for nuns, she had every reason to ignore Colette's interest in the friars. She recounts how once the saint fell ill, and her life was despaired of; and once again, at a critical time, she had a vision. The Virgin, Mary Magdalen and St. Clare on one side were kneeling before God, and they were asking that at last Colette might be allowed to join them, that death might put an end to her labours; but on the other side St. Francis, on bended knee, demurred: "Let her survive, I beseech you, whose presence you know to be so necessary to the reform of my Orders" (plural). Perrine's reason for recording the story is to show that her heroine actually desired death (for she was somewhat put out by St. Francis' intervention, which won the day); what she tells us about Colette's reform programme is the more convincing for being unintentional.

There is, it may be thought, another point of interest about this story: the curious relation it seems to portray between St. Clare and St. Francis. Did St. Colette see her reform mission as an accomplishment of the man's wishes, not the woman's? It will not be overlooked that, in the earlier vision already described, it was Francis and the Virgin who together
presented Colette to Christ; St. Clare did not figure at all. Indeed it is surely a remarkable fact that, in the printed lives of a "reformer of the Order of St. Clare", Clare herself is almost entirely absent. Conversely, when Colette spoke to her nuns about the religious formation of her youth, and said that by divine grace she had as clear an idea of the regular life at the age of nine as at thirty or forty, it was specifically of the Order of St. Francis that she spoke—not of the Order of St. Clare. 77 Taking this point together with all our other evidence it may be reasonable to conclude that St. Colette was above all a follower of St. Francis, and a follower of St. Clare by reason of her sex. Canonically her field of action was that of the Second Order, and fruitfully enough she worked within it; but through her formation and in sympathy she belonged also to the First Order, and for that reason has an integral part in the story of its reform. The point will have particular importance when we come to consider the nature of that reform.

The adherence of St. Colette, along with the increased number of houses and the moves towards constitutional unification, mean that the years 1406-1409 belong primarily to the French rather than to the Spanish reform. Nevertheless they were not without developments in the peninsula. In September 1407 Benedict XIII issued a bull confirming the status of the reformed houses established to date in the Province of Santiago by Gonzalo Laríño (it is from this bull that we know they numbered seven at the time). 78 The reason for the Pope's action was, for him, a pleasant one: the reformed communities, whose Province, we know, was split on the issue of the Schism, had decided to abandon the
Roman obedience under whose authority they had been founded.

Benedict's satisfaction was marred by a single point: Mariño himself, the man behind the reform, had not yet recognised the error of his ways. Perhaps it was owing to the Schism's confusions that a further reformed house was founded in Santiago, in or shortly before 1407, without any papal approval at all: this was the settlement of St. Anthony, near Lisbon. In October 1407, finally, Benedict XIII gave permission for a new Franciscan foundation in Castile, that of the hermitage of Villasilos. This represented a significant new departure within the Recollectio Villacreciana, for it was the first offshoot from the community of Villacreces himself. The moving spirit in the new venture was Peter of Santoyo. This friar had been Villacreces' first disciple in the hermitage of La Aguilera, whither he had come from the convent of Valladolid, and for a year or so the two men lived there on their own. Then, perhaps in 1304 or 1305, Santoyo departed on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a step which prompted Villacreces' first serious attempt to attract recruits and build up his community. It proved a sensible move, for although Santoyo seems to have returned to La Aguilera, it did not retain his allegiance: the decision to found Villasilos, taken in circumstances and for reasons which are unknown, represented a definite break from Villacreces, and the beginning of an independent enterprise.

After these events the reform in both France and Spain seems for a period to have been marking time, and there were no further developments until, probably, 1412. That at any rate is the most likely date for the reform of the friary of Dôle, in the Order's
Province of Burgundy. The question is, however, a thorny one, and we shall have to return to it; for the moment suffice it to say that a reformed way of life was established in the friary, and that the matter preoccupied both St. Colette and members of the masculine movement which had its origins at Mirebeau. As for the Spanish reform, we may note that it was in December 1412 that Benedict XIII gave formal approbation to the already existing hermitage of La Rábida.83

The introduction of reform at Dôle, however exactly it took place, represented for the French movement but an isolated success in an otherwise notably unresponsive world, and the remaining years of the Schism brought only one further advance, the concession of a friary at Varennes (Province of Franciae) at a time when the Council of Constance was already in session.84 In Spain, however, it was a different matter. The approbation of La Rábida was followed by a veritable spate of concessions from the pen of Benedict XIII, lasting from 1413 to 1417, and of greater effect on the scope of the Spanish reform than the measures of 1406-1409 on the French. It is not without irony that this considerable spell of decisive action in Spain fell at a time when the Pope's authority was repudiated in the rest of Christendom.

In 1413 five licences for reform can be recorded, one for Aragon and the remainder for Castile. The first concerned the foundation of Segorbe, in Aragon. It was by modern reckoning only the second reformed community of that Province, and it was established directly from its predecessor, S. Espíritu del Monte,85 with one of the original promoters of the latter,
fr. Bartolomé Borras, playing a leading role; appropriately therefore its constitutional position was defined in terms almost identical to those of S. Espíritu. The three bulls for Castile which followed related to the straightforward canonical stabilisation of reform initiatives. At Cuéllar it was a case of giving formal status to a settlement which was already in existence; at Constantina, of converting some houses granted to the Order ten years previously by King Henry III, and already used for devotional purposes, into a properly constituted friary; and rather similarly at the settlement of St. Julian near Capraria, the Pope's function was to permit the extension of a small hermitage already in existence, and to define its constitutional position by granting it the same privileges as were enjoyed by the reformed community of S. Miguel del Monte, founded in 1404. The last provision is an indication of a certain sense of unity within the Castilian reform, and the same point is established most forcibly by the remaining bull for Castile, which called for the reform of the friary of Sahagún — the most interesting document of the four, and that despite the fact that, so far as is known, it was not actually put into effect. For what the bull reveals is that the reform of Sahagún was proposed in accordance with a decision of a Provincial Chapter held at Cuenca, whereby in each of the eight custodies of the Province one friary was to be set aside for "strict and firm" observance of the Rule. Moreover the man chosen to introduce reform at Sahagún was none other than the author of the Recollectio Villacrenciana, Peter of Villacreces. We do not know the date of the Chapter of Cuenca, but whenever it was, both its
decision, and the choice of Villacreces to implement it at Sahagún, argue a thorough awareness of the unity of the reform - and also, it may be thought, a high level of official support. Both points confirm the impression which the observer is likely already to have gained, viz. that the strongest development of the Spanish reform came in Castile. As to the apparent collapse of the plan to reform Sahagún, it was in a sense made up for by Villacreces' foundation on his own account, in 1414 or 1415, of the hermitage of El Abrojo - the second foundation of his own immediate congregation.92

The impression of Castilian predominance within the Spanish reform is reinforced by the series of bulls which flowed from the chancery of Benedict XIII between 1414 and 1417. One related to Aragon,93 one to Santiago,94 and nine to Castile.95 We can ignore the details and emphasise their most significant collective aspect, namely the strength and coherence of the Castilian reform. The latter feature is illustrated by similarity, even identity of wording as between the several bulls of foundation. For example, that for Medina del Campo (1414)96 seems barely more than a composite of those for the earlier Castilian houses La Rabida, Cuéllar and Sahagún, and there are also similarities to the provisions for the two Aragonese foundations Santo Espíritu and Segorbe; in turn the foundation documents of Arrizafa (1414)97 and Castañar (1415)98 were partly modelled on that for Medina del Campo; and by 1417, as in the cases of Santander99 and Arévalo,100 it was enough to define a new foundation by simply extending to it the same arrangements and privileges as enjoyed by Medina del Campo and Cuéllar. The
sense of unity thus revealed was further underlined, and the structure of the reform was strengthened, by an important bull of June 1417. This was addressed to all the reformed communities of the Province, which had complained of an almost complete lack of proper Visitation, and duly empowered them to elect two friars from among their number as their own Visitors, enjoying the same powers in carrying out the function as a Provincial Minister. The provision represented a not inconsiderable consolidation of the Castilian reform, on the eve of events at the Council of Constance which were to reunite the Franciscan Provinces of Spain with the mainstream of the Order's life.

We thus reach the end of our survey of the external development of the reform in France and Spain during the period of the Schism in the Church. If the account given has been substantially correct (and the state of the sources rules out anything approaching certainty on these matters) we can conclude that in a thirty-year period, from say 1388 to 1417, the cause of reform had gained some forty-one settlements, thirteen in France and twenty-eight in Spain. More precisely, the number by Provinces was: Touraine - 9; Franciae - 3; Burgundy - 1; Castile - 17; Santiago - 9; Aragon - 2.

To put these figures, and the historical development they represent, in perspective, it will be as well to sketch the main outline of the Italian reform initiated by Paoluccio dei Trinci over the same period (a detailed treatment is not necessary, and would in any case be more difficult than for the French and Spanish movements, since the topic is less conveniently
documented and, accordingly, less well researched). Essentially the picture is of a quiet but steady growth along the lines established from the beginning by Paoluccio and of a percolation from the original settlements in Umbria and Rome to a number of other Italian Provinces.

Our earlier treatment of the history of Paoluccio's congregation broke off in the year 1380, at which time - some eight years before the reform of Mirebeau - it seems to have numbered sixteen settlements, eleven in Umbria, four in the Province of Rome, and one in the Marches. In 1390 three more were added in the Marches, and the friar who was to be Paoluccio’s successor as leader of the movement, John of Stroncone, broke new ground for the reform by taking it to Tuscany, where negotiations began for a settlement at Fiesole, just above Florence; thus at Paoluccio’s death in (probably) 1391 the total was some twenty settlements in four Provinces.

In the years which followed - the very period of the development of the French and Spanish reforms - another fifteen settlements or so were added, and entry was gained into further Provinces.

A few samples of the process will suffice. S. Francesco della Vigna, at Venice, had accepted the reform by about 1400, and a foundation was begun at Ferrara in 1407; so it comes as no surprise to find John of Stroncone described in a bull of 1407 as head of the reform in the Provinces of Venice and Bologna, as well as Tuscany, the purpose of the bull being to empower him to rebuild and take over five old friaries. For some time the field of operations seems to have remained in the northern part of Italy, with the centre of gravity in Tuscany, Umbria and the
Marches, but in 1415 John of Stroncone turned his eyes southwards. He journeyed first to Aquila, in the Abruzzi, and set in motion the foundation of a small hermitage at S. Giuliano; then he made his way to the Province of Apulia, where two further foundations followed (and he was still occupied in the area when death claimed him in 1418). In the same year, 1415, a notable addition was made to the settlements of the reform, the Portiuncula at Assisi; this, in some ways the most revered of all Franciscan places, was transferred by order of the Minister General, and with the consent of the unreformed friars of the Province, including those of the great convent of Assisi. According to the traditionally accepted figure, given by Wadding, this brought the number of reformed communities in Italy to thirty-five, while the total of their inmates was in the region of two hundred.

These figures may not be wholly accurate, but they suffice to show that the development of the Italian reform during the era of the Schism had been far from spectacular. Numerically it was now slightly smaller than the total reform north of the Alps; and if one considers that more than half its settlements were already in existence before France or Spain could show a single one, it would seem clear that in the period since 1390 the initiative in Franciscan reform had shifted decisively from southern to northern Europe. And if in the years after the end of the Schism this development was to some extent reversed, it was due to a circumstance which the undramatic tenour of the Italian movement seemed in no way to presage, namely its attraction of four men of outstanding calibre, three of whom
would become canonised saints. Bernardino of Siena joined the Franciscans in 1402, at the friary of Siena, and after a few months transferred for the remainder of his novitiate to the remote hermitage of Il Colombaio in Tuscany, where John of Stroncone himself was Guardian. John of Capistrano was accepted as a novice by the reformed community of S. Francesco al Monte at Perugia in 1415; Albert of Sarteano was recruited from a non-reformed friary in the same year; and in 1416 James of the March found a regular life such as he had been looking for at the Portiuncula, where, as we know, strict friars had been established since the preceding year. These four religious, the "four columns of the Observance", were for almost half a century after the Schism to be the greatest luminaries of the reform in any country, and can be said to have given the Italian quattrocento a part of its lustre. The advent of four such men, and in particular the almost simultaneous vocation of three of them, is to say the least a striking historical conjuncture, and in retrospect was possibly the one dramatic development in the otherwise unremarkable history of the Italian reform during the Schism; it is not, perhaps, without irony that their very success was to be largely instrumental in the gradual transformation of the movement which had made them welcome, and of which they became the chief ornament.

2. The Nature of the New Reform Movements

So far we have been considering the new reforms of the Schism epoch in largely geographical and external terms; now it is necessary to pursue our investigation at a deeper level, and
to ask what underlay the initiatives which took reform into the settlements which have been enumerated.

The topic can be opened up by a further geographical reference. On reflection, an obvious but nevertheless crucial point may spring to the attention: in the areas of France and Spain that we have been considering, there had been no previous history of reform: the movements of the Schism period were an entirely novel phenomenon. The point is underlined by the reflection that in France the reform arose in the Provinces of Touraine, Franciae and Burgundy, with one abortive effort in Aquitaine: one Province in which it noticeably did not originate was Provence - the only one which did have a previous history of reformist endeavour, that connected with the Spirituals in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. In Italy the picture was quite different; there there had been a continuous tradition of reformist aspiration going back to the days of St. Francis himself, and, as we saw at the time, the movement led by Paoluccio dei Trinci must be seen as belonging to that tradition. Here, then, was a fundamental divergence: in Italy reform was, it could be said, as old as the Order itself; north of the Alps it was something never before seen - a new creation.

Nor was this all: it would seem that the new reforms were a spontaneous and indigenous creation. The main point at issue here is whether, in view of its precedence in time, there were any direct contacts between Paoluccio's congregation and the initiatives north of the Alps, such that the former was in any way instrumental in bringing about the latter. In the nature
of the case it is impossible to be as certain on this point as on the previous one; but all the signs are that there was no material influence from south to north. We are here dealing in the first instance with the initiatives of a handful of individuals in Touraine, Castile and Santiago between 1388 and 1394 (although in fact the case of Aragon seems no different, its later date may suggest leaving it out for the present). First, it must be said that there is no positive evidence of any Italian influence on any of the individuals concerned; even to raise the possibility, therefore, takes us into the realm of pure supposition. Accepting it is such, is there any likelihood in the supposition? We may, perhaps, admit it as not impossible that one or other of the northern reformers had some knowledge of what was afoot in Italy; but it would be an uncomfortably large assumption to imagine that all three reforming groups had. And on the other side we have to recognise that there is all the difference between having heard of a distant movement, and owing one's existence directly to initiatory action by it; and such evidence as we have indicates that there was no such direct initiative in the present case. First, we have already briefly considered what positive action was taken by the Italian reform during the Schism; we saw that it was exercised solely in certain Italian Provinces, and furthermore that it was on quite a small scale. Secondly, we shall see in the course of the present chapter that the French and Spanish reforms were both in character too unlike the Italian movement to have been its offspring. In point of fact they were also fairly unlike each other, and it seems that indeed there was no direct link between
them either: there is, again, no evidence of such a link, and
the closeness of their respective dates of origin would seem
to make such a thing highly improbable. In short, the only
reasonable conclusion would seem to be the obvious and common-
sense one: that the transalpine reforms of the Schism period
arose spontaneously in their respective Provinces, and not as
the outcome of external influence.

It is important to be clear on this point, for it
establishes a fundamental difference between the new movements
and that initiated by Paoluccio dei Trinci, a difference from
which in a certain sense all else followed. Paoluccio, given
his extraordinary personal qualities, was still at one level the
product of a living and personal tradition of reform which, as
we said, was as old as the Order itself; the vital spark under-
lying his religious life had been handed on to him by
predecessors in the same cause. In the north it was otherwise.
Here the spark was so to speak self-generated. It came,
metaphorically, from nothing; more accurately, from nowhere else
than the inner resources of the Provinces concerned. In this
sense the new movements belonged to perhaps the classic, the
quintessential type of religious reform, namely the spontaneous
impulse for renewal — analogous perhaps to a pricking of
conscience — the sheer spiritual creation de novo, out of nothing.

Certainly the primary spiritual quality of the new movements
is one of their most striking features, and its study will be one
of our main tasks. But the implications of the fundamental
difference in nature between the Italian and the northern reforms
go further than this. If the impulse for renewal was self-
generated, and not transmitted by personal contact with a living tradition, on what was it based? The only possible answer is the written word. It follows that a second task before us is to discover from what written sources the northern movements formed their ideals: and this undertaking necessarily leads on to a third. For as it happened there was a considerable body of literature, of a generally spiritual nature, on which reforming friars could draw, and it embraced a fair measure of diversity, in particular on the central issue of Franciscan observance as such – there was the spiritual testimony of St. Francis himself, and this, as we saw at the start of this study, was both voluminous and far from homogeneous, and besides there was the great quantity of material relating more or less directly to the debate between the Spirituals and the Community. Therefore in appealing, as by the nature of the enterprise they were bound to do, to the written word, the French and Spanish reformers had to choose between the many available strands of earlier tradition, not least on the specific topic of observance; our third main task will be to see what choices they made on that topic.

Recognition of the nature of the transalpine reforms as a new creation thus requires us to study their nature from three points of view: as a spiritual phenomenon, as based on the written word, and as having to define a level of observance. A degree of overlap between these approaches makes it advisable to take them together. On the other hand the French and Spanish reforms were distinct enough as entities to require them to be treated separately. We may therefore begin by applying our
three-pronged approach to the French developments.

These developments can conveniently be divided into two wings, that concerning St. Colette and the so-called Coletan friars who acted as chaplains to her convents of reformed Clares, and that concerning the masculine movement which originated in Mirebeau. This division might seem to deny the essential unity which, so it was argued earlier, embraced both wings, but its basis is purely practical, viz. the patchy nature of the sources which was mentioned at the start of the chapter: it so happens that Colette and the Coletans have much to tell us about the spiritual quality of the French reform, a little as to its sources, and virtually nothing as to its level of observance, whereas with the Mirebeau group the position is almost precisely reversed. It is not legitimate simply to fill in the blank areas of the one by superimposing on it the image of the other; but by putting the two separate pictures together we shall derive a fairly full idea of the French Franciscan reform taken as a whole.

The spiritual intensity of the personality of St. Colette is something we have already glimpsed in the account of the visions which helped both to clarify and to determine her vocation; it was in fact a principal feature of her whole life in religion. In some sense the centre of that life was prayer. "The chief occupation of the glorious Mother and humble handmaid of the Lord Colette, throughout her life, was directed towards praise and fervent worship and devout prayer towards God. For wherever she was, inside or outside, standing and sitting, walking and at rest, awake and asleep, at all times her thoughts were raised to
Accordingly she set great store by the communal devotion of the Office and derived great spiritual satisfaction from it, being always deeply regretful when other cares compelled her to miss it. She desired her nuns to assemble for the Office some time before it was actually due to start, so that they should have an opportunity to prepare themselves inwardly for its performance; she herself was in the habit of arriving first and departing last, and so concentrated "heart, body and all her forces" on the act of worship that her inner joy became outwardly visible, and inspired her sisters to a similar intense devotion. Nor did this preoccupation with communal worship express itself within the choir alone; it led her to keep Sundays and feast days free from domestic or merely practical concerns, such as shopping, providing materials for new buildings, even cooking, and she would refuse to travel on such days, preferring to remain wherever she might find herself, so that nothing should impede her offering of prayer; and she brought the same principles into her concern for the religious life of the lay world (an important part of her programme, as the visions already described revealed), exhorting secular authorities and individual merchants not to hold markets and fairs on days which should be devoted to the worship of God. But if communal worship was a source of joy to her, she also felt the need for a more personal and private form of prayer, particularly suited to the quiet and comparatively undisturbed hours of the night; then "she would drive from her mind all cares and useless worries, collect all her sensual and bodily powers and natural abilities (virtutes), and direct them to a perfect meditation on God..."; whereupon
she would become increasingly rapt in her devotion, and unaware of her physical surroundings.\textsuperscript{116} Not unexpectedly, perhaps, her biographers assure us that, when she was in this state, extraordinary things happened; witnesses had seen her oratory aflame, her face blazing with supernatural light and beauty, her body raised into the air:\textsuperscript{117} it is the same story as that of Paoluccio dei Trinci in his tower in Poligno,\textsuperscript{118} and we are entitled to assume that the same substance of truth underlies the hagiographical formula.

Of Colette's deep spiritual life, then, there is no doubt. However the traits mentioned so far are all generically Christian — or at any rate medieval; for our purposes what matters is not just the spirituality, but rather the fact that it was characteristically Franciscan; and on this point there can be no doubt that Colette was among the most faithful followers of him who, we saw, was her real Master. The life of prayer itself, although generally Christian, is also characteristically Franciscan — prayer was one of the four hallmarks by which we characterized the original life of the fraternity\textsuperscript{119} — and besides certain specific features of the devotional life of Colette are as it were the image of Francis' own. Sister Perrine records how she sometimes had the opportunity to observe Colette during her night-time vigils and on one such occasion she heard her repeating, with tears and sighs, "Who art thou, Lord, and who am I?";\textsuperscript{120} is it pure chance that this is the very echo of the words attributed to St. Francis on the mountain top of La Verna in September 1224?\textsuperscript{121} Francis' retreat ended with his stigmatisation; on Fridays, at
the recollection of the crucifixion, Colette "felt herself as though wounded by a barb of sharpest pain, so that she seemed beaten and pierced by lance and sword in hands, feet and side," and once her nuns saw her normally beautiful features transformed as though she had been physically bruised and battered. For both saints these physical manifestations were the outcome of an intense concentration on the Passion. In Colette's case the devotion began in earliest youth: she learnt it from her own mother, a devout woman who, according to Pierre de Vaux, meditated on the Passion daily; her daughter listened, and learnt her recitations off by heart; and the effect was indelible: 

"... every day at the hour of noon, at which the Saviour was crucified, she felt the most acute distress and intense anguish of heart for the most bitter passion of our Lord and most loving Saviour; and, to bear them more secretly and with greater devotion, at the said hour she would withdraw from the company of others, and then, in private, she would attempt to apply all the powers of her mind to meditating on the insults and blows, the railings and curses, and the dreadful and ignominious death which, sweetly and patiently, he was willing to endure for the sake of our salvation." Thus withdrawn from others, often she could not refrain from weeping and crying aloud, "recalling the torments of her beloved Spouse." And even in public, for example at Mass, when the story of the Passion was narrated, this naturally self-conscious woman would follow every detail in heart and body until her tears flowed, "so that no heart, however hard, on seeing it could help but be softened to piety and compassion." In short, "in whatever
way she could, whether by reading or in other ways, she impressed the memory of the said Passion on her mind, and concentrated all her intellect and all her powers upon the same mystery..."127

We shall surely not be far wrong if we suppose that, wherever she was and whatever she was doing, the thought of the Passion was always, as with Francis, in some degree present to her. Nor was it without certain natural corollaries. Concern with the person of the Saviour implied concern with the places where he had lived; Colette had a special reverence for the Holy Places, and a keen desire to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem.128 She also had the spirit of martyrdom - "the fervent desire to offer her little body in death as an oblation for the love of our Lord and sweetest Redeemer Jesus Christ, who endured the most bitter death of the Cross for our sake".129 The Crucified was the epitome of suffering and sorrow; Colette rejoiced to receive trials and torments, for through them she was assimilated to her Spouse and Redeemer.130 In all these things she was as it were a reincarnation of St. Francis.

For the Umbrian saint the Saviour actually became physically present among men on one occasion: in the consecration of the bread and wine in the Mass.131 Colette's devotion to the sacrament was scarcely less than that to the Passion itself; and it was reported of her, by her own chaplains among others, that at the elevation of the host she often received the extraordinary grace of seeing her Lord in his physical, bodily shape, sometimes suffering, sometimes glorified. This was but the climax in a familiar pattern of devotion. There was, first, the inner preparation for worship — the cleansing of her conscience by
frequent confession. As the moment for the adoration of the host approached, physical symptoms began; self-conscious as ever, she would usually control these in public; but in private they were given free reign: she would tremble, dissolve in tears, groan and cry aloud. (She was asked why she reacted thus, and replied that at times she simply could not restrain herself, "even if the whole world should be present"; for she felt herself in the presence of the power and greatness of the King of kings, in relation to which the whole world was as nothing). After the adoration she remained as though transformed, absorbed in God and oblivious to her physical surroundings. If such was her response to the consecration and elevation of the host, the intensity of her feelings when she herself partook of the Body of the Saviour can readily be imagined. The act was preceded by bitter contrition, in which she reviled herself as loathsome and abominable sinner in the face of the goodness and majesty of God, and so vehement was she that her chaplains were sometimes astonished and positively alarmed (this they had little enough reason to be: Colette's sentiments were a faithful reproduction of St. Francis' own, expressed for example in the First Rule). At the moment of communion, according to Sister Perrine, who had often been present, her very joints could be heard to crack, as though the sinews themselves would spring apart; and immediately after she would be transported in an ecstatic state, which might last for hours, and which left her in a condition of spirit to all appearances more heavenly than earthly. 

The concentration of St. Francis on the figure of Christ
was such that his devotion embraced, not only major themes such as the Passion and the Sacrament, but even something so comparatively minor as the names by which God might be named.\textsuperscript{134} This is indeed one of his most characteristic and, it might be said, most endearing spiritual traits; hence it is peculiarly striking to read of Colette that "whenever she could hear ... anything of the divine, glorious, mellifluous name (of God), immediately ... she was so perfectly united with Him that she was wholly rapt into God".\textsuperscript{135} The kinship between master and disciple is in some ways revealed more plainly in such a detail than in larger themes.

Among the latter we can number poverty and humility. Although they are conceptually distinct, they cannot be isolated from the rest of St. Francis' spiritual vision, so it was inevitable that, in trying to re-live that vision, Colette should embrace them. For Francis, humility had many faces; it was not otherwise for the lowly-born girl from Corbie, and they seem to have been known to her from an early age. Already as a schoolgirl she was said to have moved among the indigent and lepers, giving to the former whatever food she could find to spare at home, tending the wounds and washing the feet of the latter; practices which led to the resolve to spend her life in the care of the sick and handicapped;\textsuperscript{136} and subsequently, when she temporarily joined a community of Poor Clares, it was as a domestic servant, not an aspirant nun.\textsuperscript{137} During her later career, when she had almost succeeded in accepting the notion of her worthiness to be a nun, she still regarded herself as the least, the most unworthy of mortals, and - as ever a true
follower of St. Francis gave the sentiment physical and symbolic expression by always choosing the lowest and least conspicuous of seats, whether alone or in company. Indeed it was her custom, so we are told, as it had been that of the early friars, to take her meals either crouching or sitting on the ground — she would sit at table only under compulsion — and in these circumstances she sometimes burst into tears: is it too much to suppose that the simple physical gesture of abasement was capable of bringing before her the extraordinary humiliations suffered by the Son of God, on which in her devotions she dwelt with such intensity? In the light of his glory she saw herself — as we have already noted in connection with her devotion to the Eucharist — as vile, abominable, the greatest of sinners; and for the rest, her conception of her function remained what it had been when, as a domestic, she first entered a convent of Clares: to serve and minister to others, and be subject to all.

It was with this very phrase that St. Francis had defined the office of Superior in the fraternity; Colette was unwilling to understand the office in any other way, and as a result she suffered a good deal of distress. The first occasion was when, through the vision already described, it was intimated to her that St. Francis purposed the reform of his Orders, and had chosen her as his chief instrument. The idea that she should be chief in anything but sin was unacceptable, and for a time she rejected the supernatural summons; it was only divine visitation — a mysterious attack of dumbness, then blindness — that compelled her assent to it. The result, as
we know, was her journey to meet Benedict XIII; and here another trial was in store: she — whose earlier plan had been to live humbly in the shadow of a convent reformed by the Pope — was made Abbess and Mother of the whole projected enterprise. She was appalled, and implored the Pope to withdraw the charge; but he was adamant. The fact had to be accepted, but she steadfastly refused it her voluntary consent, and never regarded herself as other than, simply, Sister Colette. There is here a clear and noteworthy parallel with the scruples felt not many years earlier by Paoluccio dei Trinci regarding the authority he was given over the Italian reform.

Colette's apprenticeship to poverty was of as long standing as her humility. The school-girl had been in the habit of giving away whatever she thought could be spared at home; the young woman's long search to find her true vocation began, on the death of her parents, with the distribution of all her inherited goods to the poor. Once entered on her career in religion, she never felt at ease unless her physical equipment (except, perhaps, the books needed for divine service) was held to a level of bare necessity; but the state of necessity was sufficient to cause her positive joy. Things that were small seem in themselves to have brought her particular pleasure: we are told that she preferred to live in small convents rather than large ones, and was happier in small towns than in cities; and even when, on a journey, she had to put up somewhere for the night, she would avoid large rooms and seek out some small, confined corner for herself. Naturally she applied the same standards to the rooms that she used for work or prayer in her
convents: it was barely possible to stand upright in them; Pierre de Vaux knew one that measured six feet by four, and commented that they were more like the dwellings of geese than of rational creatures. We may surely see in this the influence of her existence as a recluse, but it may be suspected that more fundamental was a spiritual response to the Gospel: Colette extolled poverty and simplicity in buildings to her nuns by reference to the example of the Saviour "who had nowhere to lay his head". It need hardly be mentioned that the entire train of her thought followed the example of her other master, St. Francis.

As with her physical surroundings, so with her immediate personal effects: Colette displayed a sort of iron inflexibility in making do with a bare minimum. Shoes she never wore, winter or summer, in sickness or in health; whatever the cold, she would not allow herself more than a single undergarment, nor even that it should be of double thickness, and when once her nuns doubled the material without her knowledge she simply took the garment off and refused to wear it until it was undone again; she would not so much as allow herself to seek the warmth of a fire. She never slept in a bed, being content with some straw scattered on the floor, and even in her final illness, when barely able to move or see, refused the comfort of a small feather pillow which her attendants tried to slip unnoticed under her head. There is, perhaps, something almost chilling about such total indifference to the common demands of comfort; but the poverty she sought in dress also had its more endearing side. St. Francis' practice of giving away the clothes he stood up in...
had been the despair of those who had to look after him;\textsuperscript{150} Colette was inclined to unstitch the sleeves of her habit and present them to anyone who was in need. Francis, we know, particularly rejoiced in a habit patched "within and without" with pieces of sacking and any odd scraps of cloth;\textsuperscript{151} not only did Colette prefer a garment that was third or fourth hand, she was an assiduous collector of left-over bits of material, and used to mend her habit with them, until more than anything else it resembled a specimen of the art of patchwork.\textsuperscript{152}

Once again it is the detail which, we may feel, establishes the kinship between two saints with indisputable force. Further points could be mentioned - Colette's asceticism for example,\textsuperscript{153} or her affection for certain wild creatures\textsuperscript{154} - but that is scarcely necessary: enough has been said to justify the conclusion that Colette's life in religion was as faithful an imitation of Francis as Francis' was of Christ. In fact, in the present incomplete state of our sources she must rank as the outstanding embodiment, not simply of the fundamentally spiritual nature of the French reform - though that point is indeed clear enough - but of its quintessentially Franciscan character.

This assessment of itself forces a further conclusion upon us, independently of any evidence: Colette must have had a detailed knowledge, whether or not at first hand, of written sources for the life and teaching of St. Francis. What were these? The documentation for her own life does not give the answer. However, it may be possible to throw some light on the matter by turning at this point to the congregation of Coletan friars, in particular to Henry de Baume, Colette's longest-
serving personal Confessor. They deserve study in their own right, for they provide new insights into both the spiritual and the essentially Franciscan character of the French reform at the start of the 15th century; but in addition they tell us something about the written sources on which it drew. Briefly, it was the merit of the Coletans to grasp the message of St. Francis as by nature spiritual, not juristic, and to attempt to relive it as such; and this they were enabled to do by basing themselves, not just on the juristically legitimate document, the Regula Bullata (important though it was to them), but on the other sources which revealed the mind and wishes of the saint — others of his writings, and the stories recorded about him: the very materials which Franciscan copyists of the 14th century rescued from obscurity and, as we discovered, made available to all the friars. In acting thus the reformers brought the fulfilment of a critical change in the Order's thinking which had also begun in the 14th century, and corrected the grave misunderstanding which had impoverished its earlier implementation of its Founder's programme.

The most important source for this assessment is one of the writings of Henry de Baume, namely the Statutes which, as head of the male Coletan group, he composed for the use of the friars attached to the convents of Colette's congregation. We allow ourselves a certain latitude in using them to illuminate the nature of the French reform at the time of the Schism, since they were evidently composed between 1434 (date of the confirmation of the Constitutions of St. Colette, to which at many points they refer) and 1439 (the year of Henry's death); however the
procedure seems legitimate in that our concern is not with events bound to a specific time and place, but rather with the underlying convictions of the movement, which it is reasonable to suppose were operative from the beginning, especially since the author of the Statutes, an old man, had played a leading role in the period of origins.

The first striking feature of these so-called Statutes is their pronounced non-statutory character. The last paragraph of all states that it is not the legislator's intention to enforce observance of his directives by specific punishments, but rather that his charges should follow them voluntarily, as best they can, with the help of God: a provision, entirely at variance with previous practice (as for example in the Parinerian Statutes), which at a stroke removes the "Statutes" from the sphere of legislation properly speaking and transforms them into an exhortation or admonition; it is precisely the trait we noted in the writings of St. Francis, the Regula Bullata not excluded. In rather similar vein, it is noteworthy how ready the supposed legislator was to leave decisions to the conscience and discretion of the individual friar — whether or not to preach to the sisters, to adopt the practice of mutual reconciliation for faults after Matins, to fast on Fridays. Such emphasis on personal responsibility was eminently characteristic of St. Francis, but is scarcely the normal concern of legislation. Its basis could lie only in a willing and joyous commitment to the religious life, not in a spirit of sheer obligation; of obedience Henry de Baume wrote that "it should not be a burden, but rather supremely pleasing for the sake of God"; and
likewise, dealing with the friars' task, originally given them by Francis himself, of seeking alms for the Poor Ladies, he wrote: "And in this the said brothers ought to rejoice greatly in the Lord, since they know indubitably that they are carrying out the wishes of so excellent a Father". To recommend that religious obligations be fulfilled voluntarily and joyously, not from some heavy sense of duty, but out of love for God and St. Francis - what could be more truly Franciscan, or spiritually more admirable?

This fundamental approach adopted in the Statutes of Henry de Baume is mirrored in the tone of admonition or pure spiritual exhortation which characterises many of its paragraphs. Once the friars' work of begging was over, he wrote, "let them return to the convent with the blessing of God, enriched by virtues and the salutary exercise of good works and of (following) the example of the saints; let them enter their cubicle (cf. Matthew chap. 6 v. 6) and, closing the door of external distractions, pray to their father in their innermost hearts, restoring themselves in the union of the love of the highest good ... and desiring unceasingly to please God, by observing the Rule more perfectly, praying most fervently for the salvation of the people, avoiding all temptation, suppressing all personal desires, bearing the condition of their neighbours with compassion and charity: let them prefer all men above themselves, judge none, give an example of holiness to all, seek in everything only the honour of God and the salvation of their neighbour, and in and through all things annihilate themselves in the depths of humility." It is impossible not to be struck by the fervent
tone of this passage - remarkable particularly in a man now long past the natural ardour of youth, and subject besides to the debilitating effect of illness - but it should also be noted that it is anything but purely inward-looking, self-cultivating: a major focus of interest is the good of the neighbour and the world. It is scarcely too much to say that this single passage sketches out a complete programme on the spiritual side for a complete religious life; one aimed at both inner sanctification and external evangelisation; by the same token it seems an inspired re-statement of the message of St. Francis, who "wished that all the brothers should share in some degree in the lives of Martha and Mary"; it is a remarkable passage by any standards, and particularly so in a collection of "Statutes". Nor should it be thought to stand alone. Earlier we read "let all the brothers residing in convents retire to their cells when the sisters have finished Compline, and devote themselves to prayer, meditation, solitude and evangelical silence ... And at the same time let the lay brothers fulfill their office of Pater Hoster, and then let them concentrate on meditation and the sentiments of the passion of Christ, on awareness of their condition and of their most worthy vocation, with fervent prayers for the salvation of the living and the dead". Apart from indicating to us the spring-time fervour expected by Henry de Baume of his fellows, these passages reveal an identity of spirit with St. Colette which made the brothers well suited to act as chaplains to her communities.

The source of this shared spirit, the statutes make plain, was the written record of and about St. Francis. "And I beseech
my brothers that on Fridays they read aloud the most holy Rule, clearly, devoutly and completely; and that from time to time they read the blessed Testament of our most blessed father, with great devotion. And this I desire most fervently in the Lord, that this most holy Rule should be known by all the brothers; and out of special devotion let them carry it with them, since if we observe it we are certain of eternal life." 172 It will be noted that, in the closing paragraph of the First Rule of 1221 (though not in the corresponding one of the Regula Bullata of 1223) St. Francis had already asked that the Rule be learnt by heart; 173 that in the document itself he required the Testament to be kept together with the Rule and publicly read with it; and that in a chapter of "commendation of the Rule" in his Second Life, Thomas of Celano had told of the crown of martyrdom won by a brother who "carried the Rule with him." 174 It is hard to believe that the thought of the 15th century reformer was unconnected with these historical texts.

In any event Henry de Baume was evidently first to carry out his own and St. Francis' instruction to learn the text of the Rule: the Statutes is studded with quotations from or allusions to it. However, what is particularly interesting is that he tended to take from it precisely those passages of exhortation which had survived the attempt to turn the almost wholly spiritual First Rule into the cut and dried legal charter of a religious Order. 175 Thus the phrase borrowed to describe the appropriate matter and manner for preaching to the people - "telling them, in few words, of vices and virtues, punishment and glory" 176 - although in form precise enough to sound like a
specific directive, is in content already non-specific and spiritual; and it was even more so with the other citations: "and when they go about the world ... let them not quarrel or contend with words or judge others; but let them be gentle, peaceable and modest, merciful and humble, speaking decently to all men, as is fitting" — one of the phrases, significantly, introduced in the Rule by Francis' wholly non-legislative "I counsel, advise and exhort"; "and let them not be concerned to learn their letters, but ... concentrate on possessing the spirit of the Lord and its holy working, and let them pray always to God with pure heart, and have humility, patience in persecution and illness, and love those who persecute, revile and attack us; for the Lord says: 'Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you and speak evil against you; Blessed are they that suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; He that perseveres to the end shall be saved'". In these few short phrases, suitably meditated on and magnified, it would be possible to see the kernel of much of brother Henry's spiritual teaching; the fact throws an interesting light on the fecundity of a document which in theory was of the juridical, not the affective order.

But of course the Rule, reverently though he regarded it, was not the only source from which Henry de Baume imbibed the spiritual message of St. Francis. One of the more delightful aspects of that message — though with a wholly serious foundation — was the saint's habit of going round spring cleaning neglected churches, and his associated insistence that everything connected with the celebration of the Sacrament should be treated
with utmost care and reverence.  Brother Henry had learnt the lesson well: "And let (the lay brothers) keep absolutely clean the churches, chapels, altars and everything pertaining to divine worship, as is proper; they should often sweep the oratories and windows, removing spiders' webs, and often wash and clean the church vessels, and do what they can to make attractive hosts".  There is nothing of all this in the Rule; Francis' attitude to the Sacrament would be most readily found in several of his own writings, first the De reverentia corporis domini et de munditia altaris, and also the Letters, Admonitions and Testament; but for his practice of cleaning out churches there is only one source, and that is the Flowers of the three companions (Celano did not see fit to copy the piece into his Second Life); therefore, unless Henry de Baume's reference to sweeping be pure coincidence, we are forced to the conclusion that he knew the work of Leo, Rufino and Angelo - in a sense the most authentic of all the biographical sources, and, whether in the original form or as recast in the Mirror of Perfection, a favourite text with the 14th century Franciscan copyists.

Other facets of the thought of the Coletan leader may or must have been inspired by Franciscan writings other than the Rule. He exhorted his followers to wear patched garments. We know that the sentiment was also St. Colette's; it might be found in the Testament or First Rule as well as the Regula Bullata.  Again, we earlier saw one mark of the quality of St. Francis' insight in the fact that, a sick man, he recognised illness as a specific spiritual problem, devoting to it one
chapter of the First Rule and one paragraph of the Admonitions, and mentioning it in the Regula Bullata. The French reformer also suffered a good deal of illness, but it nevertheless argues a remarkable sensitivity to his Founder's message that he should have picked up this comparatively minor aspect of it; and the way he handled it illustrates with peculiar clarity his own spiritual ardour, and the way in which it could develop and magnify the dry, laconic phrases of the Rule. The latter states simply: "And, if any of them should fall into illness, the other brothers ought to serve him as they would wish to be served." Henry de Baume's version is: "if any of the brothers should fall into illness, let all the other brothers, for the love of the innocent Christ who suffered so greatly for us, bear his infirmities and disagreeableness (passiones) patiently and sweetly with Job; indeed rather let them rejoice with Paul, since such things are often given by the Lord for the progress and salvation of souls, and it can be an evident sign of the singular friendship of the Saviour, who wishes us to drink from his cup, who above all drank abundantly of the torrent of the hardships of this present life of misery ..." It will be noted that not only the topic of illness, but also the Scriptural basis of the thinking, and above all the pattern of identification with the suffering Saviour, represent a perfect accord with the example of the Founder; it would be hard to find a passage which in so few words expresses better both the spiritual nature of the French reform movement, and its specifically Franciscan character. Moreover it should not be supposed that friar Henry's elaboration of the Rule's phrase on illness was based
merely on his general understanding of St. Francis' thought, for
the next paragraph of the Statutes reveals his familiarity with
the longer and more spiritual passage on the topic included in
the First Rule. The author's predilection for passages of
this hortatory type is revealed by two more paragraphs of the
Statutes, which are simply transcriptions of pithy admonitions
from the so to speak unofficial Franciscan sources, namely a
supposed Exhortation of the Patriarch of Assisi, and the
Verba of brother Giles - another collection popular, as we
saw, with the copyists of the 14th century. At the same time
brother Henry was perfectly willing to use the most official
biographical sources to add to the picture of Francis' intentions
which could be derived from the Rule. Thus to describe the
saint's reverence for the priesthood he borrowed a phrase from
the Office of St. Francis of Julian of Speyer, and used the
words of St. Bonaventure's Life to express Francis' attitude to
physical austerity; and, when he came to direct that his
fruits should go into the world "two and two together", he seems
likely to have had in mind the instructions of Francis as
recorded by both Celano and Julian of Speyer, as well as the
underlying passage from the Gospel.

In sum, even so comparatively short a document as the
Statutes (they occupy fifteen pages in the modern edition) reveals
that the reform of the Coletan friars was based on many other
texts than the Regula Bullata, including the stories and other
writings of the saint which only became widely known thanks to
the labours of 14th century copyists. This state of affairs was
undoubtedly in full accord with the attitude and intention of
Francis himself, and its great advantage was to give the reformers an unrivalled grasp of the full spiritual message of their founder. But to set against this it did have one serious drawback. The canonically legitimate foundation of the Order consisted of the Regula Bullata, the papal declarations upon it, and the official constitutions which (in principle) followed the declarations. To build a reformed observance on any other texts was a legally questionable procedure; and it was additionally problematic since, as we discovered in the early stages of this study, the alternative sources contained a number of significant discrepancies vis-a-vis the Regula Bullata, and some plain distortion, attributable to the Spirituals, in their picture of St. Francis, and since they had been used by the Spirituals to question the validity of the declarations. The possibility thus arose of a conflict with the official Franciscan canon: the problem can be seen in two paragraphs of Henry de Baume's Statutes.

The first concerns Jesus' missionary instructions to his disciples, "Take nothing with you on your journey, neither staff nor wallet nor bread nor money, etc." (Luke c. 9 v.2; cf. Matthew c. 10 v. 9). The French reformer desired his followers to put these words into practice. In doing so he was in some degree breaking the law of his Order: from Gregory IX's Quo Eligat (1230) onwards the papal declarations had been unanimous that the friars were bound to observe only those Gospel injunctions contained in the text of the Rule — and this was not one of them. How then did brother Henry support his view? "And truly we ought to do this according to the mind of our
founder and the text of the Holy Gospel, and the intention of the first fathers of our Order, who took no provision with them on their journeys." We cannot say with certainty what historical sources underlay this thought-provoking statement, but a number of points may be made. The Gospel passage concerned, which was indeed of critical importance in the primitive Franciscan experience, not least in effecting the final conversion of the saint himself, is recorded in all the official biographical sources. It appears in the First Rule. Most interesting of all, Brother Leo's *Intentio Regulae* declares that it should also have been in the *Regula Bullata*, but was removed, against Francis' wish, at the instigation of certain Ministers. We have already seen that Henry de Baume evidently knew the *Flowers* of the three companions, the longer collection in which the *Intentio* appears; there is thus a distinct possibility that, in exhorting his congregation to go beyond the official norm and fulfil the Gospel injunction, he was not simply reverting to original Franciscan practice, revealed by several historical sources, but in some sense preferring the authority of brother Leo to that of Gregory IX and his successors in the see of Peter.

The controversial character of such a procedure needs no emphasis. It is, however, remarkably illuminated by one other paragraph of the Statutes, which indicates that an element of controversy over Franciscan observance was something which Henry de Baume's historical reading had led him to take for granted. To be precise, he had no doubt that certain developments within the Order during the founder's lifetime not only were against his wishes, but represented a betrayal of his ideal, and through him,
of Christ. It is again impossible to be sure exactly what document underlay this attitude, but in general terms there can be no doubt that it rested partly on the *Flowers* of the three companions and partly on a later and somewhat distorted Spiritual source. The *Mirror of Perfection*, which is a combination of the two layers of tradition, can be taken to represent the general type of literature friar Henry must have used, and what he wrote will be presented in relation to it.

St. Francis, Henry began, undoubtedly knew better than anyone else the virtues, defects and dangers of his own Order. "And yet many of his sons were, alas, exceedingly rebellious to so great a father" (cf. *Mirror* chapters 1, 2, 3, 11, 13, 65). "For which reason the blessed father was compelled by the prick of conscience to resign the Generalate" (cf. *Mirror* chapters 41 - 'That he renounced his office on account of evil Superiors' - and 71). "Indeed from his anguish of heart he often with tears spoke these words: 'Woe to those who are contrary to me, since in consequence they damnably are contrary to Christ himself, who for the sake of all was pleased to reveal to me most clearly his will regarding the evangelical state, which in effect is this, that I and all my brothers should do our utmost to draw all men to Christ by our life and example, through profound humility, dovelike simplicity and highest poverty'" (in part seemingly an amalgam of *Mirror* chapters 11 and 50, but with features not found in either, including the characteristically Spiritual identification of the wills of Francis and Christ).\(^{203}\)

These two passages show Henry de Baume, as a result of his reading of some of the biographical sources propagated during
the 14th century, adopting a characteristic attitude of the Spirituals: the belief that what the Order became during the 13th century was in some measure contrary to the intentions of its Founder, and that consequently the official canon of declarations and constitutions— which were the foundation of what the Order became— was, at the least, an incomplete expression of his ideal. The point has an obvious bearing on the third question posed at the outset of our inquiry into the nature of the new Franciscan reforms, the question of their level of observance; specifically, we are bound to ask ourselves whether, like the Spirituals, friar Henry went so far as in principle to reject the official canon outright, and to adopt instead the observance of the Rule "to the letter".

Unfortunately, due to the state of the sources, the question cannot be answered directly—all we can say is that, since the family of Coletan friars remained an acceptable part of the Order and the Church, it cannot have openly challenged the official norms. But for an explicit answer to the question of the French reform's observance we have to turn to the evidence concerning its third branch, the movement which began at Mirebeau; always bearing in mind that what it tells us does not necessarily apply to the other two branches, those of St. Colette and of the Coletans.

The issue of the Mirebeau group's observance is most forcefully raised, as with Henry de Baume, by the question of the sources upon which it drew. The central document for an understanding of this branch of the reform is the Querimoniae which, in circumstances we shall consider later, its representatives put
before the Council of Constance in 1415; and this vital composition turns out to be little more than an adaptation of Ubertino of Casale's Sanctitas Vestra - the classic exposition of the Spiritual case for the observance of the Rule "to the letter", as interpreted by Francis' Testament and the stories recorded by brother Leo, and without the papal declarations. The whole course of the argument in the Quaerimoniae is modelled on that of the Sanctitas Vestra, and in addition the longest of its four sections is virtually an abbreviated transcription of Ubertino's work. Here is, without doubt, the most remarkable result we have yet seen of that propagation of Spiritual and reformist texts which marked the 14th century.

The case of the Quaerimoniae is the outstanding instance - and a most dramatic one in all conscience - of the Mirebeau reformers' familiarity with the thought of the would-be 13th century reform; but it does not stand quite alone. In a letter written in September 1408, in connection with the controversial reform of the friary of St. Omer, the official leader of the group, Thomas de Curte, referred casually to various revelations vouchsafed to St. Francis, of which one was, "as it appears in his chronicles ... that his Order would be greatly perturbed by evil men, who will persecute the good; but as we see, it will be reformed, willy nilly, and will last until Judgment Day." The relevance of the prophecy to the writer's own circumstances need not be stressed; and the "chronicles" in which he found it must have been some of the collections of stories put together in Spiritual circles (it seems to be either Verba Conradi c. 3 = the so-called "Interpolation" in the Speculum Perfectionis, or Verba
It must be concluded that Thomas de Curte was fully conversant with the Spirituals' picture of original state of the Order, and with the ideal of literal observance which they proposed as the means of returning to that state.

Their literary dependence upon Spiritual texts would suggest that the Mirebeau reformers too adopted the literal observance. This is the verdict of several modern historians; and it is borne out by a number of passages in the relevant sources. King Charles VI for example, in a long open letter in favour of the reformed group issued in February 1409, described them three times as "observing their Rule to the letter"; the echevins of St. Omer described their local community in the same terms; and the phrase was applied to the reformers, doubtless at their own suggestion, in an important affidavit which they obtained from the University of Paris in 1410.

Nevertheless it must be insisted that those historians who ascribe to the French reform the literal observance of the Spirituals are wrong; and they are wrong because they have been misled by the texts just quoted. For when the French reformers and their contemporaries used the old Spiritual slogan, they denoted the very thing which the Spirituals had opposed: namely the observance of the Rule according to the papal declarations. The reason for this extraordinary confusion of language is a point which will bear investigation, but of the fact itself there can be no doubt.

It is most clearly established by a comparison of corresponding sections of the Sanctitas Vestra and Quaerimoniae.
Towards the end of his treatise, asking that the literal observance as he understood it should be conceded to the Spirituals, Ubertino wrote as follows: "Vera igitur reformacio esset, si excluderetur error, ... silicet quod non est creditum beato Francisco, qui preceptit pure et simpliciter servari regulam sicut sonat, et repulit omnem glossam et omnem privilegium, quod nos posset in superbiem elevere et regulam relaxare."212

Towards the end of the Quaerimoniae we find the following: "Nihil ergo aliud restat ad reformationem huius inchoandam nisi quod ... ipsis supplicantibus tradatur sua regula promissa iuxta declarationes apostolicas simpliciter secundum quod per beatum Franciscum tradita fuit et servata, quibuscumque privilegiis et aliis, quae impedimenta et laxationum causas et occasiones dare possent, resecatis".213 It is impossible to doubt that the writer of the second passage was copying from the text of the first one; by the addition to it of the three words which above were underlined he has included in it the very thing which its whole purpose was to exclude - the papal declarations, symbol of the moderate wing of the 13th century Community. So total a transformation of the sense of the original cannot have been accidental.

The point is driven home by the fact that the apparently extraordinary usage of the Quaerimoniae was the normal and indeed official usage in the circles of the Mirebeau movement. Earlier we saw that the movement began its expansion in 1404, gaining its second settlement with the foundation of Bressuire, and that in 1406 it entered upon a phase of dramatic development. The process of expansion was marked by a series of papal bulls;
and, not unexpectedly, they tended to adhere to a common formula. This was particularly so on the central issue of observance itself, and the phrases used were the exact counterpart to that of the Quaerimoniae: "regula ... iuxta apostolicas declarationes ... ad litteram" (Bressuire, in 1404 and 1406); 214 "regulam ... iuxta traditiones et declarationes apostolicas ... ad litteram penitus observare" (bulls founding Redon, and exempting all existing reformed houses from their Provincial, in 1407); 215 "regulam ... iuxta traditiones et declarationes apostolicas ... ad litteram et unguem observare" (Fontenay-le-Comte and Olonne, 9 April 1408). 216 For further confirmation, the language of the papal bulls recurs twice in the affidavit obtained by the reformed friars in 1410 from the University of Paris. 217

It is thus undeniable that, having adopted the Spiritual slogan of "literal observance", the Mirebeau group meant by it the opposite of what the Spirituals had meant, viz. the observance according to the papal declarations; hence they were the heirs, not, as at first sight they seemed, of the 13th century rigorists, but of the middle party identified with such friars as Bonaventure and Pecham; and, in the terms of this study, their standpoint was not strict, but moderate.

How then are we to understand their use of the catch-word of the strict standpoint? It is perhaps unnecessary to accuse them of calculated deception. More fruitful may be to suggest that, thanks to their reading of Ubertino of Casale and, no doubt, other sources of a Spiritual colouring, the whole question of reform presented itself to them in the terms of the controversy
of the late 13th and early 14th century. To put it another way, we may suppose that the great Spiritual campaign had so far dominated their thinking on the issue of reform that they found it impossible to conceive of reform — that is, of the right way of Franciscan living — except as the Spirituals had done, under the heading of "literal observance". This would be testimony, not so much to the insincerity of the Mirebeau congregation, as to the decisive historical influence of the Spirituals in the long term. And it will be noted that the verbal confusions of the reformers were not the first such instance of that influence: some forty years earlier another French friar, the Minister of Aquitaine, Arnaldus de Sarnano, had managed to persuade himself that "literal observance" meant the observance of the papal declarations. 218

In any event, however they might choose to define it, all our concrete evidence concerning the life of the Mirebeau reformers shows that their standard of observance was indeed the declarations, together with the Rule which they interpreted, and the constitutions which followed from them — that is, the classic official canon of the Order's moderate standpoint. In other words, their goal was quite simply due and faithful observance of their existing obligations. From this fundamental observation follows another: the reform should also be seen as a specific reaction to the evils of Conventualism; for, as we discovered earlier, Conventualism represented precisely a wholesale abandonment of the official canon. 219

The principle of a return to its norms, embraced by the reformers, was expressed with exemplary clarity in the decrees
of the first Congregation (i.e. Chapter) which they held, at Bressuire in 1416: "First, that on the matters dealt with in our Statutes, both papal and General, nothing shall be altered, but all shall be observed in all rigour, excepting those, if there are any, which assume the acceptance of money, or might lead to relaxation ..." "And ... let them always so conduct themselves that they cannot be called transgressors of their Rule, declarations and statutes."²²⁰

As the first pronouncement shows, one matter in which adherence to the rules seemed particularly important was that of money. Later in the decrees of Bressuire we read: "Again ... on the question of money alms let the declarations be observed most strictly and to the letter".²²¹ Perhaps the most important provision of the declarations on the question concerned the official known as the nuntius, who was to be as it were a collective representative of alms-givers to the friars;²²² it is noteworthy that several of the bulls founding reformed friaries specified a novel and, it would seem, effective way for the office to be filled: by members of the Third Order, residing in the friary itself.²²³ Perhaps this was the arrangement which John Bardolini, the Minister General, had in mind when he sent his letter of exhortation and instruction to the newly reformed community of Séez: "If, for the necessity of all, or of anyone in particular, any alms should be entrusted by a benefactor to a given person, the declaration of the Rule is to be observed, and the Guardian ... shall have recourse to that person, to deal with the necessity and no more, according to the form of the papal statutes".²²⁴ The reason for the whole elaborate arrangement
was the Rule's prohibition of the use of money; this the reformers observed, neither accepting nor even handling money.225

After the question of money, a major concern of the papal declarations - and of course of St. Francis - was to ensure poverty in the quantity and quality of whatever effects the friars needed to use.226 The decrees issued at Bressuire included rules limiting the number and quality of church vessels, and added the following more general prohibition: "Again, all superfluity is to be avoided, not only in what pertains to the Church, but also in what pertains to the kitchen, pantry and infirmary, and generally in everything ... Again, (we decree) that above all superfluity be avoided, and curiositas in building ..."227

Other matters in which poverty might be abused, and which therefore were considered in the official canon of Rule, declarations and constitutions, were the storing of provisions for future use,228 the quality of the habit,229 and the use of horses230 and shoes.231 On all these points the reformers sought a strict observance of the given norms. The fact is established most concisely by the description Charles VI gave of them in his letter of 1409: "some in sandals, some barefoot, simply clothed in coarse habits ... they do not store up corn, wine or other provisions, but live from daily alms ..."232

To this it is only needful to add a further ordinance of the Congregation of Bressuire: "Again let the statute on riding be properly observed, especially that the brothers are not to own horses, and if it is desirable to ride let them borrow so far as
possible a humble beast, like an ass, and this is only to be
done with a dispensation ..." 233

The foregoing points have been presented primarily to
illustrate the Mirebeau reform's concern for the standards laid
down in the Rule, declarations and constitutions. Equally
however they could be taken to show that the reform was a
reaction against Conventualism, for we have seen evidence enough
that on all these points Conventualism broke the prescribed
norms. 234 Conversely, we may now consider some matters which
primarily emphasise the reform's character as a reaction against
specific Conventual abuses, but also embody its concern for due
observance of existing obligations.

One of the gravest traits of Conventualism was that it
involved the decay of a true sense of community within the Order,
whether expressed in the appearance of distinctions - often
virtually class distinctions - between brother and brother, or
in the abandonment by some of their very convents. The French
reformers took their stand against various aspects of this
development. In order to avoid "discursus inutiles ... et ut
plurimum scandalosos" the Congregation of Bressuire decreed that
no friar should leave the prescribed locality (terminos) of his
friary without written permission, and Guardians and Lectors,
"since their presence in the convents is the most necessary",
were particularly enjoined to remain there unless they had some
unavoidable reason for going out; "and then they should return
as quickly as possible." 235 The brothers were forbidden to
eat and drink "in town" in places which had a friary, "except",
as the Minister General wrote to the Sees community, "as the
general statutes allow". Further he insisted that, other than for sickness or other compelling reason, all should eat together of the same fare; and he asked that, in marked contrast to prevailing attitudes, visiting friars from other districts ("foreigners" as they had come to be called) should be "received with washing of feet and inner and outward joy and treated in all things with brotherly love".

This was all the obverse of Conventualism. The reformers themselves were evidently aware of the fact, and from that realisation they went on to discover the ideal literary mode for the presentation of their case: the systematic contrast between themselves and the majority, reform and relaxation — between, that is, fulfilment and non-fulfilment of the obligations theoretically binding on all Franciscans. This was the mode in which they composed their most important manifesto, the *Quaerimoniae*; and they had previously tried it out in the affidavit obtained in 1410 from the University of Paris.

It will be convenient to summarise the latter, both as an example of the literary approach, and to illustrate again the moderate standard of observance and repudiation of Conventual abuses which characterised the reformers. The picture given of them is as follows: they have no truck with money, either personally or through an "interposed person"; they own nothing, in common or individually, but are content with the mere use of material goods, which is in addition "poor" use; they store no provisions, but beg their victuals daily; their habits are "poor and abject, according to the Rule", and they neither ride nor wear shoes unless forced by necessity, "as their Rule says";
they perform the Office reverently and punctiliously, "as ordered by their statutes", and do not allow women into their cloisters; and all eat together in the refectory, of the same food, and all sleep in the dormitory. Most of these points have already come before us; together they embody an appeal to the Rule, declarations Exit qui seminat and Exivi de paradiso, and constitutions, and a reaction against the corresponding Conventual malpractices.

These are detailed in the following paragraph of the affidavit. The non-reformed friars put out collecting-boxes for money in their churches, take collections when they preach, have money for hearing confessions given to their famuli or bursarii, and engage in the normal pecuniary transactions of the lay world. They own books, utensils, ornaments and other precious material goods, and store provisions to such an extent that they sometimes have a surplus for sale. Some of them eat apart of delicate and sumptuous fare, leaving their less fortunate brethren to languish in hunger or sickness; they wear precious and superfluous clothing, and modish (and expensive) shoes like lay people, and are forever on horseback; their Office is perfunctory; and they make no bones about conversing with women and inviting them into their common and even private rooms.

It was, point for point, a damning indictment, and there should be no surprise that the Quaerimoniae adopted the same approach. In fact, the first of its four parts is little more than an expanded version of the earlier document, operating with a very similar list of topics (though arranged in a different order): of those mentioned above it leaves out the question of
ownership, the storage of provisions and special treatment regarding diet, and adds that of "spiritual reading". On the resulting list of issues the substantial point made was the same as in 1410, and the main interest therefore centres round the canonical sources quoted by the reformers. Topic by topic, these were as follows: the Office - "Rule, statutes and constitutions"; wearing of shoes - Rule, Exivi de paradiso, and the Exposition of the four Masters (one of the most important early statements of a moderate level of observance); riding - Rule, Exposition of the four Masters, Exivi de paradiso; money - Rule, Exposition of the four Masters, Exivi de paradiso; familiarity with women - Rule, Exiit qui seminat; spiritual reading - Statutes of Pope Benedict XII (1336); daily begging - Rule, "papal declarations" (evidently both Exiit and Exivi). Here were, spelled out in detail, the sources merely glimpsed in the document of 1410 - the Rule, declarations and constitutions, hallmark of moderate Franciscan observance, together with one authoritative exposition of the same standpoint.

Taken together the University's affidavit and the first section of the Quaerimonies show that the systematic comparison between themselves and the relaxed majority gave the Mirebeau group the surest means of establishing an unanswerable case for reform. This is important in itself; and it is still more so in providing perhaps the best approach to the most problematic point about them, their use of the Sanctitas Vestra of Ubertino of Casale. In a word, it may be suggested that they relied so heavily on Ubertino's exposition, not because, as one at first supposes, they were latter-day Spirituals, but because he had
given a classic example of the use of the comparative method to justify reform. As is well known, in the Middle Ages any classic was liable to be plundered without a second thought; and the fact that Ubertino's concern had been for reform according to the literal observance, whereas the French friars' criterion was the declarations and constitutions, could be quietly left on one side.

It might almost be said that Ubertino had played into his later confreres' hands. Practically the whole burden of the Sanctitas Vestra, as we saw on an earlier page, had been to demonstrate that the state of the Order was fallen away — "collapsus" — from both the intention of the Founder and the observance of the Rule and of Exiit qui seminat. It followed that, whatever he might have to say about St. Francis' intentions, the Spiritual polemicist was bound to describe the level of observance Exiit required, and the ways in which the Community fell short of it (this being something he did with particular satisfaction): precisely the requirement of the French reformers.

To make his work yet more enticing, he offered a systematic account of Franciscan observance which differed from the one they used in the University affidavit of 1410 and the first section of the Quaerimoniae; thus his scheme had the advantage of variety, quite apart from the greater literary and spiritual penetration which, we may fairly judge, it also possessed. Left to their own devices the French brothers merely enumerated a haphazard and somewhat prosaic list of externals of Franciscan observance; Ubertino offered an analysis, under seven headings, of the totality of the Franciscan ideal.
Ubertino's seven fundamentals - the Community's disregard of which it was his purpose to expose - were poverty, simplicity, purity, humility, prayer and work, charity, and the giving of a good example. The relevance of this scheme to the reformist programme of the French friars will be obvious from all that has already been said, and they accordingly presented a shortened and up-dated version of Ubertino's treatise, both analysis and description of abuses, as the third section of the Querimoniae, not without on occasion traversing anew ground already covered according to their own list of topics in the first section. They thus borrowed from their Spiritual predecessor a condemnation of many all too familiar abuses: litigation, lavishness in the use of all kinds of goods, the enjoyment of annual rents, the storing of provisions; the pursuit of privilege and freedom from normal obligations by means of University degrees or appointments as private chaplains; familiarity with women; rivalries with other clergy, secular and regular; neglect of spiritual duties; a possesive attitude to private rooms in friaries, and even to friaries themselves, with a corresponding dislike of "foreign" friars.244

Here was, it will not be doubted, powerful ammunition to add to the case the French reformers had already made in the first section of the Querimoniae, and in the University affidavit of 1410. Their procedure does however raise two important questions.

The first is how far they succeeded in adapting Ubertino's work to their own purpose - the advocacy of a moderate standard of observance based on the papal declarations - and therefore in
suppressing its to the Spiritual's most important part, the advocacy of the strict or literal observance, without the declarations. The answer is that they made a creditable job of the work of suppression - which was indeed largely responsible for both their abbreviations and their alterations of Ubertino's text - but that certain traces of the original Spiritual programme of the piece still remain. The most obvious expression of the Spiritual viewpoint was naturally the request for the literal or "simple" and "pure" observance of the Rule; we have already seen how the French reformers dealt with this - by simply inserting the phrase "iuxta declarationes apostolicas" into the existing text; this preserved their own standpoint, at the price of contradicting the original sense of the passage. The second most important Spiritual characteristic of the Sanctitas Vestra followed from the first - Ubertino's extreme embarrassment on the subject of the papal declarations. This could be more easily coped with: the French friars, with a couple of possible exceptions, merely left the relevant passages out; and it is noteworthy that at one point they included a little encomium of the declarations, quite contrary to the spirit of Ubertino, calling them "legitime et iuste sibi datas".

On general principles, therefore, the later reformers were able to expurgate the specifically Spiritual features of Ubertino's treatise and present him as a moderate (a crime against his memory no doubt, but also a considerable achievement); but on matters of detail his message was not so easily disnatured.

An important aspect of the Spiritual's case was appeal to the Testament of St. Francis and the testimony about him of
brother Leo (it was from these sources that he built up a picture of the "intention" of St. Francis, from which, he would then argue, the state of the Order had "fallen away"). In the Quaerimoniae allusion to these sources is much reduced, but not wholly eliminated: there are three references to the Testament, and two to the Leonine material. One reference to the Testament may be considered fairly innocuous (it concerns the friar's obligation to "prayer and work", and records Francis' personal reminiscence about his own manual work); but the remaining two, and the Leonine allusions, leave in their context a perceptibly spiritual flavour, and are important because they had a real effect on aspects of the French reformers' programme.

Both references to the Testament concern the question of papal privileges. Francis' express prohibition of these, recorded in the Sanctitas Vestra, was mentioned by the reformers in the third section of the Quaerimoniae, and they returned to the matter in its fourth section, when describing four principal avenues of relaxation in the Order. What they wrote on this occasion deserves to be quoted: "The second avenue are the enormous abuses of privileges against the mind and intention of the blessed Francis, author of the Rule ... For St. Francis says in his Testament that he wishes this privilege from God, that the brothers should have no privilege from the lord Pope, neither for preaching nor for persecution of their bodies ... But through these privileges money has accrued to the Order, contrary to its vowed poverty, and giving the brothers the opportunity of dressing richly, living easily, building sumptuously, rising up against the prelates and clergy, and
further relaxing the Rule in all particulars ..." The argument is decidedly Spiritual in tone, and it led the French friars to a conclusion which may be thought rather at variance with the moderate viewpoint, associated with such men as Bonaventure, which they otherwise espoused: they would not in future hear the confessions of the faithful, or bury them in their churches, without the express consent of the parish clergy, and they would not preach in any diocese without the express consent of the bishop. This was to come close to renouncing the whole network of parochial activities which in the 13th century became characteristic of the Order, and of which the declarations and constitutions were the canonical expression.

One of the foundations of the Order's parish contribution had been its commitment to the study of theology at the highest level, the University, and it may therefore be said that the degree in theology was almost as characteristic of the moderate Franciscan observance evolved during the 13th century as the papal declarations. It therefore comes as a shock that, in the fourth part of the Quaerimoniae, the French reformers undertook to renounce all degrees, saying that knowledge itself, and not the pompous badge of knowledge, was what mattered. It was in connection with the same topic that earlier, in the third section of their work, they had copied out brief Leonine comments from Ubertino: "Therefore we may well regard as fulfilled what we find that St. Francis said, namely that the Lord revealed to him that the pursuit of the knowledge which puffs up would have no good end or good fruit in his Order ... The saint also said that many friars would abandon their vocation on account of the
pursuit of knowledge ..."254

On two particulars, then, we may say that, under the influence of Ubertino, the French reformers veered away from a moderate Franciscan position and came some distance towards the strict or Spiritual one; but for the rest they were able to empty the Italian's treatise of its specifically Spiritual content. Their shortened version of the Sanctitas Vestra was an expurgated one.

The second question raised by their borrowing from the earlier work lies in a quite different direction. They laid many and grave charges against the conduct of the Order in their own day; and it turns out that, far from being based on contemporary evidence, these were simply copied out from a treatise written just over a century earlier. Was this not blatant deceit, or worse?

As a preliminary to answering this question let us recall that the French reformers were not the first to apply the criticisms of the Sanctitas Vestra to the Order at a subsequent date: the very same thing had been done by the author of that outstanding Fraticelli treatise, the Decalogus evangelicae paupertatis.255 This fact may serve to introduce the critical point for the present discussion, namely that in the Middle Ages plagiarism as such was acceptable practice (we have already noted that any classic was liable to be treated as in effect common property). What matters therefore is the truth or accuracy in its new context of the plagiarised material. Hence the question we must ask is whether, irrespective of the fact that he had written them about a quite different place and time, Ubertino's criticisms truly described the state of the Franciscan
Order in France at the start of the 15th century.

There can be no serious doubt that they did. At a quite general level, it may be recalled that the abuses denounced by the Spiritual were characteristic of what we called the lax wing of the Community.\(^\text{256}\) We subsequently discovered that the Conventualism which swept the Order (including the French Provinces) during the 14th century was nothing but the lax wing of the Community writ larger.\(^\text{257}\) It follows that with the passage of time Ubertino's strictures acquired if anything greater and wider validity than they had originally enjoyed.

Their validity in the present case is corroborated by the scrupulous care with which they were applied by the French reformers; for the latter were at pains to supplement Ubertino's account when it failed to give a full or detailed enough picture of current abuses. It is fair to conclude that the French friars used Ubertino wherever what he wrote was in their view true, and then added any further points they judged appropriate.

Two examples will illustrate their procedure (the passages underlined represent original material added to Ubertino, and the rest that borrowed direct from his treatise): "Nunc autem qualiter ista simplicitas sit a fratribus reiecta patet, quia cito post noviciatum quilibet vult studere in logica et philosophia, ut possit ascendere ad gradus et post quam fuerit graduatus, inde designatur sequi horum, refectorium ceterasque conventus communitates; sed habito uno socio pro servitore discurrir et frequentat curias, circunxit provincias, et a talibus reguntur capita."\(^\text{258}\) "Item fundatur in charitate perfecta ... Item hoc hodie in ordine communiter non servatur, quia qui non
habet argentum vel amicos in infirmitate, male visitatur et tractatur et ideo quilibet tendit habere proprium, de quo sibi ipsi subvenire possit si eum infirmari contingeret." The material added to Ubertino's is of quite different weight in the two instances, but refers in both to a classic evil of Conventualism, which only developed to the full after Ubertino's day, and was without doubt characteristic of the Order in France in the early 15th century. It can be concluded that, far from plagiarising Ubertino's text wholesale, let alone dishonestly, the French reformers used it with a striking attention to both detail and accuracy.

The foregoing discussion of the two problems inherent in the French friars' use of the *Sanctitas Vestra* will serve to underline one point: how far they were from sharing the programme of the Spirituals. Not for them the return, through the literal observance, to as nearly as possible the way of life of Francis and his first followers; their aim was quite different: the simple fulfilment of their vows, as defined by their Rule, declarations and constitutions. This may sound somewhat prosaic, not least in comparison with the other French reforms we have studied, those of St. Colette and the Coletans (which were if anything closer to the enterprise of the Spirituals); and it is correspondingly important to insist that, no less than they, the Mirebeau reform was by nature spiritual, and to be seen as a manifestation of spiritual revival. Could it be anything else, seeing what a minority interest it was?

In any event its spiritual character is revealed in a number of ways. We have already had occasion to see, from the University
of Paris' affidavit of 1410 and from the first part of the Quaerimoniae, that the reformers stressed due and devout fulfilment of their pre-eminent spiritual obligation - the performance of the Office; the point recurs in the decrees of the Congregation of Bressuire, and in the letter of the General, John Bardolini, to the community of Seéz. Equally significant, though written from a quite different point of view, are some of the comments of Charles VI in his open letter in favour of the reformers. He described them as being "de très bonne vie et honneste conversation", and beneficial both to the holy Gospel and the State, and further, he praised them for their good works and the beauty of their divine service, and therefore made them, from among all the virtuous religious of his realm, his "chers et espéciels orateurs": it is striking and moving witness to the impact that devout living could have on the piety of the age.

However the most remarkable testimony to the spiritual quality of the reform associated with Mirebeau is the letter written to the newly reformed community of Seéz by John Bardolini. Although much shorter, it is in many ways the counterpart to that other document of Franciscan spirituality, the Statutes of Henry de Baume. In passing, it will not go unremarked that the author of such a document should have been, within his obedience, the General Minister of the Order; and it will not be forgotten that, as we have noted on two occasions, the standard of observance which explicitly it inculcated was that of the declarations and general statutes.

The letter's first striking point of similarity with Henry
de Baume's Statutes is that it is predominantly admonitory as opposed to legislative. The point is revealed in the most concrete possible way, by the actual construction of the letter: it consists of two unequal parts, the first roughly four times as long as the second; and the first consists of exhortations, the second of statutes in the proper legal sense. Significantly, then, the verb used both to introduce and to close the first part is indeed hortor; and the passage leading on to the second part reads thus: "However that you may the more freely and easily observe these things, and lest the fervour of religion in your convent of Seez should grow cold ... I decree (statuo) that the following points be observed inviolately by you ..."

What then were some of the features of the "fervour of religion" which the General wished to see flourishing at Seez? "I exhort you in the Lord that, based on that fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, you apply yourselves to fulfilling your vows before God; be prompt in obedience, not regarding who commands, nor what nor to whom ... but try to suppress your own will and to obey your Superior immediately, as though he were God who commanded ... And I exhort you that there be no discord among you, but the glow of peace and brotherly love. If however any friar should say or do anything to annoy his brother, let him try immediately to confess his fault and be reconciled with his brother, and if he should not do so willingly, let him be compelled by the Guardian ... Nor shall any insubordinate trouble-maker or tale-bearer be allowed to stay there, since such can easily undermine any community ... And let them avoid grumbling like the devil, and anyone heard to grumble should
immediately be reproved by his hearer, and if he does not immediately desist the latter should avert his ears and hurry away ... Let them not display cupidity or, by begging more than is necessary, be a burden to others, but rather let them despise the world and worldly things, and show themselves humble to all."

The spiritual quality of this advice needs no commentary, nor the insight it displays into some of the psychological forces operating on the life of a religious community. There is also perhaps little about it that is specifically Franciscan; but a number of other passages from the same source not only display that quality, but suggest that it came from close attention to certain writings of the saint, in particular perhaps - as with Henry de Baume - the spiritual rather than legislative passages of the Rule. Thus: "Let the Guardian take care with love and diligence to supply the needs of each brother according to what is available ... and all the other brothers should do the same and according to the Rule should with confidence reveal their needs one to another" (cf. Regula Bullata c. 4 - the responsibility of Superiors - and c. 6 - the mutual love and trust of all). "And let all ambition, arrogance and pride be held poison among you, but let each consider himself in service the lesser of all and, from humility alone giving place to one another, let all wash one another's feet and wash up the kitchen utensils and serve one another as servants do their masters."
(The phrases underlined would seem to be based respectively on the following passages: Regula Prima c. 5 - "whoever wishes to be greater among them, let him be their minister and servant,
and who is greater among them should be as the lesser"; Regula Prima c. 6 - quoted almost word for word; and Regula Bullata c. 10. "If however any brother should fall ill let the others serve him with diligence and brotherly love and do their best to procure whatever he needs" (cf. Regula Prima c. 10, Regula Bullata c. 6; both passages, as we saw earlier, which meant much to Henry de Baume). 267 "Let them avoid all idleness as the root of every vice, but be occupied either in prayer or in manual work, according to the grace given them by God ..." (cf. Regula Prima c. 7, Regula Bullata c. 5) "... and let them not go to law or otherwise quarrel with anyone for any temporal thing, but be reverent towards all, especially prelates, priests and clerics according to the teaching of St. Francis." (The first two phrases underlined represent literal quotations, and the third a paraphrase, of Regula Bullata c. 3; the very same original passage was to be more fully quoted in the Statutes of Henry de Baume. 268 St. Francis' reverence and humility towards the clergy and hierarchy could be found in several of his writings, including the First Rule, Rule and Testament, as well as in many of the biographical accounts.) 269

These brief passages demonstrate the emphatically spiritual quality of something so apparently prosaic as the Mirebeau group's commitment to the due observance of their religious vows (defined in the Rule, declarations and statutes). And more important, they make clear the group's fundamental kinship with the other wing of the French reform, that centred on St. Colette and Henry de Baume; for we can now see that, although in different degrees, both wings reveal a common essence: a firm
grasp of the spiritual quality of St. Francis' message, based on close scrutiny of the historical texts. Thus, despite not inconsiderable differences between its parts, the French Franciscan reform of the Schism epoch was ultimately a single movement.

It is, however, very important to note the exact type of observance through which the spiritual impulse of reform expressed itself. On this point the Mirebeau group alone furnishes adequate evidence. So far as that goes, we can say that the French reform stood for the correct fulfilment of prescribed norms, in contrast to Conventual disregard of them; in historical and comparative terms therefore its standpoint was not strict, but moderate - in line with that of the moderate wing of the 13th century Community, not with that of the Spirituals.

The point is of the highest importance, since we have seen that the original branch of the reform, the Italian movement led by Paoluccio dei Trinci, did adhere to the Spiritual standpoint - the return, via the "literal observance", to a standard beyond that of the official Franciscan canon, namely the way of life of St. Francis and his first followers. In other words, the rise of the French movement spelt division for the total European movement for Franciscan reform. This was a development of the utmost gravity; and it was underlined by the fact that it was to the moderate, French standpoint that the most influential ecclesiastical body of the age, the Council of Constance, gave the official title "regular observance".

If we turn now to the nature of the Spanish reform during
the Schism, the first point to register is the greater unevenness of the sources: they are heavily tilted towards the Province of Castile (a reflection partly of the pre-eminent development of the reform in that Province), and, within Castile, to the numerically small *Rocollectio Villacresciana*. With this qualification in mind, it can fairly be said that at first sight the Spanish reform appears in purpose and observance identical to the French, as represented by the Mirebeau group. The basis of this first appraisal is the series of papal bulls of foundation which is not only the most accessible source, but in the majority of cases the only trustworthy one. So far as its witness goes — and even it barely goes beyond the Province of Castile — we can say confidently that the Spanish movement was officially called the "Regular Observance", and that the level of observance actually thus designated was, as in France, moderate observance: that of the Rule as explained by the declarations and constitutions.

The nomenclature and its definition appeared together for the first time in 1412, in the official bull of foundation of La Rabida. This was, it may be recalled, the first concession in what was to be a five-year period of prodigious development for the reform; and its concept and terminology remained decisive throughout that period. According to the papal document, the desire of the friars of La Rabida was "to live under the regular observance of the said Order in poverty and the spirit of humility" — namely "according to the tenour of the Rule of the said Order, of the declarations made by apostolic authority upon it, and of the other statutes of the Order": a classic definition of moderate Franciscan observance, only matched
perhaps by the formula with which, three years later, the friars of Soria expressed their ideal of reform: "to serve God according to the Rule and constitutions of the said Order in the due observance of the Order." 274

The specific use of the term "regular observance", introduced in the case of La Rábida, quickly found favour: the phrase appears in ten of Pope Benedict's fourteen subsequent bulls of foundation, 275 including the two addressed to the Provinces of Aragon and Santiago: and by 1417, as we learn from the bull which established Visitors for the whole Province, the reformed friars of Castile had already shortened the term, and were calling themselves simply the brothers "of the observance." 276 As to the canonical definition of the phrase, the other documents are less trenchant than those for La Rábida and Soria, but even so the wording which was evolved leaves no doubt that "regular" observance was, in our terms, moderate observance. The formula which reveals this is the in a sense tangential stipulation that the Guardian of a reformed community might, on the advice of other brothers, expel any friar who "interfered with the rest or impeded the Rule of the Order and the declarations of the same" (italics added). This phrase says much less clearly than the formula evolved in the French bulls of foundation that the reform was held to the papal declarations of the Rule, but it comes down to the same thing in the end, and it was enjoined, with slight variations in wording, on seven Castilian settlements between 1413 and 1417. 277

There can thus be little doubt that, from the viewpoint of Benedict XIII's curia, the Franciscan reform in Spain was seen
simply as a return to the canonically legitimate basis of the Order's life, namely the Rule as interpreted by the papal declarations and the Order's own constitutions; and perhaps no other view was to be expected from the centre of government and authority. On the other hand there are signs that this view was not shared by all the reformers themselves.

Two intriguing pointers to this conclusion may be detected in the curia's own documents. We have seen that the bull calling for reform in the friary of Sahagún appealed to an earlier decision of a Provincial Chapter held at Cuenca; its terms were that reformed friars should live "according to the Rule and total tradition of St. Francis, and should observe the Rule strictly and firmly". What is the precise meaning of these words? The "total tradition of St. Francis" could at a pinch be the papal declarations and official constitutions, but the more obvious interpretation is that it was the saint's writings other than the Rule, and the corpus of biographical material about him - precisely the sources known, as we have seen, in reformed circles in France; and "strict and firm observance", although (as in France) it might mean due fulfilment of the declarations and constitutions, might equally mean observance of the Rule without the declarations - the genuine literal observance of the Spirituals.

These interpretations, critical though they are, are no more than possibilities; but they are somewhat strengthened by the bull of 1414 which is generally taken to mark the establishment of reform in the friary of Oviedo, in the Province of Santiago. The bull notes that no less than six members of
the community of twenty-six had acted as Regents in theology at
the University of Salamanca, and had refused, out of humility,
to accept the title and status of Master; and its immediate
purpose was to record a decision of the community — which, it
should be noted, included a further six Lectors — that none of
its members ever should be permitted to accept that dignity.
This was, it may be thought, self-denial on a handsome scale.
It had its counterpart among the reformed friars of France, and
certain turns of phrase make it fairly clear that, as with
them, the measure of the Spanish friars' decision was not the
regulations of Rule and statute, but rather what they took to
be the attitude and practice of their founder and other early
brothers, recorded — it must be assumed — in the available
biographical or polemical sources. The community's argument
was as follows: their friary had been founded in the lifetime
of St. Francis, and they therefore desired "to follow the
counsels of the same saint and despise the deceitful glory of
the world"; moreover it was in any case right to "imitate the
sincere and holy doctrine and intention of the ancient fathers",
who "ordained in act and in will" that no brother should accept
the degree of Master. It is hard to see what can underlie such
an argument other than knowledge of St. Francis', the companions'
and the Spirituals' deep suspicion of learning, recorded in both
the polemical and the biographical works which emerged from the
Spirituals' circle.

This supposition, taken together with the phraseology of
the bull concerning Sahagún, indicates that there was more to the
Spanish reform than the mere return to canonical observance
posited by the curia of Benedict XIII. One respect in which this certainly was the case is particularly noteworthy, and establishes a far-reaching distinction between the Spanish and French reforms, which appeared at first sight identical: namely the pronounced eremitical character of the Spanish movement. It may not be too much to say that this was its essential and distinctive characteristic.

It is a characteristic which will be revealed by even the most cursory study of the external history of the Spanish reform, already sketched: the description "hermitage" is applied to the reformed settlements in all three provinces with almost monotonous regularity. To take the point further, it is not perhaps unduly imaginative to detect a kind of symbolic significance in the fact that the first known reformed settlement in each province was of a demonstrably eremitical type. In Santiago, the first of the three, we have a choice between two possible stories; in the one a retiring provincial minister withdrew to a remote settlement to lead a life of pronounced austerity; in the other it was a group of three friars who received permission "to lead a solitary life in some hermitage" ("vitam solitariam ducere ... in aliqua eremo").

The surviving account of the first reformed foundation in Castile is more circumstantial: S. Francisco del Monte stood in wild and mountainous country, already a place of "retreat from the world", and the community of friars built their settlement from the simple materials they could themselves lay hand on, and lived in silence and abstinence from cooked food. In Aragon, finally, the settlement of Santo Espíritu del Monte was erected "inter
Where the origin of the reform was in each case eremitical, we are already far towards defining its essence as such.

Two of the four settlements just mentioned received the title "del Monte", a plain indication of their character; the application of the same name to S. Francisco de Villaverde, founded in 1401, and to S. Miguel, near Alcocer, founded three years later, tells its own tale. The settlement of Castañar, established in 1415, might equally have enjoyed the name, for its situation was described thus: "in the mountains of Toledo, six leagues from that city, in much wilderness and solitude ... so rough and wild are the mountains that for two leagues all round there are no villages ..."

One of the features of this somewhat desolate retreat was the restriction, mentioned in the foundation bull, of the inmates to nine. When we note that the original community of S. Francisco del Monte de Villaverde numbered seven, and that papal permission to "lead a solitary life in some hermitage" was addressed to three friars of Santiago, it begins to look as though limited size was characteristic of the eremitical communities, and we shall interpret accordingly the fact that, as laid down by their bulls of foundation, La Rabida was not to have more than thirteen members, and Arrizafa not more than six.

If, however, the character of the Spanish reform was predominantly eremitical, it was not so exclusively, at least in Castile; the bull of 1417 establishing the office of Visitors for the reform in the whole Province makes the
distinction throughout between a smaller and a more substantial category of settlement, respectively eremitorium and domus, the sense of distinction between them coming out most clearly in the authority given the Visitors to transfer friars "de domo ad domum ac de eremitorio ad eremitorium seu de eremitorio ad domum et e contra". There is no means of knowing which settlements in particular were counted as domus, but it may be surmised that those of Cuéllar, Medina del Campo and Santander were among them.

The distinction between the two types of settlement illustrates in the most concrete way the chief implication of the eremitism in the Spanish reform, namely the divided nature of the movement. Its hermit strain confirms the earlier indications, in the bulls relating to Sahagún and Oviedo, that something else was afoot than the straightforward return to canonical norms. The plain fact is that the Franciscan canon of papal declarations and official constitutions had not a word to say on the hermit life, for the simple reason that it was elaborated with an eye to a quite different life-style - that of the city friaries and their parish apostolate, which had become normative during the 13th century. The traditions to which the eremitical tendency pointed lay elsewhere: in the practice of the Spirituals and of John of Valle and Paoluccio dei Trinci, the protagonists of "strict" as opposed to "moderate" observance; and in the example of the Founder and his companions, recorded in the former's "mini-Rules" for the conduct of the hermitages, and in the corpus of biographical material: in precisely the traditions, that is, which are
glimpsed in the Sahagún and Oviedo bulls. It is therefore possible to conclude that there were two quite distinct, and in some respects opposed currents within the Spanish reform movement: on the one hand a return to canonical norms; on the other a reaching out to a pattern which lay outside and beyond the official canon. The division seems to have been between what we know as the "moderate" and "strict" Franciscan positions on observance; to put it in the sharpest possible way, a re-enactment of the division between Spirituals and Community in the 13th century.

It is at this tantalising point that the general sources for the nature of the Spanish reform movement give out; and, if we wish to dig deeper, our only recourse is to the rich source material on one small branch of the Castilian reform, namely the Recollectio Villacreciana. The dangers of any attempt to generalise from such a narrow base are obvious; yet it is almost impossible not to do so. For as it turns out the Recollectio seems to be the epitome and fulfilment of the para-canonical current within the Spanish reform. It was eremitical to the core; its inspiration was drawn largely from the non-official writings of St. Francis, the biographical material about him (particularly that supplied by the three companions and the Spirituals), and certain polemical works of the Spirituals; and in the plainest terms it rejected the cornerstone of moderate Franciscan observance, the papal declarations. By the same token it repudiated the view of the Spanish reform taken in the curia of Pope Benedict XIII, and demonstrates overwhelmingly the divided nature of the movement.
All these points, although most fully documented for one of the later branches of the *Recollectio Villacreciana*, that led by Villacreses' closest disciple Lope de Salazar y Salinas, can be quite satisfactorily established in the case of the Master himself, both from Lope's many reminiscences, and from the *Memoriale Religionis* which describes the customs of Villacreses' hermitages. The reformer's starting-point was, it could be said, rejection of the papal declarations and the Order's constitutions, and thus the extra-canonical nature of his enterprise was immediately established. In Lope's words, "the teaching of the said Fathers (Villacreses and his first disciple, Peter of Santoyo) was always that their friars should never adopt or hear those relaxations, and lax opinions, and declarations, and constitutions, but only the strict ones, and pure, and to the letter ... Indeed of the blessed Father who nurtured me (i.e. Villacreses) it can be said with certainty ... that he would rather burn his books than consent that his friars should study those constitutions and declarations departing from the sincere wishes of St. Francis ...". It was on this explicit basis that recruits were allowed to join the community: "If he decides to join us, they declare the Rule to him simply, *au pied de la lettre*, without the subtlety of any distinctions, as the Rule itself requires ... disregarding the sophistry of its division into precepts, and counsels, and exhortations, and admonitions ... so that he shall keep the greater and the less with equal devotion ..."

A more circumstantial definition of literal observance of the Rule could hardly be imagined, nor a more explicit rejection
of the moderate observance defined by declaration and constitution. But this was only the beginning—a clearing of the ground as it were. Having repudiated what they regarded as a lax body of interpretation of the Rule, and against the wishes of St. Francis, Villacreces and his followers proceeded to replace it with what they saw as the one legitimate and indeed necessary interpretation, namely the saint's own example. In the induction of new recruits, after the presentation of the Rule, "then they read him from a memorial ... all the supererogations which St. Francis used and taught as help, guard and holy support for the said Rule"—in greater detail, "the rites, and ceremonies, and supererogations, and religious instructions for soul and body, with which we have to occupy ourselves, and pass day and night, summer and winter, to help us keep that essence of the Rule which we have to vow and promise, according to the intention and teaching of St. Francis ...".

In what sources, then, did Villacreces and his followers discover the "intention and teaching" of their Founder, which they took as yardstick for their interpretation of the Rule? The answer is, as we shall see, implicit in many passages of the Memoriale Religionis; but in two paragraphs it is, at least in part, stated explicitly: "The spiritual readings which ought most to be carried on in our congregation should be principally the Gospel, and the Rule of Honorius, which we promise with its strict declarations, and the old Rule of our Father St. Francis, which Pope Innocent conceded us without Bull"—the Regula Prima—"and the Testament of St. Francis. And after these, the
Flowers and Chronicles of St. Francis, which are the readings assigned to Fridays, and the famous argument of the old Italian fathers on the Rule, and the treatise of obedience ... What this last was cannot be said with certainty. The "famous argument" can only be one of the polemical treatises produced by the Italian Spirituals before the Council of Vienne; and it is clear that the Chronicles included the Speculum Perfectionis in some form. As to the Flowers, Lope de Salazar once wrote of "a few other certain chapters which are called Flowers, in which are expressed the desires and will of St. Francis, and the prerogatives of his virtues"; the description seems to belie the opinion of Lope's editors that what he had in mind was the Fioretti, and the present writer would suggest that it was some small collection associated with the writings of the three companions, possibly even Leo's Intentio Regulae, which we know to have existed as an independent collection, and the purpose of which was precisely to display the saint's intentions regarding his Order's observance. At another point of the Memoriale, the friar desirous of studying "charity, obedience and chastity, and the other virtues" is referred to, among others, a writer called simply "Ubertino". In the Franciscan context, and particularly in view of the sources already enumerated, this would seem most likely to be none other than Ubertino of Casale; and if this is correct, the work referred to has a good chance of being, once again, the Sanctitas Vestra, whose purpose was largely to display the virtues in which the Order was grounded - poverty, simplicity, humility, purity, charity, prayer and work, and setting a good example.
The interest of these passages needs no emphasis. For the first time in the Order's history a group of friars was formally required to seek its inspiration, not in the official apparatus of commentary, but in the unofficial writings of St. Francis, and in the memoirs and polemics of his companions and of the Spirituals. The extra-canonical nature of the procedure is plain enough. It was, in addition, but the epitome of that essentially spiritual return to the total (and pre-eminently spiritual) message of St. Francis which we have already found to be characteristic of the reforms of the period.\textsuperscript{310} And it was also perhaps the supreme consequence of that wave of copying of the writings of Francis, the companions and the Spirituals which had characterised the middle quarters of the 14th century.\textsuperscript{311}

Was it not also, after the lapse of a century and a half, the fulfilment of the policy of the three companions, Angelo, Rufino and Leo, particularly Leo? For theirs was the written word which summoned the friars to imitate the total example of their Founder. Their purpose in writing the \textit{Flowers}, according to the introductory letter of 1246, was "to set forth examples of his holy will ... for the edification of those who wish to follow his example."\textsuperscript{312} Accordingly, a constant thread running through the \textit{Flowers} (and hence the \textit{Speculum Perfectionis}) is indeed that Francis felt bound to be the "model and example" of the other brethren, in whose actions they would learn better than anywhere else what it was to be a true friar minor;\textsuperscript{313} and the \textit{Speculum} itself, in its title, merely made this line of thought slightly more explicit: "the mirror of the perfection of the friar minor"; "the mirror of the perfection of the friar
minor, which fully reveals the perfection of his vocation and profession"—what is this to say except, as was suggested before, that to be a true ("perfect") Franciscan meant acting as Francis and the companions were shown to act in the Speculum's stories? It can be quite soberly concluded that the whole Recollectio Villacreciana, whose essence was the observance of the Rule to the letter, together with the further or supererogatory teaching of St. Francis' total example, was the fruit of the literary labours of the three companions, particularly of him who had described St. Francis' "Intention in the Rule". Thus in the end, after an interval of more than a century, what brother Leo had undertaken as in some sense his life's work began to reap its historical reward.

The point is reflected throughout the custumary of Peter of Villacrecses' hermitages, the Memoriale Religionis: no text had more influence on it than the Speculum Perfectionis. The fact is in some ways more clearly established in small things than in large ones; and, as with St. Colette, it is often the detail which reveals the reformers' work to be a return to the spiritual message of their Founder. A delightful—as well as wholly serious—aspect of the latter was Francis' desire, recorded in the Speculum, that the friars' gardens should always have a bed set aside for flowers and aromatic herbs, to stimulate praise of their Creator; in the twenty-five lines which it gave to the office of the gardener, the Memoriale found room to recall this wish. An important topic within Francis' spiritual teaching, as we have seen more than once, was the problem of illness; to this the Memoriale devoted nearly three
hundred lines; and these began with the quotation of one whole chapter of the *Speculum* (containing in turn part of the *First Rule*’s section on illness).\(^{318}\)

These points, peculiarly convincing though they are, do not bear on the essentials of the *Recollectio*; but their lesson holds good for more substantial matters: in following the main lines, as well as the details, of the example St. Francis set by word and action, Villacreces and his disciples drew largely upon the *Speculum Perfectionis*.

A critical and controversial aspect of the saint’s example was his attitude to learning and study, which he may be said, not indeed to have condemned outright, but to have regarded with very great reserve, insisting that they be always subordinate to the elemental Gospel and Franciscan qualities of poverty, humility, simplicity and prayer.\(^{319}\) In the words of Lope de Salazar, "That was also the opinion of the blessed and good Master fr. Peter of Villacreces, who used to accuse and criticise himself, saying with great fervour of spirit: 'I received the degree of Master at Salamanca, though not deserving it; rather, I have learnt more in my cell by weeping in the darkness, than in Salamanca, Toulouse or Paris by studying in candle-light' ... And again he would say: 'I would rather be a simple little old man with the charity of the love of God and my neighbour, than know the theology of St. Augustine and of the Subtle Doctor Scotus.' And thus the first study which he taught his disciples was to weep and detest the study of letters. And if he saw that one of them did wholly detest letters, and give himself over to prayer, and devotion, and tears, then he would
give him a thorough formation in letters ... in conformity to St. Francis, who honoured Masters of Theology and humble learned men, and ordered others to honour them". 320

The reference in the last sentence is no doubt to the corresponding passage in Francis' Testament; 321 but in the Memoriale Religionis 322 the sources used are the Speculum Perfectionis and, secondly, that more Spiritual product of the zealots of the March of Ancona, the Actus b. Francisci et Sociorum eius. 323 "For it is certain that St. Francis expressly forbade, on behalf of Christ, the study of the art of grammar ..." (Speculum c. 69?) "and with a terrible curse he brought down fire from heaven and caused the death of the first learned brother who planted the study of grammar in his Order in the convent of Bologna". (Actus c. 61) "And ... that is and was the will of Christ ... since St. Francis expressly pronounced and declared by the Holy Spirit that the study of the liberal arts would be the downfall and destruction of the whole sanctity of the Order". (Speculum c. 69, "How he foresaw and foretold that learning would be the occasion of the ruin of the Order...") "And therefore he wished and declared and pronounced that all the brethren should persevere in the holy simplicity, and ignorance, and patience of those whom he called ignorant and unlettered" (Speculum c. 72 - "That the souls which seem to be converted by knowledge and preaching are really converted by the prayers and tears of humble and simple brothers").

One of the elemental qualities in which the friars of the Recollectio Villacreciana tried to follow each shade of St. Francis' teaching was poverty. It was only to be expected that
they should refuse to touch money: this was a precept of the Rule, and was also a principle of the canonical or moderate reform standpoint taken by the French Observance. Even so in the Memoriale Religionis the principle received a non-canonical corroboration: "and let them take as much account of (money) as of the dung of animals and men" — surely a reference to Speculum Perfectionis c. 14, the story of how St. Francis punished a friar who had thoughtlessly touched some coins by making him place them with his own mouth on the dung of an ass. The same chapter of the Memoriale instructs the friars to refuse "excessive and unnecessary" alms, "believing in all faith that that would be a robbery of the poor and would make of them thieves and robbers"; this can only represent an implementation of Speculum Perfectionis c. 12, "That (St. Francis) regarded it as robbery to acquire or use alms going beyond necessity". Similarly the Memoriale laid down that the friars' buildings should be made of wood, earth, untrimmed stone, or bricks, and bound together (it would seem) with mud, not lime; there are clear echoes here of St. Francis' preference, recorded in successive chapters of the Speculum Perfectionis (nos. 9, 10 and 11), for dwellings of "loam and wood".

In large questions, therefore, as well as small, Villacrezes' congregation was modelled, with an almost slavish literalness, on the picture of St. Francis and his fraternity presented in the non-canonical sources, particularly the Speculum Perfectionis. But there is yet more to the matter than that. The points mentioned so far, whether minor or major, were no more
than aspects of the life of the Recollectio; we shall find the heart of the congregation elsewhere, in its eremitism. Here without question lay its most basic and distinctive characteristics; and the vital point for our present purpose is that these also were derived in every detail from non-canonical Franciscan sources, namely St. Francis' "mini-Rules" for the hermitages: the De religiosa habitations in creo, and the three chapters of the Speculum Perfectionis (nos. 55, 82 and 112) which contain instructions for the way of life to be followed at the Portiuncula.

Of these the chapters of the Speculum seem if anything to have had the greater influence on Villacreses, and this point in itself may tell us much about both his use of the Speculum as a source, and his guiding principle of imitating the example set by his Founder. The fact is that a minor but significant theme of the Speculum is Francis' wish that the Portiuncula should be taken as the "form and example" of all the Order's settlements; the point recurs five times.\textsuperscript{329} Given the literalness with which Villacreses adopted other lessons of the Speculum, and the additional specific point concerning "example", it begins to seem not only understandable but even inevitable that, for the reformer, the "mini-Rules" should in a real sense have taken the place of the Rule.

The result was a style of Franciscan living which, so far as the historical record tells, was unlike anything the Order had known since its earliest days (and which as a consequence has met its fair share of hostility and incomprehension, from both contemporaries and later commentators).\textsuperscript{330} And yet,
strange though it may at first sight appear, it was deduced in all its characteristics from the recorded word of St. Francis.

Chief of those characteristics was, perhaps, emphasis upon strict enclosure — for Villacreces, a many-sided concept. The *Memoriale Religionis* reveals an explicit division of the Villacrecian family into priests and lay brothers; and, in general, it was the function of the latter to attend to all practical and active duties, so that the former might pursue in uninterrupted seclusion their life of "due prayer and contemplation and holy meditations", according to St. Francis' "desire ... that the priests should be secluded in much holy devotion and preserved in strictness of life". Accordingly it was only with reluctance, and at necessity, that priests were allowed to leave their enclosure, in order to seek alms for example, and a general rule for the alms-gatherers was that they should remain in the outside world for as short a time as possible — and even then their life was to be marked by "prayer and silence, their words devout and few". An even greater reluctance to break claustrophobia attached to the office of President (i.e. Guardian): "That which the President of the brothers has to do is this: first, he must devote all his power to not going out of the settlement, except for matters so arduous and important that they cannot be dealt with by other means or by letter, and so necessary to the congregation or his own or a brother's salvation that they cannot be refused; but on no other account is he to go out, even though they should thereby suffer loss or damage". Connected with the discipline of enclosure (as we may see from the above general rule for alms-gatherers)
was the discipline of silence, whose preservation was also a principal task laid upon the President;335 the underlying connection between the two comes out in the Memoriale’s classic statement on claustration, made in consideration of the office of janitor: "It is his duty to receive visitors with charity and humility, and little speech; and he is not to learn from them news of the world ... nor speak idle words with them ... nor hear from them news of other monasteries, or of the lives of other men, or of relatives of the brothers, but only the reason for their coming. And if this is such that he can dispatch it without his Superior, he is to deal with them, and not so much as mention it to his Superior ... And he is to ensure that no brother, especially the priests, and saving only his Superior, shall know anything of visitors and his duties, neither who goes, nor who comes, nor what he wants ... and let him send the visitors away as quickly as he can ... and he is not to allow any person to enter the friars' cloister, or garden, or their part of the church".336 This last rule was so strictly applied that the only people whom Villacreces would normally permit to enter the enclosure of his hermitages were their secular founders, and the General and Provincial Minister, provided their business was "spiritual visitation".337

In summary, these were the characteristics of the Villacrecian "enclosure": a division between priests and lay, those who prayed and those who served; minimum contact with the outside world, whether by the brothers' going out or strangers' coming in; and a strict discipline of silence. This is not what one thinks of automatically as Franciscan living; yet every
feature is drawn from Francis' recorded words.

"Those who wish to live piously in a hermitage must be three or at most four brothers. Two of them shall be mothers and they shall have the other two for sons or the one. But the mothers shall lead the life of Martha and the others the life of Mary ... And as soon as the sun has set they shall pray the Compline and try to maintain silence ... And at the proper time they shall pray the Primes, and after the Trines they can break the silence ... And they must permit no-one to enter the enclosure where they are, and no-one must eat there either. The brothers who are mothers shall keep themselves away from all men, and, as their Superior has told them, guard their sons from all men, so that no-one can speak to them. And the sons must not talk with anyone except their mothers and with their Superior, if he with God's blessing visits them." (De religiosa habitazione in eremo).  "I wish therefore that (the Portiuncula) may always be under the control of the Minister General ... Clerics are to be chosen from the holier and more worthy brothers and from among those who in the whole Order can recite the office best ... From among the friars and saintly laymen, men who are prudent and worthy are to be chosen to serve them. I wish that no friar or any other unauthorized person shall enter this place, but only the Minister-General and the brothers appointed to serve them. The clerics are not to speak with anyone at all, other than the friars who serve them and the Minister-General, when he visits them. Similarly, I wish that the lay friars who serve them be bound not to pass on to them any talk or news of the outside world that they may hear
which is not profitable to the soul. On this account I especially wish that no-one enters this house, that its clergy may preserve their purity and holiness the better, that this house may not be profaned in the slightest by any vain and unprofitable words, but may be served wholeheartedly and kept pure and holy with hymns and praises of God. "For although the place itself was hallowed, they nurtured its holiness with continuous prayer day and night, and continuous silence." (Speculum Perfectionis c. 55). "For (St. Francis) considered that it was not good either for himself or his friars that the profit gained through God's help in time of prayer should afterwards be lost by idle or unprofitable talk. To prevent any such lapse into idle or unsuitable talk he commanded the friars (staying at the Portiuncula) to observe this order: if any friar, when journeying or working at anything, makes any idle or unprofitable remark to the friars he is bound to say the Lord's Prayer once, with God's praises at the beginning and end ..." (Speculum Perfectionis, c. 82).

Comparison of these passages with the instructions of the Memoriale Religionis demonstrates the care with which Villacreeces had studied the text of the Speculum and De Religiosa habitacione, and the literal exactness with which he modelled his congregation upon their pattern; there have perhaps been few religious groups formed more completely after a literary exemplar. In fact, there is but one discordant note: the size of the settlements. The maximum set by the De religiosa habitacione was four; Villacreeces perhaps found this impractical, and set an upper limit of twelve.
from one or two other hermitages of the Spanish reform movement that a lower limit was possible - Castañar with nine for example, and Arrizafa with six - but by the Order's general standards at the time a maximum of twelve was still quite low, and to set a limit at all was uncommon. Perhaps Villacreces bore in mind not so much the specific directive of the De religiosa habituatione, as a more general comment in the Speculum Perfectionis, c. 10: "Therefore (St. Francis) wished the friars not to congregate in large numbers in houses, because it seemed to him that it would be difficult to preserve poverty with large numbers".

The same, we may suppose, could be said of physical austerity generally; and this was, after what was called "enclosure", the second striking and specifically eremitical trait of Villacreces' congregation. The Memorialis's treatment of food is representative: "Bread, and water, and salt are all that necessity requires; in all else let patience shine (literally 'sing'), and virtue restrain the impetus of appetite ... And if we should be compelled by great and manifest necessity, confirmed by the Superior, let us at his command with other things receive a small quantity of wine and meat, ... not in whole or in part giving sensuous consent to them, (but) treating them like a trial and confirmation of our treasure of chastity ... The Friar Minor's food ... white and black, tough and tender, dry and fresh - all is to be received in the same spirit. Cool and clear water ... we regard as a great delicacy. A simple vegetable stew is our normal food; and oil and sardines we consider splendid fare. If we happen
to have eggs, we treat them as chicken; if God sends us dried fish, that is our beef and mutton; fresh fish we hold superfluous."344 By most standards this was a severe regime (though Villacreses himself regarded it as one of moderation);345 and it was therefore laid down that due regard must be had to the needs of the individual. The friar refectorer was required to be "wise in his distribution of food, not giving the same equally to all, but considering the physical quality of each ... for some are robust and others feeble, some sick and others healthy, some old and others youthful, some boys and others adults. And therefore he must be sensible and careful to provide more generously for the boys, to build them up, and for the elderly, to sustain them, giving the boys particularly body-building meat, and the elderly the more tender and nutritious foods ... Again, regarding the sick, he has to consider what is appropriate to each according to his infirmity, and regarding the healthy, what is enough to discipline them without enfeebling them." And yet finally, above and beyond all discretion in individual cases, there reigned a standard of self-denial which all had to obey: "All that is to be understood so as never, in the distribution of food and drink, to exceed the measure and circumstances of the state of poverty which St. Francis praised and commanded, to which we all - old and young, sick and healthy, boys and adults, Prelates and subjects, literate and illiterate, base and gentle, cultured and ignorant - are bound equally and without exception, saving manifest necessity, if we wish to imitate the poverty of the Gospel.346

In short, we may say that the characteristics of the
Villacrecian abstinence were austerity, tempered by discretion: on the one hand a considerable measure of personal asceticism, in accord with the general standards of self-denial St. Francis had discerned in the Gospel; on the other, consideration of the circumstances of each individual, and avoidance of anything so extreme as to endanger health. Whence were these traits derived? First, a general justification of physical asceticism was included in the Speculum Perfectionis, c. 55 (on the Portiuncula): "They also wasted their flesh with many fasts, with cold and nakedness and manual labour". Here was, no doubt, a starting-point; and everything else might be found by turning to another chapter of the same work: "Once it happened ... about the middle of the night, when all the friars were resting, that one of the friars cried out 'I am dying! I am dying!' ... And St. Francis said to him: 'What is the matter, brother? How do you mean, you are dying?' And he said: 'I am dying of hunger' ... For he and all the others had recently been converted to the Lord and were affliction their bodies excessively ... (Then) St. Francis said to the others: "My dearest brothers, I assure you that each one of you must consider his own nature. It may be that one among you can be sustained on less food than another. However I wish that one who needs more food should not be bound to imitate the other in this, but bearing in mind his own nature he should furnish his body with its needs, so that it may be able to serve the spirit. We are bound to beware of superfluity of food, which is bad for the body and the soul, but we must shun too great abstinence even more ... I desire and order you that each brother,
according to our poverty, shall satisfy his body as is necessary to it'... We who were with him bear witness concerning him that throughout his life he was discreet and prudent with his friars, so long as they did not deviate at any time in food and drink from our Order's standard of poverty and right behaviour. Nevertheless from the beginning of his conversion to the end of his life the most blessed Father was austere towards his own body, although he was by nature delicate, and in the world had had to be pampered... At one time... he said: 'Do not the brothers think that a little indulgence is necessary to my body? It is because I need to be a model and example to all the brothers that I want to use and be content with little and wretchedly poor food...' (Speculum Perfectionis c. 27). The thought of the whole passage, it might be said, is an oscillation between the demand for asceticism, and the demand that it be tempered; and we may suppose that the closing reference to St. Francis as "model and example" was all that was needed, given Villacreces' general religious premisses, to ensure his attempt to follow it in his own congregation. The resultant chapter of the Memoriale is a perhaps unparalleled translation of biographical narrative into the terms of a code of religious practice. There is only one of its points which seems partly extraneous to the story - the emphasis upon necessity as the ultimate yardstick; but this was entirely characteristic of Francis, receiving expression for example in the First Rule. To give a complete picture of the life of the Recollectio Villacreciana under its founder would require a good deal more to be said; but the ground already covered is enough to
establish its essential characteristics. These were as follows: to go, for inspiration and model, beyond the canonical basis of Rule and official commentary to the whole experience of St. Francis, especially its eremitical side; and to do this on the basis of unofficial writings - the saint's own, the companions', and the Spirituals', above all the Speculum Perfectionis.

This particular combination of characteristics was something quite new in Franciscan history, and its novelty is indeed perhaps the most striking comment on the sense in which, as has already been suggested, the Franciscan reforms of the Schism period were a "new creation". On the other hand this originality should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the Recollectio belonged recognisably to a particular Franciscan tradition, that of the "literal observance", represented earlier both by the Spirituals and by the congregation of John of Valle, Gentilis of Spoleto and Paoluccio dei Trinci. Both these groups had had a pronounced eremitical tendency - the reflection, it may be added, of a spiritual life no less intense than that of the Villacrecian family; and both had understood, by the catch phrase "literal observance", the attempt to re-live, as nearly as possible, the existence of the Founder and his companions.

And if there is no evidence that the early Italian Observance made use of written sources, the Spirituals did, albeit to a lesser extent than the Villacrecianos; they had relied heavily on the Verba and Intentio Regulae of Leo, and knew certain unofficial writings of St. Francis.

Two further points may be made about the Recollectio Villacreciana, to underline its kinship with the earlier movements...
in the Franciscan zealot tradition. First was the important role it gave to the lay brothers. We have already seen that they played a vital function within the eremitical communities, undertaking most of the necessary practical duties, and a passage of the *Memoriale Religionis* on the friars' food indicates that they were on exactly the same footing as the clerics in regard to the fulfilment of their shared evangelical vocation;\(^{355}\) a similarly high regard for the lay brethren was also characteristic of the early Italian Observance,\(^{356}\) of the Spirituals,\(^{357}\) and of course of St. Francis.\(^{358}\) Secondly, we have seen throughout this study that real poverty in clothing was constantly almost the supreme mark of reformist zeal, with Spirituals, Fraticelli, Italian Observance — and not least with Francis himself;\(^{359}\) it is a striking fact that, according to Lope de Salazar, one of Villacreces' first actions in launching his movement was to "reform" the habit, by requiring it to be of poorer cloth than was then current.\(^{360}\)

Only one question remains: was the *Recollectio Villacreciana* representative of the contemporary Franciscan reform in Spain as a whole? We have already noted that, strictly speaking, the question cannot be satisfactorily answered, for lack of sufficient evidence. Nevertheless there are certain pointers towards an answer which are so powerful as to force themselves upon us.

Much the strongest of these is the trait of eremitism. We have discovered that in this lay the heart of the *Recollectio*; it was also, we concluded earlier, the essential and distinctive characteristic of the Spanish reform generally. This fact
demands an explanation, for the simple reason that an eremitic style of Franciscan life was, so far as is known, something never before seen in Spain: it had been hitherto a uniquely Italian phenomenon, and its votaries in that country – the original fraternity of St. Francis, the Spirituals, and the early Observants under John of Valle and Paoluccio dei Trinci – had been linked, as we were at pains to point out, by an unbroken series of personal contacts. How then was the eremitical tradition planted in the Spain of the Schism epoch? We saw above that there is no evidence for any contact with the Italian Observance in the beginnings of the Spanish movement; and we now know very well the source of the Villacrecian eremitism – the written word of St. Francis, and of his three companions in the Speculum Perfectionis. Can it have been otherwise for the rest of the country, especially since, as we know, Spain was an area to which those texts were spread by the copyists of the 14th century? 

Further similarities with the Villacrecian enterprise may be found in the probable references already noted, in the bulls concerning Sahagún and Oviedo, to the whole literary tradition about St. Francis, and to the strict Franciscan standard of the literal observance. It may also be noted at this point that later we shall come across clear evidence for the presence of the literal observance after 1418 in both Aragon and parts of Castile not within the Recollection.

It can therefore, despite the lack of direct evidence, be taken as virtually certain that at least a significant part of the Spanish reform movement shared many of the characteristics
of the Recollectio. It follows that, at the least, the Spanish movement displays two very different faces, and that in all probability it was indeed deeply divided. In part it had the character of a straightforward return to canonical norms, the Rule, declarations and constitutions, officially defined as "regular observance"; and in part it had an opposed, extra-canonical character, going beyond those norms to what could be called, in the words of the Provincial Chapter of Cuenca, the "total tradition" of St. Francis, and which the historian defines as "literal observance".

There is in this situation a curious irony, and an important lesson. When considering the Mirebeau reform in France we found that it seemed to claim adherence to the literal observance, but in fact adopted the moderate or canonical observance of Rule, declarations and constitutions. We now in Spain find the opposite self-contradiction: officially - in the documents of Pope Benedict XIII's chancery - it followed the canonical line; but in reality it held at least in part to the extra-canonical literal observance. The lesson of this irony is that the French and Spanish reforms, which appeared at first sight identical, were in some respects profoundly different; the fact was, as we shall see, to have the gravest implications for the entire future of Franciscan reform.

Despite the important differences between its two parts, some general conclusions can be registered about the nature of the reform of the Schism period as a whole. First was its novelty. This applied initially, as has already been pointed out, in a purely geographical sense: the reform was, in the areas
in which it took root, something previously unknown. But it applied in a second and deeper sense, which follows on from the first: this was the first reform in Franciscan history which was entirely founded upon a response to the written word. At one level, the canonical and official one, the response was simply to the letter of the law which the Order was in theory bound to observe, and in practice disregarded; at a deeper level – which we suspected in St. Colette, found strongly in Henry de Baume, saw traces of in the Mirebeau group, and found pre-eminently in the Recollectio Villacreciana – the response was to a whole corpus of writings of and about St. Francis. But at both levels the foundation of reform, the written word, was of another order than the living tradition of personal contacts from which Paoluccio dei Trinci had derived his inspiration; and it is this fact, implied by their geographical novelty, which justifies the earlier contention that the French and Spanish movements were in their nature fundamentally different from their Italian counterpart. In this sense the reforms of the Schism era marked a watershed in the history of the Observance.

In so far as the inspiration of these movements was not the canonical norms, but the wider corpus of literature of and about Francis, we can record a second general conclusion about them: they were rendered possible only by the 14th century copyists, by whose labours that literature – which had originated in the narrow circle of the companions and Spirituals in central Italy – was broadcast to the entire Order. Here then was the crucial historical importance of that 14th century diffusion of what we
saw was a reformist literature, and of its then dawning use as the true yardstick of Franciscan life: it did, in the end, generate reform.

But what, we must ask, enabled it to do so? Works such as the *Speculum Perfectionis* and so-called Saxon Compilation, which explicitly summoned their readers to model themselves according to the stories which they contained, had passed through countless hands before Peter of Villacreses and his like took them at their word. What then made the difference between those who had read these and other similar collections – who even had laboriously copied them out – and for all practical purposes ignored them, and those who read them in order to make them the basis of their whole life? *Mutatis mutandis* the same question applies, less dramatically but perhaps yet more acutely, to the difference between disregard and fulfilment of the prescribed canons of Franciscan observance, known to the whole Order for a good deal longer than the *Speculum* and its fellows.

To this question there is no real answer; all one can say is that in the closing decades of the 14th century there seems to have been a new spirit abroad which enabled certain friars to read perhaps old and familiar texts with new eyes, and galvanised them to implement the message of those texts in their lives. We here confront the ultimate mystery of all reform, the origin of the spirit of renewal itself. A number of comments, however, are worth making. First, it can obviously be seen as a response to that growing demand for reform which, we discovered, had characterised the Order in the decades before the outbreak of the Schism – and which, it is worth noting, had been particularly
strong in Castile and Santiago. Secondly, it may be supposed that the reformers were able to devote their spiritual energies to fulfilling a reformed observance—whether strict or moderate—because they did not have to expend any energy on first of all defining it: that had been done during the Order's first hundred years by, respectively, the Spirituals, and the Popes and members of the Order's moderate party; and, as was remarked above, the process had been demanding enough to absorb much of the Order's spiritual force. The later friars were perhaps fortunate in having only to apply what their earlier confreres had struggled to work out. Thirdly, the fundamentally spiritual quality of the Franciscan movements has been stressed throughout our investigation, both in the general sense of deep religious devotion, and in the specific sense of the rediscovery of the essentially spiritual totality of St. Francis' message; this makes it the more easy to see the reform as outcome of a pure working of the spirit. Finally, one cannot but connect the Franciscan case with the general current of the Church's life at the time. It was the epoch, not only of the perplexities of the Schism, but also of the promise of Conciliarism; and the essence of Conciliarism was the call for the Church's "reform in head and members". Indeed it has been said that "never, surely, in the history of the Church was the word 'reform' used so often as between 1378 and 1449". The effect, as far as the head was concerned, might in the end be negligible; but in regard to one section of the members, the regular Orders, certain positive results were achieved. Among the Benedictines a number of small foci of reform came into being in Hungary, Spain and
Italy in the last decade of the 14th century, the very moment of
the origin of the new Franciscan movements; and the current of
endeavour found its perhaps most important expression in the
establishment, prompted by the Council of Constance itself, of
the reformed congregations of Melk and Bursfeld.\textsuperscript{371} There were
centres of Cistercian renewal in France, the Low Countries and
Spain from the early 15th century onwards, and the last of these
is particularly germane, for it set itself the goal of a return
to "the regular observance of St. Bernard".\textsuperscript{372} Most striking of
all, the twin Mendicant Order to the Minors, the Dominican, also
produced a reformed branch, likewise known as the observance —
indissolubly linked with the names of St. Catherine of Siena,
St. Vincent Ferrier, Bl. Raymond of Capua and Bl. John Dominici —
whose first house was established in 1389 — within a year or two
of the first reformed Franciscan foundation in both France and
Spain.\textsuperscript{373} The Franciscan movement thus becomes the more under¬
standable as part of a wider pattern — but one product of a new
current of spiritual energy which seems to have made itself felt
to a greater or lesser extent throughout the Church towards the
turn of the 15th century. Even so, the mystery of the quickening
of that seemingly self-generated spark of renewal, within the
Order or the Church as a whole, remains, to the historical eye,
impenetrable. One further point should be noted. However we
account for it, the fundamental spiritual quality of the new
Franciscan reform was one feature shared with the earlier Italian
movement\textsuperscript{374} which in other respects, it was argued above, was of
a quite different order.

In sum, it might be said that the new reforms of the Schism
era were the product of the action of an unheralded spirit of religious devotion upon an existing body of written material. The fusion of these two elements had dramatic and no doubt in many ways admirable results; but it did also raise one serious problem, namely the status to be accorded to the non-canonical writings of and about St. Francis. These were numerous, they gave a much fuller account of the saint's essentially spiritual teaching than any of the canonical sources, and in many cases (notably several of Francis' own writings, and the Flowers and its derivatives) explicitly summoned their readers to put them into practice. On all these counts they were bound to attract the serious consideration of the reforming friars. And on the other hand there could be no balking the fact that they lay outside the official canon of Rule, declarations and constitutions, and at many points flatly contradicted it. How was the dilemma to be resolved?

A number of solutions were possible, and as it happened different sections of the reform chose different ones. The Mirebeau group seems to have drawn least upon the extra-canonical material, and when it came to the point departed from it in order to maintain the strict canonical position; thus it derived from it what spiritual sustenance it could, within the limit of prescribed observance. Henry de Baume and the Coletans were much more adventurous in their use of the unofficial sources, and derived from them a powerful Franciscan spirituality; but as a corollary, although when pressed they would no doubt abide by the canonical norm, their hold on it could on occasion be distinctly shaky. Finally the Spanish reform, in so far as it was
represented by the Recollectio Villacreciana, founded its deep and highly characteristic religious programme exclusively on non-canonical material, firmly rejecting the official standpoint. In the last analysis, despite the intermediate position represented by Henry de Baume, it came down to a straight choice: for or against the papal declarations and the Order's constitutions. In the terms of the present study, it was a choice between moderate and strict Franciscan observance; the very same choice, it will be observed, as earlier had confronted the Spirituals.\textsuperscript{375} And as we have seen, different sections of the reform of the Schism era made opposite choices.

The consequences of this were critical. The reform movement which Paoluccio dei Trinci had initiated in Italy, and which historians know as the Regular Observance, had followed the strict or literal observance; so did the Recollectio Villacreciana and certain other sections of the Spanish reform; the reform in France, and the remainder of it in Spain, adhered to the moderate observance enshrined in the declarations and constitutions: and this was the position which contemporaries christened "regular observance", following the usage of Benedict XIII's curia and of the Council of Constance. The reform, in short, was now divided against itself, having what may be called a strict and a moderate wing. In addition, both wings were distinct from the unreformed main body of the Order, which followed a relaxed or Conventual observance, characterised by a falling short of the moderate and canonical position. Within the one Order therefore there now existed three quite distinct standpoints on observance. Their presence among Franciscans was
bound, by its nature, to raise the issue of the Order's division; we must now consider what became of this issue in the period of the Schism.

3. The new Reform Movements and the issue of the Division of the Order

In France the question of the Order's division, on the basis of rival observances, was in principle straightforward, for there only two of the three possible standpoints on observance were represented; it was, if one wishes, a two-party and not a three-party situation. In this sense it was, it will be noted, exactly the same situation as the Order had faced during the 13th century: despite the existence of two wings within the Community, the essential dispute had been between Community on one side and the Spirituals on the other. A measure of similarity between the events of the two epochs would therefore not be unexpected. In fact, the similarities are so great as to be almost uncanny, with the French reformers' appealing to a General Council in the actual words of the Spirituals' appeal to a General Council merely crowning the effect of déjà vu. This makes it the more important to remember the one critical difference between the 13th and 15th century situations: in the earlier case the majority adhered to the moderate and canonical standpoint on observance, and the would-be reformers were demanding the strict or extra-canonical observance of the Rule ad litteram; in the later case it was the reformers who were trying to establish the legitimate canonical observance, whereas the majority represented a relaxed and in sum degenerate standpoint. It is not hard to see that this difference places the relations of the 15th century
parties in quite another light than the relations of the 13th century ones; there can be little doubt that it was at work on the occasions when the experience of the later reformers departed from — and was happier than — that of the Spirituals.

The first such occasion was the very foundation of the French movement, the reform of Mirebeau. The initiative for this step came from three unnamed friars of the Province of Touraine, and it is clear, from the historical account presented by their successors to the Council of Constance in 1415, that it represented their protest against the lax discipline of their day. In exactly similar fashion the whole Spiritual problem began with the zealots' protest against breaches of discipline, whether according to strict or to moderate criteria.

The reception of the protest in the two cases could not have been more different. The Spirituals were reviled and persecuted by their Superiors; the later reformers were "benignly received and consoled" by the General Minister, Angelus of Spoleto, and received "with joy", and given what they asked for, by their Provincial, John Philippi, who went so far as to remove the existing community from Mirebeau in order to make it ready for them.

Here then was the same break with the past, the same achievement as was represented by the establishment of the Italian reform under Paoluccio dei Trinci: authority countenanced the co-existence within one institute of two different levels of observance. It will be noticed that, as in the Italian case, one feature of the arrangement could be called "separation of dwelling" — the existing community of Mirebeau
had actually to be expelled to make way for the reformers. This argues on the part of Philippi a more positive policy of support for the reformers vis-a-vis the other friars than we observed in Italy, where the initial "separation of dwelling" was simply due to the existence of uninhabited hermitages;\textsuperscript{379} and in general it seems fair to say that the role of the Superiors was more positive in the origin of the French than in that of the Italian reform - it may be recalled that in the latter case the crucial first consent was given by the General at first unreflectingly, and then unwillingly.\textsuperscript{380} In short the reform of Mirebeau involved, in degree though not in kind, an unprecedented level of official backing for the establishment of reformed observance among Franciscans. As such it must at one level be seen as an outcome of that demand for reform made increasingly by Franciscan and papal authority during the second half of the 14th century. And, at quite another level, we may say that it represented a perfect implementation of the sparse directions given in the Franciscan Rule for dealing with the issue of reform. In the Rule's 10th chapter we read the following: "I firmly command (the brothers) to obey their Ministers in all things which ... are not contrary to their soul and to our Rule. And wherever there are brothers who know and realise that they are unable spiritually to observe the Rule, they may and should have recourse to their Ministers."\textsuperscript{381} The historical account in the \textit{Quaerimoniae} of 1415 makes it clear that it was in response to these words that the three French friars sought out their Minister General.\textsuperscript{382} The passage of the Rule continues: "And let the Ministers receive them lovingly and benignly, and have
such attention to them that they (scil. the brothers) may speak and behave with them as lords with their servants; for it should be so, that the Ministers be the servants of all the brothers."

It can fairly be said that, in their response, Angelus of Spoleto and John Philippi fulfilled these words in the spirit and to the letter; and thus the reform of Mirebeau represents, on the part of all concerned, a perfect following of the message of St. Francis. If it was in that sense a higher achievement than the establishment of Paoluccio dei Trinci at Brugliano in 1368, one important compensatory point must be borne in mind: the observance sought by the French friars was no more than that to which, in theory, the whole Order was bound, and so it was perhaps comparatively easy to grant; Paoluccio’s request was more difficult – the literal observance, as earlier demanded by the Spirituals.

The early years of the Mirebeau experiment, as we have seen, appear to have been uneventful: so far as is known it was not until 1404 that, with the foundation of Bressuire, the reform gained its second settlement. Up till that time Mirebeau itself did not impinge on the historical record, and, as far as its relations with the rest of the Order are concerned, it must be presumed to have enjoyed the same official support as was given at the start in or around 1388. After the beginning of the process of the reform’s expansion it was still the same, at least as regards the Order’s most important office, that of the General Minister; for, as we have seen, it was the General John Bardolini who in 1404 gave his backing to the self-imposed reform of the friary of Séez. More than that, indeed, Bardolini can
be said to have been himself the mouthpiece of the reform ideal; we discovered his letter to the community of Seez to be a classic expression, not just of the movement's chosen level of observance, but also of its fundamentally spiritual character.\textsuperscript{384} Such a level of personal identification with the cause of reform is surely yet more remarkable than the as it were external support afforded by Angelus of Spoleto, or by any of the 14th century Generals to the Italian reform movement, and may indeed have some claim to be regarded as unique; it has perhaps received insufficient attention from historians. On the other hand, Bardolini's identification with the reform ideal was not so complete as to prevent him seeing how it might antagonise the unreformed majority of his subjects (does this not show him as a true spiritual father to all the friars in his charge, lax and zealous alike?), and accordingly he included in the Seez letter a most pertinent directive with regard to the maintenance of harmonious relations between the two groups: "Let them above all avoid in any way criticising other brothers, and especially the community of the Order; but rather let each concentrate on criticising himself";\textsuperscript{385} and the instruction was backed up by a penalty of exemplary severity: any reformed friar doing the contrary, and not at once truly repenting it, was to be sent before the custos, who was to transfer him to another friary with such further punishment as he judged appropriate.

Wise though it was, the directive was not enough to ensure good relations between the zealous and the lax. It applied only to the former; and it seems clear that it was the latter who introduced dissension and bitterness into the story of the French
reform. At the level of the office of General Minister, Angelus of Spoleto's favourable policy toward the reform might be continued by his immediate successors; with the lower office of Provincial it was otherwise. According to the historical tradition of the reformers presented in 1415 in the Quaerimoniae, John Philippi's benevolence to them made him unpopular with some friars while he was still alive; and once he was dead (probably shortly after the turn of the century), his policy was replaced, on the part of Provincial and custodes, by one of obstruction and harassment; here, then, the story of the Spirituals began to repeat itself. A major source of friction was the question of money — appropriately, since, as we have seen, it was a question on which the behaviour of the two groups of friars was thoroughly at variance, the reformers — according to the Rule — having nothing to do with it, the others making no bones about its use. Trouble arose when, as they were entitled, indeed obliged to do, the Province's Superiors conducted visitations of reformed friaries. It had become customary for Visitors to recoup expenses from the community visited, and now the Provincial of Touraine, Alanus David, and his entourage refused to see any reason why they should waive the custom for one particular group of their subjects. The reformers, however, saw every reason: the demand for money was "against the purity of their Rule". They therefore, as humbly as they might, disobeyed their Superior. What the latter could not obtain willingly, was sought by force. In the case of Laval (reformed, we may recall, between 1404 and 1407) the sum demanded was 15 livres. The Guardian explained why he could not agree to pay; as the
visitation party withdrew, the custos of Brittany snatched a silver chalice from the high altar and departed with it. In his own eyes he was, no doubt, merely fulfilling a right which had been insolently refused; to the sufferers by his act he could only seem a tyrant. 388

As the number of reformed friars grew (it did no significantly from 1406 onwards) similar tyrannies were enacted elsewhere, and others were added to them. Strict brothers were, it seems, transferred to unreformed friaries, their pastoral work was obstructed, and in general they concluded that their Superiors were seriously bent on the destruction of the reform movement - even by invoking wherever possible the assistance of the secular arm.

Such was the story told by the reformers themselves. From what might be called a collateral source - Sister Catherine Rufine, of the congregation of St. Colette, writing after 1492 of the congregation's historical traditions - we receive a different version of events. She recounts that the community of Mirebeau enjoyed the right of annually electing its Guardian and other officers, the elections being reported (and no doubt confirmed) at Provincial Chapter. One year however no election was made - all the brothers having out of humility declined to accept the post of Guardian. It therefore fell to the Provincial at Chapter to nominate the community's Superior, and, by accident or design, his choice fell on "ung grant frere", who proceeded, together with some accomplices, to despoil the settlement entrusted to him. 389

Whatever the truth of the two stories - and they are not
mutually irreconcilable — they came down to the same thing: the strict friars were compelled by the actions of their Superiors to take steps to protect their movement. The step they chose was that of appeal to higher authority. This had been, in like circumstances, the policy of the Spirituals. It was also the policy which had brought about the reform of Mirebeau; and, as in that case, it was pursued in accord with the 10th chapter of the Rule. Through the pen of one of their number, Thomas de Curte, the reformers put their case to the General whom they knew to be sympathetic to them, John Bardolini, explaining how they were being forced to act in ways "contrary to their salvation and to the purity of their holy Order" (as they put it in the account of 1415).

Bardolini was now as favourable as Angelus of Spoleto had been in c. 1388. He looked into the matter, and came to the conclusion — which in the light of foregoing events would seem to have been well justified — that his edict alone would not be sufficient to guarantee the reform against obstruction; so he transferred the question to the supreme authority, that of the Holy See. Benedict XIII put in hand his own investigation, and it confirmed the exemplary life of the strict friars, and the unjust oppression to which they had been subject.

On such a basis the outcome could hardly be in doubt; and, on 26 April 1407, the Avignonese Pope addressed to Bardolini one of the capital bulls in the story of Franciscan reform and divisions. It was concerned with friars of "Bressuire, Mirebeau and certain other settlements in the Provinces of Touraine, Franciae and Burgundy", and its first aim was to
rehearse what must have been their chief grievances: first, the "pecuniary exactions" levied by their Superiors for Visitations or other causes — exactions contrary, as the bull pointed out, to the prohibition of the use of money contained in the papal declarations which — so Benedict declared — the strict friars observed penitus ad litteram; secondly, the fact that they had been forbidden to accept recruits to the reform. The bull then went on to deal with the first grievance and, much more important, its underlying causes. The Minister General was ordered to free the reformed brothers from all payments or subventions whatever, and, in the same breath, to exempt them from "all jurisdiction, subjection and dominion" of their Provincial Ministers, and indeed of any other friar than himself and his successors. Here, then, was the supremely significant point; and in what followed its implications were worked out with some care. The exempt friars were no longer in any way to obey or otherwise be answerable to their Provincials, or any other subordinate of the General, who were to have no further coercive power over them; nor were these to transfer their former subjects from their reformed settlements to other ones, nor, conversely, send novices or professed friars to the reformed communities (both obvious methods of so to speak diluting and, eventually, destroying the reform). The powers thus removed from the Ministers and community of the Order were transferred to the strict brethren themselves: Bardolini was, by virtue of apostolic authority, to empower them to receive and train novices, and to expel any of their number who should prove a hindrance to the reform. A further important provision
redressed the second grievance stated at the outset of the bull: friars from unreformed convents might henceforth freely join the reform, even without their Superiors' permission.

These regulations left the strict brothers subject to no-one save the Pope and the General of their Order. Accordingly, "lest they should be defrauded of the fruit of obedience" (as the reformers put it in 1415), a new, intermediate authority was created, equivalent to that of the Provincials, and implementing the responsibility already vested in the General: that of the Vicars. The bull's first reference to these officers is curiously hesitant - "if such should happen to be nominated by you or elected by (the friars) and confirmed by you or your successors"; but that it was a purely stylistic hesitation is made clear by the closing section of the bull: here Bardolini is ordered "this first time" to nominate a Vicar for each of the three Provinces from among the reformed brethren, whom the latter are to obey and be answerable to as formerly to their Provincials, and it is laid down that in future Vicars shall whenever necessary be elected, the General retaining the power of confirmation.

There is no need to stress the significance of Benedict XIII's enactment in the context of the present study. In the three Provinces concerned the Order was now formally divided up to the level of Provincial Minister - which is to say the level immediately below that of the General himself; to put it the other way it consisted of a single head, and then, under him, of two parallel and separate bodies, with mutually independent chains of authority from the position of Provincial Minister (or Vicar) downwards. In the context of its times, and as a guide to the
mind of the Pope who issued it, it must be interpreted in two further ways: as an earnest of the conviction that the reform movement was meritorious and must be promoted; and as the most damning indictment of the relevant Ministers and their associates, who had demonstrated their total inability to understand and handle it as it deserved. Whatever their failings, we may feel that the punishment and humiliation meted out to them — revocation of their responsibility over what the Pope evidently regarded as the better section of their subjects — was almost too severe. No mercy softened the justice of Christ's Vicar.

The sternness of his sentence may however lead us to exaggerate the novelty of the situation which it created: this was no different in kind, and not even very different in degree, from that which in the case of the Italian reform had been reached by 1380 — almost a decade before the reform of Mirebeau took place. Under Paoluccio dei Trinci the movement for renewal constituted a distinct and partly autonomous family within the Order, having up to a point its own independent chain of authority; within the family Paoluccio exercised many of the powers of a Provincial Minister (not indeed all such powers, as the Benedictine Vicars were to do); and he did so by virtue of a newly created office which was the exact counterpart to the office of Vicar — that of Commissarius.392 We must conclude that, as far as the division of the Order was concerned, there was little difference between Italy and France. If contemporaries and historians have nevertheless reacted very differently to the situations in the two countries, it can only have been in view of the ways in which respectively they were
brought about: in Italy, by progressive and willing concession of the Order's own authorities; in France, by a single mandate of an external authority, the Holy See, in response to an appeal from within the Order, and (effectively) as a punishment of previous oppression by the Order's Superiors. If we recall that a similar contrast underlay the independence accorded respectively to John of Valle and Gentilis of Spoleto, and that the two men were also judged very differently by contemporaries and historians,\(^ {393} \) we shall begin to suspect that the really contentious issue among Franciscans has not — despite their assertions — been the division of the Order as such, but rather the manner of its accomplishment. This would be a capital conclusion; there will be further opportunities to test its validity.

The way in which Benedict XIII's partial division of the Order was brought about — through the appeal of an oppressed minority of would-be reformers, and a subsequent investigation by the Holy See — will suggest another historical comparison: with the experience of the Spirituals. Here is, in fact, a most striking point of the resemblance between the 13th and 15th century events. In this context it is instructive to compare the policy of Benedict XIII with those of earlier Popes. Perhaps unexpectedly, it turns out that the early 15th century pontiff was more favourable to the cause of reform and its autonomy than any of his predecessors, with the exception of the on all counts exceptional Celestine V. Clement V and John XXII had refused the Spirituals' request for independence, and John in addition suppressed them as a party; Clement VI guaranteed
the existence of reform according to the literal observance, but
was careful not to give it autonomy; only Celestine and Benedict
went so far as to create a largely autonomous family of reformed
Franciscans. And as between these two Popes, there was an
important difference of policy: unlike his successor, Celestine
established his reformed group outside the Order, so much so that
officially they ceased to be Franciscans at all, being named "the
hermits of Pope Celestine". Benedict XIII therefore was the
first Pope in the Order's history to create an autonomous
reformed Franciscan community, while, through its subjection to
the Minister General and his Vicars, retaining it within the body
of the Order.

It was an epoch-making innovation, and from a papal stand-
point is the counterpart to the favour shown the reform by the
three Franciscan Superiors Angelus of Spoleto, John Philippi and
John Bardolini. We may surmise that the contrast it involved
with the policy of previous Popes was due above all to one factor:
the reform they had had to deal with had propounded the
intransigent ideal of the literal observance; the ideal of the
French reformers was less austere - as Benedict stated in his
bull, the literal observance of the papal declarations.

If the Avignonese Pope's decision was epoch-making with
regard to the past, it was to be no less so with regard to the
future: it is scarcely too much to say that it set the terms for
the whole remaining debate about Franciscan divisions, right up
to the year 1528. In particular it was, as we shall see, around
the official introduced by Benedict, the Vicar, that all future
discussion was to revolve. To this extent the bull of 1407 can
be regarded as the most important single pronouncement on the issue of Franciscan reform and division from the period of the Schism onwards.

Did John Bardolini, the General who had been instrumental in causing the issue of the bull, have some inkling of its future significance, and wish to undo what had been done? It is at all events a singular fact that, despite his earlier favour to, indeed personal identification with, the cause of the reform, for over a year he took no steps to carry out the instructions which the Pope had given him. In the end the reformers themselves were compelled to raise the question. Benedict wrote again to Bardolini, on 13 May 1408, and, although less obviously, the letter can be seen as no less a rebuke to the General than its predecessor had been to the Provincials: it ordered him to carry out the earlier directions without delay, "so that the Guardians and brothers need not have any further recourse to the apostolic see". In addition, it made an important new constitutional provision: doubtless at the suggestion of the strict friars themselves, Bardolini was ordered to nominate Thomas de Curte (the author of the original appeal to the Pope) to a new post within the reform, that of Vicar General. This office was additional to that of the Provincial Vicars already created, and was plainly intended as an analogue to that of Minister General within the rest of the fraternity. With its creation the constitutional structure of the reform may be said to have been completed, since it now had a head as well as a body; and it was, in miniature, a replica of the Order as a whole. In short, it would seem to have become a fully formed religious congregation,
and was prevented from being completely autonomous only by the fact that its canonical head was the Vicar - thus the delegate - of the head of the main Franciscan community. This arrangement was historically to have as much influence as Benedict XIII's earlier creation, the Vicars Provincial. John Bardolini might well feel qualms about the papal decisions which he had helped to bring about.

He was not alone in doing so. The exemption of the Mirebeau reform was perhaps so unexpected, and seemed to contemporaries so drastic a step, that it sowed doubts in a more important place than the mind of the General Minister: among the reformers themselves. With this development we encounter a critical feature in the development of the French movement, to which historians have perhaps paid less than adequate attention, and which, in the precise form it took, had no counterpart in the experience of the Spirituals: the division of the movement against itself, on the issue of obedience. Thus a whole new dimension of significance is added to Benedict XIII's bulls of 1407 and 1408.

Our vital witness for what took place is the Colettine nun, Sister Catherine Rufine. After giving her account of how an unreformed friar was sent as Guardian to Mirebeau and despoiled the community, she continues: "and therefore the brothers of the observance who had earlier been living there left the place, and they made up their minds never to be under the obedience of the ordinary Ministers, but they and their allies would pursue their vocation apart from them (scil. the Ministers), and would have their own prelates after their own fashion. Our father brother
Henry who was their colleague absolutely refused to agree with them, nor could his conscience consent to it, for he felt it to be against the purity of his state. So he decided to go to Jerusalem as a sort of penance ..." Brother Henry was none other than Henry de Baume. Sister Rufiné does not elaborate on his reason for refusing to accept the Benedictine Vicars, but on later evidence it will have included the argument that, since the Rule commanded the brethren to obey their Ministers, it would not do to obey an official with any other title - even though Vicars of the General, and established by him, or for that matter by the Holy See. Another important point not mentioned by Sister Rufiné is whether friar Henry had any companions in his dissent from the majority policy. It may seem on the face of it unlikely that he should have adopted an entirely lone stance; but in any case events soon rendered the question a secondary one. Within months, if not weeks, of leaving Hirebeau, Henry de Baume had become the confessor and counsellor of a little-known recluse, Colette of Corbie; and not long after that she and he were on their way to the court of Pope Benedict XIII to inaugurate a further reform of the First and Second Orders of St. Francis. Thus the principle that Franciscans owed obedience only to those named Ministers, and not to any so-called Vicars, acquired the backing of a saint, and of the institutions, both male and female, which looked to her, and a division of the French reform endeavour, additional to the division between it and the unreformed friars, was ensured.

However in 1407 and 1408, when the office of the Vicars was created, all this lay in the future, and imminent trouble
threatened from another quarter. Benedict XIII's bull of May 1408 in a sense marked the high point in the fortunes of the Mirebeau movement; six months later its very existence was at risk.

The reason for this dramatic reversal of fortune lay in national politico-religious events unconnected with the reform as such, and may be simply explained. 1408 was the year of the second and definitive French withdrawal of obedience from Benedict XIII. The Pope was declared schismatic and devoid of authority, and the same condemnation fell on those who supported him. The entire Mirebeau movement had been a work of Avignonese obedience and its chief benefactors had been the Pope himself, and one of his most notorious supporters, John Bardolini: it was only too easy for its enemies in the Order to present it as a schismatic enterprise. Herein lay, for them, a curious and almost providential mix-up of terminology: schismatic for the nation at large meant adherent of Benedict XIII; for an unreformed Franciscan it also meant the exemption of stricter brothers from the authority of the Provincials; it should not prove too difficult to confuse the one form of schism with the other, and suppress both together. Here was the most direct impact of what historians call the Great Schism upon the course of Franciscan reform.

Its effect was soon felt by the whole Mirebeau movement. Bardolini was deposed from his office by the national Council of Prelates on 20 October 1408, thus the strict friars lost the protection of the General who in the Order's history had been perhaps uniquely identified with the principles of reform.
And about the same time the lax friars obtained from Charles VI a decree (now lost, but known from the _Quaerimonies_ of 1415) for the cancellation of the reform's exemption and the dispersal of its members; the accusation against them was "the crime of schism". A period of duress followed: the strict brethren feared to obey their General Vicar Thomas de Curte, and were so hampered by the Ministers, _custodes_ and their allies in the performance of their pastoral functions that they dared not approach any place where their enemies resided.  

If this was the general picture, the French nation's repudiation of Benedict XIII can be shown to have impinged in a particular way on the course of Franciscan reform at St. Omer. As what took place there is instructive in other respects also, it deserves further consideration.

Events were set in motion by the Provincial Minister: some time before August 1408 he appointed as Guardian a friar with a known zeal for pure observance, Jean Maquerel, and gave him the explicit task of improving discipline. This comes as a surprise, and would seem to belie all the assumptions normally made about the decadence of the majority of the Order; but closer inspection reveals the Minister's conception of reform to have been a decidedly limited one. He was concerned, he had written, to promote the service of God and to expel "dishonest women" (the nature of their "dishonesty" being left to the reader's conjecture) from his friaries; but he could have no truck with what he called "novelties" - one of which was the renunciation of begging for money. In fact, one of the _custodes_ had written to seek his opinion on this very topic (a sure indication, we may
feel, of the spread of new and disquieting ideas of pure observance from the reformed settlements). The Minister replied that begging for money was an old custom, and a not unreasonable one, and it was better to adhere to it, until such time as a Chapter should determine otherwise, than forsake it at the say-so of a few "simple brothers", who would be better advised to follow the dictates of custom and of their elders than decide such matters for themselves. Here is a classic statement of that characteristic medieval subservience to tradition which was one of the greatest obstacles in the way of reform.

From a friar of St. Omer itself, Jean Béraut, Master of Theology, we receive a more forthright and detailed defence of the practice of begging for money. First, "since we need money to pay our debts, which are large, and won't be paid for by mere words, and to maintain our house, which is big, and to pay the contributions demanded by our prelates" (including no doubt the Visitation expenses which had been at the root of the early trouble with the reform), "and to pay our servants ..." There is realism here, and even, perhaps, a certain pathos, as well as a kind of inert fatalism before some of tradition's more material encrustations; but it could only lead to thoroughly specious arguments in defence of the use of money, seeing that this was forbidden both by the Rule and by the papal declarations. Thus Béraut was reduced to saying that - in contradiction to the declaration's clear provision - the "spiritual friend" described in *Exit qui seminat* was entitled to gather money directly for the friars; that St. Francois had prohibited the use of money only in order to avoid avarice, and that to beg from necessity
could not be called avaricious; that begging for money was "more humble" than begging for alms in kind.\(^\text{402}\) In the light of these arguments, and of the views expressed by the Provincial, it may be suggested, first, that the latter's call for reform at St. Omer represented his attempt to respond both to the long-standing demand of the Order's own hierarchy and the Papacy, and also to the more recent challenge of the Mirebeau movement; and secondly, that it was but a halting attempt, without the least hope of success.

This was evidently also the conclusion of the zealous new Guardian of St. Omer, Jean Maquerel, and some time in August he pursued the goal of reform by a step which his Minister undoubtedly had not intended: he brought his friary into the Mirebeau movement, placing it under the jurisdiction of Thomas de Curte, and expelling those who did not agree to the step\(^\text{403}\) (thus again a "separation of dwelling" between zealous and lax was achieved by the expedient of expulsion). The move had the support of the magistrates, and was taken with the permission of the Minister General:\(^\text{404}\) so up to the very end John Bardolini (whose deposition was published two months later) showed himself the convinced patron of the reform. The step was also supported by the Duke of Burgundy, the celebrated John the Fearless, had been discussed with the diocesan, the bishop of Thérouanne, and received his enthusiastic commendation: on 9 September he wrote to the magistrates of St. Omer, asking them to defend the reformers against any ill-wishers, describing their undertaking as "in accordance with the life of St. Francis", and promising himself to secure royal support for Maquerel.\(^\text{405}\) The outlook
could not have been rosier.

How, meanwhile, did the community of the Order react? The feelings of Maquerel's Provincial can be imagined—some mixture of shock, outrage, anger and resentment. More concretely, he made a stand on the question of obedience—the obvious issue, in terms of which the earlier disputes over reform—between Spirituals and Community, and between Fraticelli and the spokesmen of orthodoxy—had been couched. His view was as was to be expected: Maquerel and his adherents were guilty of disobedience and rebellion, punishable by excommunication. His reasoning? Obedience was the foundation of the regular life, and by their Rule Franciscans were bound to obey their Ministers and custodes; this was a provision which not even the General could override, for the Rule had been confirmed by the Holy See. This was a version of that view of obedience which, it was suggested above, may have motivated Henry de Baume's rejection of the Benedictine Vicars, but one taken, surely, to a point of absurdity; it will hardly be judged any more convincing than the defence of pecuniary begging offered by Jean Beraut.

By itself, therefore, it might have cut little ice; but at this point the French repudiation of Benedict XIII came to the embattled Minister's aid. He made representations to the University of Paris, a chief architect of that development, and to the bishop of Thérouanne and the Duke of Burgundy, both of whom happened in early September to be in the capital. The import of his conversation with the bishop has been preserved: Maquerel and his followers were evil, hypocrites, "and much else besides", and must return to his obedience, and their patron
Bardolini was "evil, false, schismatic and heretical". The substance of the Minister's representations to the University may be read in the letter the Rector addressed on 18 September to the magistrates of St. Omer: Bardolini's exemption of the friary from its Provincial was not only against the Rule (this was the Provincial's own argument), but invalid because of his and Maquerel's suspected support for the schism of Pedro de Luna; the strict brothers, having left the obedience of their lawful Superior, were schismatic, hypocritical - in short, Fraticelli. The reappearance of this word, with all its connotations of past condemnation, was ominous for the reformers.

Worse followed. By 26 September their previously enthusiastic defender, the bishop, had been won over to the Provincial's view, and three times in four days he summoned Maquerel to appear before him, on pain of suspension of his functions, to retract his "words against the faith" - namely, support of the schismatic Pedro de Luna. On 16 October the strict friars' discomfiture was completed, with the defection of the Duke of Burgundy to their opponents' cause; he wrote to the magistrates of St. Omer, ordering them to leave the question of their town's friary to those whose proper concern it was - the normal Superiors of the Order. The outlook for the reform was now as bleak as, barely two months before, it had been rosy; and the reversal of fortunes was due to the movement's all-too-close association with the rejected Benedict XIII and Bardolini, and the (for its enemies) all-too-convenient confusion of one type of "schism" with another.

There was only one way out of the strict friars' plight: to
distinguish, in the minds of "the powers that be", between the two "schisms"; in other words, to dissociate the reform from its former patrons Benedict and Bardolini - if one wishes, to abandon the sinking ship. What heart-searching this may have caused the brethren is not recorded, but in any case the work was undertaken. It was carried through by patient lobbying on the part of suitably placed supporters (many of them, it will not go unremarked, figures of considerable eminence): among others, the representative of the magistrates of St. Omer at the royal court in Paris, whose tireless diplomacy on behalf of the reformers is one of the features of the whole story; Jean Salaut, the king's secretary, and Arnaud de Corbie, Chancellor of the realm; Jean Chousat, treasurer to the Duke of Burgundy, and Jean Petit, scarcely less famous than the Duke himself. Their efforts were aided by the influence, once again, of events only marginally connected with the reform as such: the Provincial Minister fell out with the University of Paris over the views of one of his subjects, Jean Gorel, on the respective rights of the seculars and Mendicants - a topic on which the Paris Masters were notoriously sensitive.

The first sign of a changed situation comes in a letter of John the Fearless to the St. Omer city fathers, dated 16 December, completely at variance with the letter written exactly two months before: now the party of the Provincial Minister were "evil" and "scandalous", the reformers virtuous and a source of edification to the people and the whole realm, and the magistrates were therefore directed to take Maquerel and his followers under their protection (perhaps they smiled on receipt of the
missive; for that had been their policy all along). On 2 January 1409 the theological faculty at Paris condemned the views of Jean Gorel. Finally, on 28 February, Charles VI issued the glowing commendation of the whole Mirebeau movement which we have already come across, and countermanded the suppression, ordered some four months earlier, of its autonomy: the Franciscan community was forbidden to molest the stricter brethren, whose mode of life, and obedience to the General Vicar Thomas de Curte, were not to be in any way impeded "by reason of the withdrawal of obedience" from Benedict XIII. The significance of this provision is confirmed by the one condition which underlies the whole royal letter: that the reformers renounce their former benefactors, John Bardolini and the Pope whom he had served.

Thus the perilous identification of the Mirebeau movement with the Avignonese "schism", which had so nearly engulfed the reform, was brought to an end, and, as far as the nation as a whole was concerned, the reputation of the strict brothers stood as high as ever it had before the withdrawal of obedience. Well, then, might the Duke of Burgundy think to engineer a reconciliation between Jean Laquerel and his aggrieved Provincial Minister. However the situation was less simple than it appeared to John the Fearless: the reformers of St. Omer might be cleared of the one charge of schism; in the eyes of the head of their Province they were still guilty of the other — disobedience to himself. Therefore, although — in the presence of the Duke — a ceremony of reconciliation took place, in which the Minister undertook to maintain Laquerel as Guardian of St.
Omer, and not to transfer any of his friars unilaterally, it was on a completely false premiss; for the Minister made it conditional on Maquerel's acceptance of his jurisdiction — "supposée humilité et obéissance doresnavant, et autrement non". This was a condition which, as a subject of the Vicar Thomas de Curte, Maquerel had no intention of meeting; and so the reconciliation in fact reconciled nothing. Accordingly all the future promised was a continuance of strife with the friars of the Order's community. It was not a comfortable prospect, and so the reformers of St. Omer purposed to arm themselves against whatever storms might lie ahead: they set about obtaining a guarantee of their position from the forthcoming Council of Pisa.

In this move their own local story rejoins that of the rest of the reform; for, in circumstances about which nothing more is known, the whole movement sought from the Council, and duly received, confirmation of its independent existence. It will not be considered rash if we see in this a foreshadowing of the later appeal to that more celebrated ecumenical assembly, the Council of Constance, and therefore a significant departure; equally, the move must be seen as continuing the canonically unimpeachable policy pursued since the reform of Mirebeau itself, the appeal to higher authority.

In the present case, as it turned out, the policy proved less effective than the reformers must have expected. By an unforeseeable and - to them - most unhappy chance, the Pope who emerged from the Council of Pisa - and was promptly acknowledged in France - was an unreformed Franciscan. He did indeed, in
September 1409, permit the foundation of one more reformed friary, that of Amboise, but a fortnight later, in the bull *Ordinem Fratrum Minorum*, Alexander V decreed the suppression of the reformed congregation. It was a cruel blow from fate, with an extraordinary historical parallel: the cancellation by Boniface VIII of the exemption given to the Spirituals, so many years before, by Celestine V. And it had been proposed by none other than the Minister General whom the French friars were now bound to recognise – Anthony of Pireto, head of the Order’s new Pisan obedience. Here was the proof of how much the reform had lost by its enforced disavowal of John Bardolini and Pope Benedict XIII.

The provisions of *Ordinem Fratrum Minorum* were, for the strict brothers, all too clear. They were described as perverting the Order’s obligatory obedience, splitting its unity, and dissolving the bond of charity, to the fraternity’s great confusion and harm. Therefore all exemptions and other concessions received from Pedro de Luna and his General Bardolini were annulled, likewise their recent approbation at the Council of Pisa; and, on pain of automatic excommunication, the reformers were ordered to be obedient to their General, Provincials and custodes; to desist from accepting recruits (particularly novices) into their number; and to give up their separate, reformed settlements, and live without distinction – including distinction of dress – with the rest of the Order. The Hurebeau movement, begun some twenty years before, was to be no more.

But if the decision was plain, the argumentation on which
it was based was not. Alexander V’s strongest point was perhaps on the question of clothing. We have already seen that the reformers advocated greater poverty in dress than was evinced by the majority; the present bull shows that they had put their convictions into practice. In thus setting themselves apart from the rest of the Order they were following the almost constant practice of Franciscan zealotry from the 13th century onwards; and also breaking a series of official demands for uniformity in dress which was every bit as old. But on the other hand they were, as they argued in the *Querimoniae*, fulfilling a different series of official pronouncements – the definition of the correct standard of poverty in dress given in the Order’s own Statutes. In other words, here was an issue on which, legally speaking, both sides had a good case.

The rest of the Franciscan Pope’s argumentation must be considered less sound. His contention was that the exemption of the French friars had been contrary to the "observances and regular institutes" of the Order. What these meant to him was that the vow of obedience was the "beginning and principal foundation" of the Order; that the Rule commanded all friars to obey their General and Provincials; and that to these Ministers alone belonged the right of accepting novices or new foundations: all three, so he said, principles which the reformers had transgressed. However in defining his three principles the Pope could not omit that obedience was not required in matters "contrary to the soul or to the Rule", and that the Ministers were entitled to commit vicarial powers (*vices suas*) for the receipt of novices and settlements to other friars.
As these points were in some sense the foundation of the whole separate existence of the Mirebeau movement, the Pope's theoretical case against it was destroyed by his own argument.

It was a grave, and perhaps even a fatal weakness. A final provision of Alexander's bull was to forbid the reformers to seek further support for their cause from outsiders—kings, princes, lords, ladies, or anyone else. He well knew his men: their immediate reaction to his bull was to appeal against it, and they pursued the policy until the final appeal to the Council of Constance in 1415. This was a typical medieval reaction, less reprehensible than it may now appear to us; it was the continuation of a policy pursued since the foundation of the reform at Mirebeau; but it was also, we may surmise, made much easier by the inherent weakness of the document against which the reformers were protesting. The result of the policy of legal protest was that, right up till September 1415, when the Council of Constance reached a decision, the whole question of the reformers, and of their relation with the community of the Order, was extremely confused. It was a situation which could only exacerbate the tension between the two sides, and in which acts of oppression and outright violence flourished. Once again, there is a remarkable historical parallel: two years of very similar confusion between Spirituals and Community, likewise marked by the crudest violence, had characterised the interregnum preceding the election of Pope John XXII in 1316.432

The reformers' first appeal was made through the lord Guy de Laval, a supporter who, together with his lady, happened at the critical moment to be at the curia.433 The case was handed over
to the Cardinal de Chalant, who summoned representatives of the community friars to put their point of view. They did not appear, and so, as a judgment of first instance, the application of Alexander V's bull was suspended. Thereupon, it seems, in about November 1409, the matter was by the Pope himself referred for thorough investigation to a prelate resident in France, the abbot of Ste. Geneviève in Paris, constituted "judex et executor" on the question.

While his inquiry - to which they naturally contributed - was in progress, the reformers found themselves a new supporter: the University of Paris. This alliance was cemented by the impingement, once again, of events largely external to the reform as such. A fortnight after the publication of Ordinum Fratrum Minorum Alexander V had, with the issue of the bull Regnans in excelsis (12 October 1409),434 reawakened the controversy between seculars and Mendicants. In the previous January the University had, as we saw, condemned the views of the Franciscan Jean Gorel on the question, and now the Pope's stance was as favourable to the Mendicants as his had been; so on the instant the University was up in arms. As on the preceding occasion, it was a propitious development for the Hiéreau movement. They too were threatened by an (as they saw it) unjust decision of Alexander V's, and in addition, as we discovered in the Quaerimoniae, one feature of St. Francis' example which they consciously followed was his humility and reverence towards the seculars.435 This was quite enough to win the heart of the University, which, on 19 February 1410, issued the affidavit we have already met, contrasting the life of reformers and Franciscan community to the
advantage of the former; the document concludes with the assurance of University support for the reform, and the Masters' undertaking to work for that of the king and princes, and to press the Pope himself for renewal of the exemption which he had so recently revoked.

Of these authorities, the king had, almost a year before (on 28 February 1409), given wholehearted backing to the Mirebeau movement. Now, whether or not the University had any hand in it, he formally did so again. On 7 March 1410 he condemned Alexander V's cancellation of its exemption, ordered that the reform should enjoy all its old privileges, and forbade any interference with its members, on pain of a fine of 1000 marks.

These happy developments were, from the point of view of the strict friars, crowned by the outcome of the investigation held by the abbot of Ste. Geneviève. Besides the king's judgment and a memorandum from the reformers themselves, he had received favourable testimony of them from the Duke of Burgundy, the supporter still of the reform at St. Omer. The abbot's decision, delivered on 21 March, was all that the strict brethren could wish: *Ordinem Fratrum Minorum* was revoked.

The brothers decided to dispatch messengers to the author of the bull, to prevail upon him to confirm the decision of his own judge delegate; but death was before them: by the time they reached the curia John XXIII had been elected Pope of the Pisan obedience (17 May). The friars put their case to the new pontiff, but he instituted yet another inquiry, entrusting the question to the Order's Cardinal Protector, Giordano Orsini.
The Cardinal heard both sides to the dispute, studied the bulls of Benedict XIII and Alexander V, and came up with a simple compromise: the reformers should be ruled as before by their own elected Vicar, but he in turn should be subject to the Provincial Ministers. Wadding states that the solution had the agreement of both parties, and a Vicar was indeed instituted, one Nicholas of Brittany; however, according to the reformers' account in 1415, some Ministers at least never accepted the situation, and certainly community friars - with the General Piero at their head - continued to press John XXIII for a simple confirmation of Ordinum Fratum Minorum. Perhaps this was why, in June 1410 and again in March 1412, the University of Paris again spoke up for the exemption of the reform.\textsuperscript{439} In the end, in July 1414, the Pope complied with the community's request; but he added one significant provision to the bull of his predecessor: the Provincial Ministers were forbidden in any way to "molest" the strict friars now once again submitted to their immediate authority, on pain of delation to and punishment by the General.\textsuperscript{440} Here was a policy to preserve both the jurisdictional integrity of the Order, and the existence within it of the healthy spirit of reform; a similar solution to the problems of Franciscan disunity on observance had been proposed, one hundred and one years before, by Pope Clement V.\textsuperscript{441} Even here, however, the matter was not allowed to rest, for the strict friars were no more content with John XXIII's attempted compromise than their opponents had been with the Cardinal Protector's, and they lodged an appeal in anticipation to the forthcoming Council of Constance. That appeal became the
Such was the background of appeal and counter-appeal against which existed a state approaching undeclared war between the two factions of French Franciscans. The reformers' account of its engagements (which is the only one we have) is naturally one-sided, and on the whole imprecise as regards dating; nevertheless it is fairly clear that clashes took place over the whole period from the issue of Ordinum Fratrum Minorum till the submission of the Quaerimoniae in 1415, with an intensification after the bull's confirmation in 1414, and that pressure on the small minority of strict friars was indeed likely to be heavy. They record in the Quaerimoniae that at one point reform had been established in the friary of Moyrans, in the Province of Burgundy, only to be extinguished by the Minister's dispersing the strict friars among other settlements. The fate of Péronne, in the Province of Franciae, was a variant of the same thing; here reform was suppressed by the Minister's infiltration of lax brothers into the strict community (precisely the act which Benedict XIII had forbidden in his exemption bull of 1407, and demonstrating why "separation of dwelling" was vital to the reform's survival); and allegedly the same device had been tried several times at St. Omer. After John XXIII's confirmation of Ordinum Fratrum Minorum the Burgundian Provincial's policy of dispersing the reformed brothers amongst the rest became widespread; at St. Jean d'Angély it was effected by a dawn break-in of the custos and some forty friars and other supporters, who manhandled some of the inmates and imprisoned others, and this despite the appeal, already announced, to the future Council of
Constance. Once dispersed amongst the majority, the reception of those friars who had claimed to be better than the rest was not enviable — any more than that in exactly comparable circumstances of the survivors of Gentilis of Spoleto's reform, Paoluccio dei Trinci among them.\footnote{445} In brief, they were bullied and mocked for their adherence to standards supposedly binding on the whole fraternity. If, to quote some examples given in the \textit{Quaerimoniae}, they refused to take part in undue riding, the handling of money, the purchase of food for cash, they were called "singular" and "disobedient", and treated accordingly;\footnote{446} if they criticised the prevailing attitude to the secular clergy, they were "heretics and destroyers of the Order";\footnote{447} those who tried to fulfil the Rule's injunction to "prayer and work" were derided as "hypocritical and fatuous".\footnote{448} After the reissue of Alexander V's bull in 1414 the unpleasantness increased.\footnote{449} There were further imprisonments; a member of the strict party was refused Christian burial by his brethren of the Order's community; and the reformers were denounced at Provincial Chapters as excommunicate, heretical and — no less ominously than on one occasion in 1408\footnote{450} — Fraticelli.

It is against this unedifying background that we have to set the vexed question of the reform of the friary of Dôle, generally assigned to about 1412.\footnote{451} The authors of the \textit{Quaerimoniae} claimed that the Provincial of Burgundy had tried to frustrate their success here in the same way as at Moyrans, but on this point at least their story cannot be taken quite at face value. The fact seems to be that the reform of Dôle introduced into the scene what may be called a third force: a body of friars who
adhered to the standards of the Mirebeau movement, but, under the influence of St. Colette and of her Confessor brother Henry, formerly of Mirebeau, refused to leave the jurisdiction of their Provincial, and would have no truck with those who followed a so-called Vicar.

The problems surrounding Dôle stem partly from the near-contemporary assertion that Colette had been commissioned to reform the friary by Pope Benedict XIII, with the exceptional power of choosing whether it should then be inhabited by friars or by her own nuns. Historians have argued that this would be canonically absurd, impossible in practice, and that there is no basis for it in the surviving registers of the Pope.452 The arguments are strong, although on the other side we must note that the story was the accepted version of events among Colette's own sisters: it is told by both Perrine, the saint's biographer, and Catherine Rufiné, and was believed unanimously by the informants they consulted.

But if we must doubt Colette's supposed canonical authority at Dôle, there can be no question of her moral authority over the community. This seems to have arisen in connection with the establishment in 1412 of her second reformed nunnery at Auxonne, only a few miles away. It cannot have escaped her notice that Dôle was ideally situated to supply chaplains for the projected community of sisters. At any rate she passed through the place, was received most warmly by the friars there, and received the unusual distinction of being invited to deliver a homily to them; if Sister Perrine is to be believed, her matter was "the nobility of the state of the religious, and evangelical poverty".453
Whether this was enough to change the hearts of the friars, or whether they had already adopted the principles of reform, is not clear; but the outcome was a lasting connection between the male community and Colette's sisterhood, on the basis of strict observance; it was in effect the creation of the first Coletan friary, pledged to remain under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Ministers.

Here was a rival, and perhaps a threat, to the friars of the Mirebeau movement, and they seem accordingly to have made an ultimately unsuccessful bid to capture the place. Evidently they won over one of the most influential members of the community, one Jean Foucault, to their side; and in 1415 they may have been in the ascendant. The evidence for this is the remarkable fact that the friary of Dôle figures among the signatories to the Quaerimoniae - the classic manifesto of the rival reform party.\(^{454}\) Later the community argued that this represented an impudent fraud;\(^{455}\) but the slightly fuller account of their partisan Sister Rufiné suggests that this account should no more be accepted at face value than that in the Quaerimoniae itself. Her version is that the authors of the document "pretended" that Dôle was of their number, "on account of a simple word spoken to them by the Guardian, in complete ignorance of their intention and of what they purposed, for if he had known he would never have accepted it, nor any of his brothers."\(^{456}\)

From this it is clear that the Guardian of Dôle was indeed party to the Quaerimoniae, and that some of his friars (and possibly the majority) agreed with him; whether they genuinely were misled about the purpose of the document, and to what extent, are
matters for conjecture.

The story of how Dôle was added to the list of signatories to the *Quaerimoniae* may throw some light on a considerably more important feature of the list: the absence from it of Mirebeau — the cradle of the whole reform enterprise. This is a very striking circumstance; how should it be interpreted? It must be supposed that the friary's former reformed community had dissolved — that in 1415 its members had accepted the jurisdiction of the Provincials, and were no longer associated with the movement which had begun in the place. How this had come about is the problematic point. It might perhaps have been through the policy of dispersal of the strict friars, which we know to have been followed by the Provincials; but if this were all one might have expected some member of the old community to have managed to add its name to the *Quaerimoniae's* list. There remain two possibilities: either the erstwhile reformers were forcibly prevented from acceding to the document; or else they had no desire to do so. Now, had force entered into the matter in any appreciable way, we may be sure that the authors of the *Quaerimoniae* would have recorded the fact, just as they did the invasion of the friary of St. Jean d'Angély; so we are almost driven to conclude that Mirebeau's failure to participate in the appeal to the Council reflected the friars' own choice. If so, an important change of policy was involved, for Mirebeau was among the friaries whose exemption had been decreed by Benedict XIII in 1407 and 1408, and defended by the University of Paris in 1410; it is hard to see what might have brought about such a change other than the influence of the ideas on
obedience of St. Colette, Henry de Baume and the Coletan movement. One later piece of evidence indicates that this was indeed at the bottom of it; we have therefore to note that Mirebeau's absence among the parties to the Quaerimoniae was probably due to a process opposite to the one which produced the inclusion among them of Dôle, and further, we may be reminded of one more strange historical parallel - the absence of Brugliano among the Italian hermitages which, under Gentilis of Spoleto, sought a guarantee of their survival from Pope Clement VI. 458

In both cases, it may be, the cradle of a reform movement repudiated a step which would involve setting it apart from the body of the Order.

This was, in the plainest terms, the goal of the signatories to the Quaerimoniae; and in this point is the reason why the whole of the document, and not just the third section with its direct borrowings, can be seen as simply an adaptation of Ubertino of Casale's Sanctitas Vestra: Ubertino's goal also had been to secure the exemption of his party from the main community of the Order.

The reformers' request to the Council 459 was that two friaries should be assigned to them in each custody of the three Provinces where they were represented, over and above their existing twelve settlements. (This was an unreasonable, perhaps simply an unrealistic request, for it involved no less than 40 friaries). 460 The members of the reform in each Province should be subject to a custos of their own party, and the three custodes should in turn be subject to a single Provincial (the progression of authority was logical, but its
net effect was not, since it confused the Order's normal offices, giving the "custos" charge of a Province, and the "Provincial" charge of three Provinces). In accord with current practice, these officials should be elected, and the "Provincial" should be confirmed by the General Minister; but if the latter should refuse confirmation, some other prelate should be authorised to give it. Here was, it will not be doubted, a most pertinent, and potentially highly controversial point; it was to recur again.

By these provisions the essential would be ensured: the survival of the reform movement, with a partly independent chain of authority, on the lines first laid down by Benedict XIII. The next question was the possible increase of the movement: on this it was proposed that any friary might by majority decision join the reform, and that, because accession to the movement was voluntary, a friar might subsequently leave it only with the consent of his Superior within the organisation. One considerable problem implicit in any future expansion was squarely faced: if the strict brothers should gain control of a settlement which in any respect conflicted with their standards of poverty, they should be entitled to "impoverish" it to the correct level. It is not hard to see that this could create great practical difficulties, at both a personal and a material level.

There were, then, what might be called intrinsic difficulties in the reformers' proposal; but their greatest difficulty was no doubt extrinsic, namely the attitude of their laxer confreres. Perhaps it was in view of this that "for the
present" they claimed no intention of seeking the reform of the latter, ardently though (so they said) they did desire it.

Here was, in sum, a detailed and reasonably feasible proposal, suitable for immediate implementation. Ubertino of Casale in the Sanctitas Vestra had produced nothing remotely like it; on the other hand the course of the argument which led up to it was in effect the repetition of the great Spiritual's. In outline, the Quaerimoniae was constructed according to a simple syllogism: the reform was desirable and beneficial to the Church because it fulfilled prescribed observance, which the majority disregarded (sections 1 and 3 of the document); nevertheless it was obstructed by the Order's existing hierarchy (the historical section 2); therefore it should up to a point be freed from the existing hierarchy and given its own one (section 4).

This was exactly what, without the formal structure, Ubertino had argued, and the relevance to the later reformers of what he had written was grounded in the identity of their situation with that of the Spirituals, of which we have seen ample evidence. And in the end of the day it is plain that the French friars were themselves perfectly aware of the similarity: for at the close of their appeal they wrote: "So it was done in the Council of Vienne, but because no provision was made for the good brothers outside the community of the Order, therefore that reform was of short duration".

Had they any reason to hope for the attainment of what the previous reformers had been denied? We may suppose that there were two circumstances about their own case which distinguished it from the earlier one, and gave it a higher chance of success.
The first was the fact that the observance for which they sought some institutional autonomy was not the austere observance of the Rule ad litteram, but merely that of the declarations and constitutions, to which in theory the whole Order was obliged. The second was the general contemporary clamour for the "reform of the Church in head and members", of which the Council was itself perhaps the quintessential expression. 462

What part the first consideration may have had in the Council's handling of the Quaerimoniae can only be guessed at - though it might be a good guess that it was considerable. The second consideration was undoubtedly of great importance.

Shrewdly if expectedly, the reformers themselves brought it into the discussion. Just before their reference to the earlier assembly at Vienne, they commented: "And it was for this that this holy Council was called, namely to reform the state of the Church". The observation bore immediate fruit. On the occasion of their representatives' very first appearance before the assembly, in July 1415, they caught the attention of none other than the Emperor Sigismund. The Emperor inquired what these humble brethren were seeking; the reply was the Council's establishment of the reform which they had vowed to God. Sigismund commented: "Their petition is just, since we are gathered here in order to reform the state of the Church". 463

Such approbation from the most important single member of the Council could not but set the tone for the negotiation which followed, and was somewhat in contrast to the more neutral atmosphere which had prevailed at Vienne.

This is the more noteworthy in that, in certain major
respects, the procedure followed at Constance was almost uncannily like that at the earlier assembly. The matter was handed over to a commission of Council members; it had before it a treatise from one of the parties; and this was inspired throughout by one of the most notable treatises actually presented at Vienne. These parallels serve to highlight one of the most striking differences between the two occasions: the absence of any written depositions on behalf of the opposing party within the Order. This was a significant point which the appointed commission could hardly overlook.

It is true that the viewpoint of the community of the Order was not unrepresented among the commission members: they included Johannes de Rocha, deputing for the absent General Minister Antony of Fireto, and a number of other Masters and senior friars. The Council's prevailing enthusiasm for the work of reform seems however to have ensured that theirs should be the minority view on the commission, and furthermore it included two men whose exceptional influence was almost certain to be thrown behind the strict brothers: Giordano Orsini, Cardinal Protector of the Order, who after the accession of John XXIII had arranged that they should have their own Vicar, who would be subject to the Provincials; and the celebrated advocate of Conciliarist reform, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly. The latter had already declared his sympathies openly enough, having the representatives of the French friars looked after within his own entourage. It is also worth noting that, at their first appearance, they had been brought before the assembled fathers by the ambassadors of the King of France; evidently they had
retained the support of the crown which in 1409 and 1410 had declared itself most openly in their favour.

In brief, there can be little doubt that at Constance there was a general groundswell of support for the petition of the French Franciscans. The result was that, in the vital decree which decided the question, *Supplicationibus personarum*, issued on 23 September 1415 - and which, so it states, had the agreement of both Franciscan factions - their proposal was granted in virtually every particular. It was in the process so tidied up and strengthened as to make the Council's provision the yardstick for all future discussion of the issue of the Order's division until at least 1446.

The improvement is perhaps most clearly seen in the definition of the structure of authority within the reform. The Superior of the reformers in each Province was to be designated, not *custos*, but, more logically, Vicar of the respective Provincial Minister (Provincial Vicar for short); likewise the Superior of the reform in all three Provinces was to be, not Provincial, but Vicar of the Minister General - Vicar General in other words. These officers should, in line with the original proposal, be elected, and confirmed by their respective Ministers; and an appropriate procedure was found to deal with the ticklish prospect of a Minister's withholding his confirmation: if it was not granted within three days of the conclusion of an election, a Provincial Vicar should receive confirmation from the Vicar General, and a Vicar General should be held to receive it automatically, on the authority of the Council itself. The Provincial Vicars were to enjoy the same
authority over reformed friars as did Provincial Ministers over the others, and the Ministers were forbidden to interfere in any way in the government of the Vicars, except that - as the sign of their ultimate superiority over those who were in theory their deputies - they should retain a right of "personal" visitation in the reformed friaries. Mutatis mutandis, the same conditions were to regulate the relations of Vicar and Minister General. Two further matters of possible legal doubt were defined: the powers of a Vicar were not to cease on the death (or disappearance for any other reason) of the Minister of whom he was in principle the deputy; and authority to depose an unsatisfactory Vicar lay with his own subjects, not with the Ministers. To conclude this part of their work the Conciliar fathers, "this first time", nominated a Vicar General for the reform, namely Nicholas Rodolphe, one of the strict friars' representatives at the Council. With this provision the topic was, one might say, well buttoned up.

The decree dealt as commendably with the French friars' unrealistic demand for the reform of two communities in each custody. This was changed to two per Province, a total of six. Given that the movement already counted a dozen settlements, this was generous.

Still more so were the provisions made for the future increase of the reform. The arrangements proposed by the strict brothers - that friaries might join the movement by majority decision, and that individual withdrawals from it must have the consent of the relevant Superior - were accepted (the relevant Superior being defined as the Vicar General); and an important
further provision was made: all friars as individuals should have an unconditional right of joining the reform if they so wished. This enactment, particularly when set against the restriction of the freedom to leave the movement, was a clear instance of discrimination in favour of reformed as against relaxed observance, and promised over the years an automatic increase of the former at the expense of the latter. It was a pointer towards that ultimate reform of the whole Order which was the "ardent desire" of the French friars.

By the same token it raised the thorny problem of how existing relaxed communities were on the nod to be changed into true homes of poverty and austerity. This the Council handled with great good sense: the Vicar General was empowered to remove any "superfluous" goods, whether moveable or immovable, from reformed friaries, so long as it was done without causing too great offence, and with the advice of senior confreres; and, if necessary, suitable outsiders to the Order might be appointed to, with the Council's authority, sell or otherwise dispose of such goods, and use the proceeds for some pious work.

The foregoing provisions amounted to the re-enactment, with many improvements in detail, of the exemption first granted to the French reform by Benedict XIII in 1407 and 1408. Alexander V's contrary bull, Ordinem Fratrum Minorum, was accordingly annulled. It was the definitive decision which the French friars had sought for so long, and the vindication of the policy of appeal they had pursued consistently since the bull's issue in 1409. This being so, we should register what it was that the Council was so favouring: the brothers' observance was
incidentally defined as being "according to the declarations and statutes of the Apostolic See and of the Order"; and, so defined, their movement received the title Regular Observance.

There remained the problem of the practical relations between the Regular Observance (as the French reform must now be called) and the rest of the Order. The conciliar Fathers were well aware that these were unlikely to be cordial, and therefore took such stringent measures as they could to prevent actual manifestations of unseemly rancour. In doing so they were plainly referring at many points to the strife of the preceding years, and thereby demonstrated both that they had studied the historical section of the Querimoniae with care, and that they believed it.

An obvious and imminent potential source of trouble was the Council's requirement that two friaries in each Province should be nominated to join the reform; the process was not, the Fathers stipulated, to be accompanied by the secreting or removal of any goods pertaining to those friaries. Then came a reference to the past: if "in the previous fifteen months" (i.e. since John XXIII's confirmation of Ordinem Fratrum Minorum in July 1414) the strict friars had been "expelled or ejected" from any of their settlements, and replaced by others, the Vicar General, Nicholas Rodolphe, was empowered to take all lawful means to have the intruders removed, and substitute subjects of his own, and any interference with the task was forbidden on pain of excommunication. Further, the Ministers, custodes, and all their friars were forbidden in any way to molest the Observant brothers or their Vicars by reason of the past strife, the
negotiation at the Council, or "any cause whatever", or to call them "de secta nova, vel reprobata". For their part the Observants were not to decry their laxer confreres, or hinder the flow of alms to them - both potentially most inflammatory points. Finally automatic excommunication was decreed for any acts of overt hostility arising out of the issue; the list of acts given - physical violence, arrest, imprisonment, deprivation of books, false accusation of heresy - fairly clearly looks back to the earlier behaviour of the community of the Order. It may reasonably be felt that with these provisions the Council had done as much as could be done to forestall future conflict between the parties.

Up to this point the whole tenour of Supplicationibus personarum was unambiguous, and it was all plain sailing for the Regular Observance. There was, however, in the decree a single provision which may be thought to be neither. For this very reason, and because it has escaped the attention of historians, it is in some ways the most interesting of all.

It follows immediately on the concession of friaries' right of transfer to the reform by majority vote, and of individual friars' unconditional right of transfer. The decree continues: "However by this we do not mean that individuals and friaries may not, if they wish, live according to this strict Observance while remaining immediately under the charge of the Provincial Ministers, except for the aforementioned friaries (scil. those party to the Quaerimoniae), and the friary of Mirebeau, which we expressly desire and order to be subject to the care and rule of the aforesaid Vicars; and for the reason that, as it was there
that this strict Regular Observance had its birth, so it should always shine forth there ..."

The critical passages are those which have been underlined. The first of these can only be taken as approving what may be called the Coletan programme, the rival to that of the Regular Observance: reform according to the standards of the Observance, but pursued under the Ministers, not the Vicars. This aspect of the Council’s decree has not, to the best of the writer’s knowledge, been recognised before. This is perhaps not surprising, since the point is indeed far from emphatically made, and is so out of keeping with the tenour of all the rest of the decree. Partly for these very reasons it is a point of the highest importance, and demands a considerable reassessment of the import of the conciliar decree, which has generally been thought exclusively favourable to the Regular Observance.

The importance of the second underlined passage is that, by verbal and syntactical juxtaposition, it strongly implies that Mirebeau was among those which wished "to live according to this strict Observance while remaining immediately under the charge of the Provincial Ministers". Here is strong confirmation of the explanation offered above for the absence of Mirebeau among the signatories to the Quaerimoniae: that it had forsaken the programme of the Observance for that of Henry de Baume and the Coletans. Is it fortuitous that, years before — about 1406 — brother Henry had himself left Mirebeau on the very same issue?

It is natural to wonder how the fundamental decision of principle here involved had been included in the decree of the Council. It will be observed that it is the only point in the
whole document which was not based upon the actual proposal or the historical relation contained in the Querimoniae (since the latter, for obvious reasons, forbore to mention it). It must therefore have been brought up during the discussions of the commission appointed to handle the matter, and presumably by the community representatives on the commission. It must be supposed that both Franciscan factions proceeded to claim Mirebeau for their own, the representatives of the Observance on the grounds, cited in the decree, that it was there that their movement began, and that in the course of discussion the whole question of what might be called the Coletan alternative came up for review. As we have seen, the decision on the specific point at issue went in favour of the Observance, but on the question of principle a discreet, yet undeniable sanction was given to the rival programme. On general grounds one might expect the latter to be more significant in the long run than the former. Here was, in fact, the sole concession in the entire decree to the point of view defended by the Order's community. It is perhaps symptomatic of the whole situation that it was given where there was a prospect of reform.

The decree of the Council of Constance must indeed, as a general judgment, be seen as one of the foremost practical documents of Franciscan reform during the medieval period. On the general question of the exemption of the Observance it was not, we may grant, any more favourable to the reformers than Benedict XIII had been; however in following the guidelines which he had laid down it, by a perhaps natural process of refinement - which included the "first draft", as it may be called,
contained in the *Quaerimoniae* - elaborated Benedict's blueprint into a masterplan admirable in both its detail and its comprehensiveness. In the skill with which it fulfilled its appointed task, it remains a tribute to the talent assembled at the greatest of the late medieval Councils.

Granted however that the work was well done: should it have been done at all? What, in other words, were the rights and wrongs of the exemption which, improving upon the pioneering essay of Benedict XIII, the Council gave to the Regular Observance? The question, it need hardly be said, has been of almost desperate interest to Franciscan historians, and it is pressed upon us by the fact that, as we have seen, the Council gave discreet approbation to a reform programme which forewore the policy of exemption, that of the Coletans.

It is notoriously difficult to answer such essentially political questions as this one is. Nevertheless we may hope to find an answer by in the first instance returning to the justification which, in the *Quaerimoniae*, the Observants themselves gave for the policy of exemption. Their reform, they argued, was desirable and beneficial to the Church because it fulfilled prescribed Franciscan observance, which the majority did not; nevertheless it was obstructed by the Order's existing hierarchy; therefore it should up to a point be freed from that hierarchy and given its own. There is nothing here with which the observer can disagree; we have had ample evidence both of the reform's observance of the Order's existing norms, and of the majority's attempt to impede it in that observance, and the intrinsic logic of the argument is sound; therefore the
Observants' case must be granted.

It is true that its consistency may be invalidated by what may be thought a higher logic: that of St. Francis himself, who, as we know, explicitly countenanced disobedience for a good cause, but held that to suffer consequent persecution was preferable to seeking safety through division: "For he who would rather receive persecution than be separated from his brothers, abides truly in perfect obedience, because he is laying down his soul for his brothers". Whether this exalted view, in the circumstances of the early French Observance, represented either a feasible or a desirable alternative to the policy of Pope Benedict XIII, must be left to each reader to decide.

There was one other apparent alternative which must be judged in fact an unreal one - that represented by the Coletan movement, which was as strict as the Observance, and yet managed to live under the Ministers. It was unreal, first, because there is at least some reason to believe that the Ministers promoted the later movement within their ranks as a counterweight to the one which had escaped them; to put it another way, reform under their jurisdiction seemed preferable to the alternative, reform outside it; either way, it was the existence of the first and exempt movement which made the other one possible. Secondly and more importantly, however favourable some Superiors might be to the Coletans, that did not mean that the relevant Superiors were or had been favourable to the Observants: and it was precisely in their lack of favour (let us say bluntly, hostility) to a justified cause that the grounds for exemption lay.

This highlights what is perhaps the most important point
about the whole issue: that the key factor was the attitude taken by the responsible Superiors. In a word, if they promoted the reform, all was well; but if they did not, the demand for exemption was bound sooner or later to be made. This observation is instanced perfectly in the early history of the reformed Mirebeau itself: for a dozen and more years it enjoyed the active support of a Provincial and at least two General Ministers, and there was not a whisper of trouble; then a new Provincial followed a policy of obstruction, and this led directly to the appeal to Benedict XIII. In this context we should note the exceptional importance attaching to the terms in which, in 1414, John XXIII confirmed Alexander V's earlier suppression of the reformers' exemption: he forbade the provincials in any way to molest the strict brethren returning under their jurisdiction. Here if ever was the Superiors' chance to show a change of attitude, cherish the reform, and so avert the threat of exemption. We have seen only too clearly how they refused to take the chance; it was not offered again.

Here it might be objected that such a reconciliation was no longer thinkable - that the original exemption given by Benedict XIII had injected so much bitterness into the relations between the Franciscan factions that it was impossible for them ever to be repaired. It must be suspected that there is a good deal of truth in this; the Pope's action does seem to have been followed, as we might now say, by a considerable polarisation of forces, and a hardening of attitudes on both sides. Thus Alexander V was (for once) entirely to the point in Ordinem Fratrum Minorum when he argued that the reform was "dissolving
the bond of charity" within the fraternity. Similarly, on this one point we must say that the Coletans were right if, as has been persuasively suggested,\(^{467}\) the basis of their rejection of the Vicars was appreciation of the dissensions they were bound to bring in train. Benedict XIII's institution of that office was followed by bitterness and strife, which lasted in full force for over a century, and whose influence can in a sense be felt to this day. This makes it the more important for us to remember where real responsibility for the fateful event lies: not with the Pope who gave the exemption, or the strict friars who received it, but with the friars who obstructed an in sum justified movement which they ought to have encouraged, and so made its exemption necessary. In a nutshell, the partial division of the Franciscan Order effected by Benedict XIII and, improving on his example, the Council of Constance, was necessary and justified in the circumstances. That is not to say that it was, in an absolute sense, desirable.

In Spain the question of the division of the Order on the basis of differing observances was in principle more complicated than in France, for, as we saw, the split within the reform movement meant that in the area all three possible standpoints on observance were to be found. Thanks, however, to the scarcity of source material, the story is very much simpler in the telling. In particular there is a complete lack of information about the practical relations between the several groups of friars; almost all we have are a number of papal bulls regulating and pinpointing their relations in a juridical sense,
and some decidedly unspecific reminiscences of Lope de Salazar about the views and experience of his venerated master, Peter of Villacreces. We are fortunate indeed that this scanty material is enough to establish conclusions on the relations between the factions which are no less important than those which emerge from the fuller French sources.

The first of these conclusions is that, in the beginning, the Spanish reform was under the aegis of the normal Superiors of the Order. The point is made explicitly in the foundation bull, issued by Boniface IX in 1392, of the first of all authenticated strict settlements, lying in the Province of Santiago: "Volumus autem, quod superioribus dicti ordinis nihilominus sub consueta obedientia existatis". The same phrase could do service for the second proven reformed friary, that of S. Francisco del Monte, in Castile, founded with the authority of Clement VII in 1394; for the regular Superiors were involved at every stage in the establishment of the place, which, as we saw, was an unusual and lengthy process. So far as this evidence goes, it can be said that neither the Roman nor the Avignonese Pope was in favour of the exemption of the reform.

The conclusion is important, for it emphasises the decisive role played in the development of the Spanish reforms by Pope Benedict XIII. Not only was it he who sanctioned the overwhelming majority of official reformed foundations, and the term "Regular Observance", and defined this as adherence to the papal declarations; he seems from the start to have had a consistent policy of granting the friaries of "regular observance" a significant measure of exemption from the Superiors of the
Order's unreformed main body. This was the counterpart to the policy the Pope pursued in the case of the French reform in his critical enactments of 1407 and 1408. However it was applied before 1407 — and can thus be said to have originated — in Spain; it was not there taken to quite such lengths as in France; and there is no positive evidence that it was a response to specific oppression of the reform. It is therefore certain that the fateful creation of the office of Vicar was in line with an already existing policy of the Pope's, and possible that from the start he considered a large measure of independence to be requisite for the new movements, irrespective of whether they were impeded by the unreformed majority. These considerations throw a significant light on the French decisions of 1407 and 1408.

The basis for them may be found in the bulls of 1403 and 1404 which, respectively, founded the first reformed settlement in the Province of Aragon, the hermitage of Santo Espíritu del Monte, and conceded certain privileges to the existing hermitage of S. Miguel del Monte, in Castile. The striking common feature of these bulls is the extent to which, in different degrees and ways, they limit the power of the Provincials, either directly, or by transferring certain of their functions to the eremitical brothers themselves. In the case of Santo Espíritu it was laid down that the Guardian and his Vicar should be elected by the community every three years, and exercise their authority without the customary confirmation by the Provincial authorities; here, it will be observed, was a degree of autonomy not apparently enjoyed by the first reformed community in France,
that of Mirebeau: according to Sister Catherine Ruiné the practice of confirmation was there in force, and it was the very abuse of the practice that helped bring about the exemption of 1407. Further, the Guardian and brothers of Santo Espíritu might admit friars to their community, and even accept novices and admit them to profession: highly important powers, which were among those conceded to the French reformers in 1407, and as such particularly attacked by Alexander V when in Ordinum Fratrum Minorum he revoked the bull of exemption. The Guardian and his Vicar were also empowered to punish their subjects, and the brief did not fall short of even the severest penalties, expulsion from the community, and imprisonment. A historical comparison is again instructive: in 1380 not even Paoluccio dei Trinci, head of a family of 12 hermitages and fully-fledged Commissarius of his Provincial, enjoyed such extensive powers of discipline. Yet more pertinent historically, it was laid down that the reformed community was to be free of any "exaction of monies, by reason of the expenses of the prelates of the Order": it was precisely such exactions to meet expenses which, according to the reformers themselves, were to be the major single cause of the appeal which produced the French exemption of 1407, and in the exemption bull they were accordingly forbidden; and here we find them being prohibited four years earlier in Spain. Can we avoid speculating that, if the Santo Espíritu decision had been applied in France in 1403, the exemption of 1407, the institution of the Vicars, and all that followed, might never have taken place? Finally - and again prophetically - it was stipulated that the Provincial of
Aragon might not transfer any friar from Santo Espíritu without the consent of the Guardian and his senior confreres, nor "visit, correct and punish" the Guardian other than for an undoubted misdemeanour, and with the advice of at least four senior brothers. The essential part of the first provision was one more of the regulations included in the French exemption of 1407, and the fact that in the sequel the opposite was done—that reformed friars were transferred from their communities to unreformed ones—was one of the major grievances expressed in the *Quaerimoniae* of 1415.475

It might be wondered what powers remained to be forbidden to the Provincials, or transferred to the strict brothers. The answer is given in the two bulls of 1404 for S. Miguel del Monte: spiritual powers. The Guardian of the eremitical community was authorised to advance his brethren to holy orders, and to absolve them and other friars in all cases, and from all ecclesiastical sentences, in and from which a Provincial might.476

The foregoing provisions, if combined, would make the reform autonomous in every vital aspect, both administrative and spiritual, of daily life at the level of the individual friary; they contained a blueprint for assured development at that level which in a number of respects went beyond the French exemption of 1407 (whose signal contribution was at a higher level, that of the Vicars), and in the writer's view was virtually perfect. And the three bulls represent the first fully documented involvement of Benedict XIII in the affairs of the Spanish reform. That the Pope's first known involvement should at one
stroke have produced a masterpiece is, surely, quite astonishing.

Not surprisingly the first blueprint was followed, and hardly improved upon, in the spate of foundations which flowed from Benedict's pen between 1413 and 1417 - the golden epoch of the Spanish reform, and the time when Pedro de Luna was regarded as schismatic by most of Christendom. A number of refinements of language were introduced and standardised, and the foundation documents had what might be called a common core of essential provisions, with certain "optional extras" in some cases. 477

The first innovation of terminology characterised what it was that the Pope was concerned to favour, and has already been noted: Franciscan "Regular Observance", defined as adherence to the declarations and constitutions.

The core provisions included, first, assuring the reformed friars of a Guardian of their own persuasion. The normal procedure laid down was for a community to elect its Superior, whom the Provincial would confirm, but without any choice in the matter; in two cases (La Rábida and Aracafía) the Provincial retained the right of choosing the Guardian, but with the proviso that he must belong to the reformed family. Secondly, the prohibition on Superiors' transferring reformed friars, found in the Santo Espíritu bull and the French exemption of 1407, was retained, but with new wording, viz. (with minor variations): "in their observance the brothers shall not be molested or in any way impeded by any Superior of the said Order, nor removed from the friary without manifest reasonable cause or by reason of some evident scandal or crime". That the Superiors aimed at in this clause were those of the unreformed main body is made
clear by the regular concession to the reformers of precisely the power to expel trouble-makers. This had been included in the disciplinary authority extended to Santo Espíritu, but was now re-worded (and thereby becomes the evidence of what Benedict XIII meant by "regular observance"): "if however any of the brothers residing in the friary should be a molestor of the others or should impede the Rule of the said Order or the declarations of the same, or should be insubordinate or unruly or otherwise unsuitable, him the aforesaid Guardian may, with the advice and consent of the other friars ... send back to his Minister, who shall place him elsewhere". Two further regular concessions to the strict communities were the right to accept friars who wished to join them, and the right not to pay "pecuniary exactions"; both these had been extended to Santo Espíritu and to the Mirebeau movement in 1407.

If the preceding provisions represented a fundamental minimum, they could be "topped up" with other concessions: general powers of discipline, as given to Segorbe (Province of Aragon) in 1413; the right to refuse admittance to unsuitable brothers, additional to the power of expulsion (La Rábida, 1412); powers of a spiritual nature, as extended to S. Miguel in 1404 (St. Julian near Capraria, 1413; Medina del Campo, 1414; Santander and Arévalo, 1417); the important power of accepting lay recruits and admitting them to profession (La Rábida, Arricafa in 1414, Medina del Campo, Santander, Arévalo).

Even without these extras, the constitutional position established for the Spanish Regular Observance by Benedict XII comprised a considerable measure of independence from the Order's
normal hierarchy; one can therefore hardly fail to be surprised by the phrase which, belonging to the common core of essential provisions, was used (with variations in individual cases) to express that position: "that the brothers remain under the obedience and correction at least of the General and Provincial Minister". It is true that this is a bureaucratic way of saying that the strict friaries were freed from the "obedience and correction" of their immediate Superior, the custos (an interpretation confirmed by the explicit abrogation of the authority of the custos in one particular case in which the general formula appears - that of S. Francisco del Monte in 1415); even so it is hard to avoid the suspicion that the studiously vague formulation was designed, at least in relation to the Provincial's office, to preserve appearances rather than guarantee any very great rights; for the net effect of the other decisions was, for all vital practical purposes, to exclude their influence from the reformed communities.

There remained but one logical step: to create a new office to fulfil, in regard to the strict friaries, the functions removed from the Provincials. This had been done in France with the creation of the Vicars; the step was taken in Castile - as we saw, by far the preponderant reformed Province - in the bull of 1417 which established the office of Visitors for the Province. This office was to be permanent, and to be filled by election, according to the model of the election of Provincials. Vested in the holders of the new office were all the powers customarily exercised by a Provincial in the conduct of a Visitation; and in addition, the canonical functions of
confirming the elected Guardians of reformed friaries — hitherto exercised, in all cases but the first, that of Santo Espiritu, by the Minister — and of accepting postulants into the reformed family — formerly the prerogative of the Minister, except in the five instances where the right had been conferred on a strict community. This represented a significant transfer of authority from the Minister to the new officials, but one less complete than took place in France with the establishment of the Vicars, for the Provincial retained certain powers; mentioned in the bull are those of nominating suitable Observant priests as preachers and confessors, and appointing lectors "in arts and philosophy" to the reformed friaries. These were, in a day-to-day sense, important rights, but not, we may venture to think, critical ones. More truly critical was one more enactment eroding the position of the unreformed brothers and favouring that of the reformed, and with its counterpart in the French exemption of 1407: it was laid down that the Provincial must give his permission to any brother wishing to throw in his lot with the strict party.

The creation in Castile of an office within the reform holding certain of the powers of a Provincial did hardly more than symbolise and regularise a transfer of authority which was already accomplished throughout the Spanish Observance. The correspondence of the Visitors' position to that of the French Vicars does however underline the similarity of what had taken place in the two regions; and we may conclude that in Spain as well as France, through the agency of Pope Benedict XIII, a Franciscan reform movement, living according to the papal
declarations in "Regular Observance", had been set free from the Order's normal chain of authority in order to develop a purified life-style without interference from the main body of friars.

The Regular Observance seen by Pope Benedict was, however, but one half of the Spanish reform; how did matters stand with the other half, the eremitical upholder of the literal observance?

Our information is, as before, confined essentially to a single representative of the family, the Recollectio Villacreciana, and is in addition extremely sparse; but so far as that takes us its evidence is decisive. As reflected in the experience of Peter of Villacreces there was undisguised hostility between the moderate and strict wings of the Spanish reform, based on their differences over observance. The latter party took the view - identical to that of the Coletans in France - that, by reason of its autonomy, the Observance was guilty of "disobedience" to its lawful Superiors (is this the explanation of Benedict XIII's formula which, against the evidence, stressed the obedience of the Observants to their Ministers?); accordingly, like the Coletans, the Villacrecianos professed an untramelled subjection to the Order's regular hierarchy. The hostility between the parties issued in the attempt of the Observance to "take over" (and thus of course suppress) Villacreces' enterprise. It was therefore the aged chief of the party of literal observance who, like the spokesmen of the French movement of moderate reformed observance, made his way to the Council of Constance to seek protection and a guaranteed future for his work; and his petition, like theirs,
was granted. It takes us into a dark but intriguing world of personal relationship that the ringleader of the assault against him should have been none other than his own first disciple and for a time sole companion in austerity, Peter of Santoyo.

The essential features of the story may be found in the recollections of Lope de Salazar. Three general points about these should be noted in advance: they place the beginning of Villacreces' reform several years before that of the moderate party; they were part of Lope's defence against just such an attempted Observant take-over as had threatened his master; and they were written when the Spanish Observance was much more fully developed, and more self-conscious, than it had been in Villacreces' time.

We may quote first a bird's-eye view of what took place. "The other reason why we do not unite with you is that we have our idea, false or true, as though from certain knowledge, that all or most of those whom you have governed for the last forty years did and do hate and detest both us, and the Father who founded us, except for Father Santoyo, who we think did not commit this sin against us on account of the great reverence and devotion which he felt for the said blessed Father Master Villacreces, who nurtured both him and us." (If the comment on Santoyo be more than diplomacy or wishful thinking, we would have to suppose that his opposition to his spiritual father was motivated by objective rather than personal considerations - "more in sorrow than in anger", as it were.) "Which hatred and detestation on the part of your estate, or rather of its rulers and their advisers, against our estate, was already frequently
manifest in the time of our Father Villacreces, and thereafter, as for example the bull of Benedict against him and his friaries, which was surreptitiously acquired before his death, and which I, forty years ago, tore up in the Council of Constance at the order of Pope Martin V ..."480 The tenour of "the bull of Benedict", and its revocation by Martin V, will occupy us shortly.

The basis of the Observants' hostility lay in the differences of custom and observance between them and the Villacrecianos. Having described his master's preference for recruits of tender years, himself among them (the best safeguard of pure observance being, in Villacreces' view, a rigorous training from the earliest possible age), Lope continued: "And the same first Observants, forty years ago, used to reproach him for it, behind his back and not to his face, and he replied to them publicly in his sermons, going from El Abrojo to Valladolid, pointing out the great control, discipline and doctrine which he formed in them, especially in curbing their corporal desires, and having them lie down or sleep only where their novice-master could see and supervise them; and he imposed great austerity in their food, drink and clothing, their perpetual silence, and their letters which they had to learn, putting them in great fear of their mothers and fathers, lest they spoil them; and especially of the Observant friars, who were beginning then, because they detested his austerity (and so he locked me in at Valladolid, and the Council of Constance, for fear of their harmful words), saying that he would sooner entrust them to lackeys than to those friars."

Again, attempting to justify to the Observants of his own day the poverty of habit
customary in his congregation, Lope wrote: "And since, Fathers, in these and similar things you call us 'singular' and 'superstitious' the very accusations, we may note in passing, levelled at the Spirituals by their detractors in the 13th century... I will have recourse to the arguments which the blessed Fathers Master brother Peter of Villacreces and brother Peter of Santoyo used to give to the first Observants, whom I knew... when they criticised them for the same singularities which you say that I and my brothers superstitiously use." (Underlining added. The reference to Santoyo is of some interest, for it evidently takes us back to a time when he and Villacreces were united in opposition to the Observance).

The outcome of the antagonism born of different life-styles was that the Villacrezianos wanted nothing to do with the Observants: "he said to us many times, and warned us - me, and brother Peter of Regalado, and all the others - that we should never abandon the austerity and jurisdiction in which he left us, nor join the Observants, who were beginning forty years ago, for the express reasons which he gave us, and which he declared to them themselves, citing many examples and proving it in his sermons in S. Francisco at Valladolid; and he added that if the angel of God should say anything to us against that or against his austere teaching, we should not believe it." "And therefore until to-day we have never called ourselves, nor have we popularly been called, Observants, nor did the Father who founded us accept it, nor do we hold ourselves in rei veritate for true Observants ..." From the point of view of the division of the Order, the
hostility between the strict and moderate viewpoints on observance had one critical consequence: the Villacrecianos refused to join in the exemption accorded to the Observance, and professed to remain wholly under the jurisdiction of the normal Superiors. Accused of "procuring favours against the command of the Provincial", Lope responded: "Fathers, as to that it is plain and manifest that Father Master brother Peter of Villacreces of good memory, who nurtured me, from eighty years ago when in himself he began the reform of our Order in this Province, and likewise the blessed brother Peter of Santoyo from his beginnings, both among the Conventuals and then in the reform ... and I myself from fifty years ago, whether as subject or unworthily as Superior: - we were always under the ordinary jurisdiction of the General and Provincial Minister, without any change or other division or any schism, to this day."486

It is natural to suspect - and in one sense doubtless true - that the Recollectio's adherence to the Conventual hierarchy was a tactical move to keep the Observance at bay (and indeed that the Conventuals' adoption of the Recollectio was equally aimed against the Observance, and equally tactical; the whole arrangement having thus something of the air of a marriage of convenience); and it is worth noting that the "singularity" of the Villacrecesian habit had been attacked by Conventual friars no less than by Observants.487 In spite of this we should not overlook the genuine sense of mutual commitment between the Conventuals and Villacreces. Lope records that, after the Council of Constance, in his last years, "he went several times, and from El Abrojo I with him, to that church of Valladolid with
the Conventual Fathers, Masters and Doctors who were staying there, and he ate with them in their refectory; and they held him in great reverence and devotion ..."488 If the unusual co-existence here displayed between strict and relaxed Franciscans was characteristic, we may have a shrewd guess as to its source on Villacreces' side. We saw before that in a sense the basis of his work was not the Order's official Rule, but St. Francis' "mini-Rules" for the hermitages, including chapter 55 of the Speculum Perfectionis, on the Portiuncula – the "form and example" of his own communities.489 The relevant section of the chapter begins with these words: "I wish therefore that it may always be under the control of the Minister General ..."490

We have now reached the limit of Lope de Salazar's information on the relations between his master and the Spanish Observants. For corroboration and elaboration we must find what we can in the occasional papal bull.

The first which offers a suggestive hint or two – nothing more – is the document of 1413, already referred to, which calls for the reform of the friary of Sahagún, in accordance with an earlier decision of Provincial Chapter.491 As we noted, the man nominated to introduce the reform was Villacreces. On the other hand, with the customary roundabout formula,492 the bull intimated that observance at Sahagún was to be in accordance with the papal declarations. We already know that this was the last thing to which Villacreces would submit himself; there is no evidence that the reform of Sahagún was implemented; and we have to note Lope de Salazar's description of his master "fleeing from the reform of convents founded in the towns, even though Pope
Benedict XIII commended and ordered him to undertake it. The Pope's bull was issued in response to a petition from persons unknown. It is possible that he, or he and they, were simply misinformed in thinking of Villacreces as a likely person to reform Sahagun according to the declarations; but it is feasible that the proposed arrangement was all a plot - in which Benedict may or may not have connived - to detach Villacreces from the literal or strict observance and submit him to the moderate.

This interpretation is somewhat strengthened by the provisions of the later "bull of Benedict" mentioned, in a passage already quoted, by Lope de Salazar; for its purpose was plainly to submit the literal to the moderate observance. The document was issued in June 1417 at the petition of the "Guardian and brothers" of the friary of Villasilos. This was Peter of Santoyo's friary, founded by him in 1407; and the purpose of the bull was to incorporate into it Villacreces' own first stable foundation, the nearby La Aguilera. The stated grounds for the decision were that La Aguilera was "expedient for the consolation" of the Villasilos community; it was therefore laid down that the former should be "joined and united" to the latter; that the brethren of Villasilos should nominate a Vicar to Villacreces' hermitage; that the Guardian of Villasilos might transfer friars from either settlement to the other; and that both communities should follow the same observance. There was one qualification, indicative of Villacreces' feelings about the arrangement: the decisions were not to be implemented until his death, or else until he had given his consent.

Here was a literal take-over of Villacreces' reform; and
the import of the demand for uniformity of observance in the two
settlements was spelt out in a second bull issued on the same
day, in which the community of Villasilos was granted all the
"privileges and graces" enjoyed by the friars of Medina del
Campo. These amounted to a classic statement of the nature
and constitutional position of the Observance in Spain, and as we
saw their concession was by 1417 a recognised way of founding new
Observant settlements. Here was the proof that Villacreces
was being required to join the Regular Observance, in adherence
to the papal declarations.

We are bound to wonder how Peter of Santoyo came so to turn
against his former master as to attempt the suppression of his
work and the subjection of his person to the moderate observance
he repudiated. One comment of Lope de Salazar's, we have seen,
indicates that his motives were so to speak objective, not
personal, and indeed that he retained "reverence and devotion"
for Villacreces. Elsewhere Lope gives a slightly more concrete
version of what took place, though without perhaps bringing us
any closer to understanding it: because of Villacreces' own
aversion to the Observants, "brother Peter of Santoyo remained
for several years unwilling to join with them, nor be under
their visitation, until they came to his government and
subjection;... they came to his government, and he was
assigned their Visitor, even though he did not wish it." Whether this way of viewing the matter represents anything more
than the best gloss Lope could put upon it, each reader must
decide.

There is one other consideration which sheds some light on
Peter of Santoyo's desertion of the literal observance for that of the papal declarations: the fact that it was apparently not unique. So far as can be seen, something similar happened in the case of the hermitage of S. Francisco del Monte.

This was, as we saw, the first proven reformed settlement in Castile, founded in 1394; and its chief characteristics seem to relate it very closely to the Recollectio Villacreciana — a remote and rugged setting, extreme poverty of construction, strict disciplines of silence and abstinence. It was also founded in normal subjection to the Order's Superiors. Then it disappears from the records; and when, in 1415, it reappears, it is in order to join the Regular Observance, by virtue of a typical bull of Benedict XIII, containing the characteristic core provisions of the series of bulls from 1413 to 1417 — among them commitment to the papal declarations, and a considerable measure of exemption from the authority of the Provincial. How the change came about is unknown; but it is plainly analogous to the change in attitude of Peter of Santoyo. It is possible that these two cases are but the tip of an iceberg, and that, if the sources were fuller, they would reveal something like a campaign of the moderate observance against the literal.

In any event Peter of Villacreces saw in the bull to Villasilos that the days of his reform were numbered. It was the same message as Alexander V's Ordinum Fratrum Linorum spelt for the French reform of moderate observance; and — aided no doubt by the postponement of its decisions which the document itself demanded — Villacreces responded as the French friars had
done, by appeal to the highest available authority. Approaching his seventieth year, he promptly set out, barefoot, with Lope de Salazar at his side, for the Council of Constance. 502

The Council put an end to the Great Schism, and ushered in the last phase of its activity, when on 11 November 1417 it elected Ottone Colonna as Pope Martin V. Whether Villacreces was already in Constance on that day, and what exactly transpired after his arrival, is not known. In any case his business was not concluded until 28 April 1418, when the Council was already officially over, and it is a safe assumption that it was fully discussed with both the General of the Order, Antony of Pireto (the enemy of the French Observants' exemption), and the new Pope. In its closing months, just as in the summer of 1415, there was but one matter before the conciliar Fathers: reform. 503 This was perhaps as propitious for Villacreces as earlier it had been for the French reform movement. At all events the concessions from Martin V with which he left Constance represented as great a triumph for his own literal observance movement as did the Council's decree of 1415 for the French Regular Observance. 504

First, the bull incorporating La Aguilera into Santoyo's friary of Villasilos was quashed. To be precise, the Pope revoked "a certain bull, issued by him once in some quarters called Benedict, contrary to some provisions herein contained"; that the Villasilos document is meant is confirmed by Lope de Salazar's assertion that he "tore it up" at Martin's command.

Thus was the immediate threat to his life's work removed. But Villacreces was not satisfied; he meant the boot to be on the other foot. A second request granted by the Pope was that
his own observance should be followed in the "convent or hermitage which brother Peter of Santoyo is beginning to build at Astudillo, provided that consent is given by the aforesaid brother Peter of Santoyo and his brethren, or their majority." For the good of Villacreces' reputation it must be hoped that the proviso was willingly included, and that his request arose from something other than personal vindictiveness.

He had every reason to be magnanimous; for certain of Martin V's concessions gave an explicit recognition to the Franciscan literal observance, in the particular way in which Villacreces formulated it, which was certainly unprecedented, and may be unique in Franciscan history.

It was granted that the rule of life followed in Villacreces' two settlements, La Aguilera and El Abrojo, should be St. Francis' ordinance for hermitages, the De religiosa habitacione in eremo; in Villacreces' text it is called ordinacio antiqua beati Francisci de Sancta Maria de Porciuncula. Further, the Villacreces' enclosure - one of the central features of his reform - received full and detailed recognition: it was agreed that certain members of the communities might reside in individual cells within the hermitages, and that none should normally be permitted to visit them except the donor of the place, and the Provincial and General, provided their purpose was "spiritual consolation" and not some matter of government; these rules were only to be broken when otherwise "great scandal or harm" would result, or by majority or unanimous decision of the community; and any infringement of them, whether by outsiders or by a member of the community, was to be visited
with severe punishment (Villacreces asked for automatic excommunication, from which the bishop alone might absolve, but the Pope stipulated something short of that). Thirdly, it was explicitly recognised that these rules were to preserve the "greater peace and silence" of the brothers, in accordance with chapter 55 of the Speculum Perfectionis - "secundum intencionem beati Francisci, ut in eius legenda antiqua legitur".

These are most remarkable provisions. If one had to pick out the three key features of the Recollectio Villacresiana, they would be its eremitical enclosure, and the sources on which this was based, the De religiosa habitacione in eremo and fifty-fifth chapter of the Speculum Perfectionis; and in 1418 Pope Martin V gave the Church's recognition to all three. This was a more far-reaching concession to the Franciscan literal observance family than even that granted by Pope Celestine V in 1294 to the Anconan Spirituals; for he had extended to them no more than observance of the Rule and Testament. In fact, Martin V was in some degree altering the legal basis of the Franciscan Order, by giving canonical standing to instructions of St. Francis whose problem had always been that they were, precisely, uncanonical. And in the process, it will be observed, he lent official recognition to the phrase which was in a sense the symbol of the 14th century copying of unofficial Franciscan sources: legenda antiqua.505

Thus, in the guise of a reform movement, Martin V ushered before the world a style of Franciscan living which in its legal basis, if not in substance, it had never before seen. And it was laid down that this new creation was essentially to be
subject to the Order's normal Superiors: "Again, that the aforesaid hermitages be immediately under the power of the General or Provincial Minister." Here, then, there was to be no question of the Vicars established in a famous - or notorious - conciliar decree of 1415, or of the Observant Visitors of Castile created by Benedict XIII two years later. Can we doubt that this consideration gained the assent to the scheme of the Minister General, Antony of Pireto, who had personally tried to bring about the suppression of the French Regular Observance under Alexander V and John XXII, and whose deputy at Constance, Johannes de Rocha, pursued the same policy in the commission of 1415?

In the sequel the members of the Recollectio Villacreciana, like the Coletan friars in France, could claim that they preserved "obedience" to the Order's normal Superiors, and that the Regular Observance did not. And yet it is quite plain that their "obedience" was more apparent than real; for from the concessions of Martin V in 1418 we can see that they would enjoy an autonomy no less than that of the Spanish Observance, and hardly less than that of the French. Here is the first confirmation of our earlier suspicion that the really contentious issue among Franciscans has not been the division of the Order as such, but simply the form and manner of it.506

It was laid down that no friar might be removed from Villacreses' two communities, "save by reason of grave transgression"; conversely, no brother should be accepted there "who may reasonably be thought likely to impede the service of God and peace of the brethren. Rather, if any resident there be
found to be such, he shall be expelled by the President 
\[\text{Guardian}\], with the advice of the majority of brethren".

Villacreces and his Vicar were empowered to admit lay people to the Order and accept their profession in the two communities, either as lay brothers or as clerics; they could also accept members of their own Order (provided they were not Prelates – an intriguing but unexplained restriction), and of other Orders. There was one qualification in both cases: "petita tamen a suis Superioribus, per se vel per alium, licencia." This form of words suggests that the permission of Superiors had to be sought, but not necessarily granted, before entry to the Villacrecesian family; if so the provision was highly favourable to the Recollecto, and corresponded exactly to one of the concessions to the French Regular Observance given by Benedict XIII and the Council of Constance. Further, Villacreces personally was empowered to nominate Vicars for the two hermitages, "correct" them and the other friars (the general or unspecific use of the verb would seem to imply very wide powers of discipline), and transfer friars from either settlement to the other. Finally, at the spiritual level, Villacreces was given powers of absolution within his hermitages equivalent to those of the lesser apostolic penitentiaries, and all priests in the family, even novices, were authorised to dispense the sacraments to the other members, and absolve them in cases normally reserved to the Provincial Ministers.

These concessions covered practically the same ground as the full list of privileges extended by Benedict XIII to the individual friaries of the Spanish Regular Observance, from the
first bull of 1403 to the last one of 1417 (the only Benedictine enactment without a Villacrician counterpart was the liberation from "pecuniary exactions"). We cannot avoid the conclusion that the core of normal Ministerial authority had passed from the Provincial of Castile to the reformed family, especially to its leader, Villacresco; the latter indeed, most obviously through his powers of discipline, and of nominating Vicars and transferring friars, had become something like the official Superior of a largely autonomous religious congregation - the very position, as we saw, also attained by Paoluccio dei Trinci in 1380. As in the earlier case, this fact is the most significant comment on the sense in which the Recollectio Villacriciana was "under the normal Superiors of the Order".

It is true that under the arrangements confirmed by Martin V the General and Provincial Minister retained the personal right to "visit, correct and punish" Villacresco and his brethren; but it is hard to doubt that the powers thus conferred, though real so far as they went, were essentially ceremonial ones, and that in all serious matters of daily living the Villacrician family was free to order its own affairs.

The result was that in Spain the situation among Franciscans was very similar to that in France. First, a reform party, of moderate observance, had become for either most or all practical purposes independent of the unreformed main body; and secondly, the movement for reform was not united: a section of reformers refused to accept the authority of independent Observant Superiors, claiming allegiance instead to the regular hierarchy of the Order. There were, however, two differences:
the Coletan rejection of the Vicars was based solely on the principle of "obedience", and their life-style as such was identical to that of the Observance, whereas the real division between Observance and Villacrecianos was the more fundamental one of observance itself. Secondly, it is clear that, despite their protestations, the Villacrecian friars were not really "subject to the regular Superiors of the Order"; the evidence does not enable us to decide whether the same was true of the Coletans.

4. **Conclusion: the Transformation of the Regular Observance**

In 1378, at the outbreak of the Great Schism, the enterprise of Franciscan reform was represented, in a concrete sense, only by Paoluccio dei Trinci's family of hermitages. By 1418, when the Fathers of Constance went their separate ways, leaving Martin V to guide the course of Peter's bark, a completely new situation confronts us. The centre of gravity in achieved reform had shifted from the south to the north of the Alps, and in the new areas a new basis for reform had appeared: it was no longer, as with Paoluccio dei Trinci, the outcome of a tradition of personal contacts, but a response to the written word, fostered - we can hardly doubt - by the general spirit of renewal evident throughout the Church at the time.

These points are by themselves enough to establish the period of the Schism as a watershed in the history of Franciscan renewal. However as regards the issue of the division of the Order over differences in observance, the most critical changes of the period - which made it the decisive turning-point for the
First, and most obvious, was the emergence and definition of the Regular Observance movement itself. We have seen that it was characterised by adherence to the papal declarations of the Rule, and the Order's corresponding statutes; and on this basis in both France and Spain it received, from the Church's supreme authority, an official division of the Order: one in the latter case extending to broadly the level of the office of Provincial Minister, and in the former not stopping short of the office of Superior General.

Both points establish that the Regular Observance of the 15th century was quite different from the reform movement led by Paoluccio dei Trinci: his standpoint had been that of the literal observance, and his congregation of hermitages received no exemption from external authority: the real and considerable autonomy it enjoyed was granted by the Order's own Prelates.

It follows that the title of "father of the Observance", often ascribed to Paoluccio, is not rightly his. If anyone deserves it, it is the man who in both France and Spain gave the term "Regular Observance" official status, defined it in terms of the papal declarations of the Rule, founded the overwhelming majority of friaries which adhered to it, and exempted them from their unreformed Superiors: Benedict XIII. The title is a fit one for the most impressive in many respects of the Popes of the Schism era, and one cannot but wonder how the cause of Franciscan reform would have flourished had he been the undisputed head of Christendom.

It must however be noted that, great though it was,
Benedict's contribution to that cause was a partial one, in both senses of the word. For, as the canonical standpoint and separate existence of the Regular Observance were defined, a significant fraction of the reform was excluded - or excluded itself - from the developing movement, preferring to remain within the orbit of the main body of friars and their Ministers. In France the motive was not a difference over observance as such, but the juridical question of obedience; in Spain it was perhaps both, but principally the former; and in the Spanish case the aspirations of the group achieved complete canonical approval from Pope Martin V.

The result was that, by the time the Council of Constance dispersed in 1418, the Franciscan Order was divided between three firmly established factions: the unreformed Conventuals; the Regular Observance properly speaking, i.e. the partisans of a reform according to the papal declarations, and largely independent of the Conventual friars and their Ministers; and, distinct from, indeed hostile to the Observance, the advocates of a reform within the general ambit of the Ministers, according either to the declarations or to the literal observance. The drama of the next 110 years, with its climaxes in 1446-7 and 1517/1528, was but the working out of that situation.
PART III  CHAPTER II
DENOUEMENT: 1418 - 1447

The thirty years following the end of the Council of Constance witnessed the emergence of a resolution of the relations between the factions which had become established within the Franciscan Order during the Great Schism. Our task is now to consider the terms of that resolution, and the process whereby it emerged. This can be done with maximum clarity by concentrating on essentials, and not on every detail of events; however, before we do this, we must take note of certain background matters which, while not strictly speaking involved in the relations between the rival groups, had a more or less direct bearing on them.

Much the most important was what might be called the triumphal progress of the Regular Observance - defined, as always, by adherence to the papal declarations - through the second quarter of the 15th century, culminating in the canonisation in 1450 of its first saint, Bernardino of Siena, a mere six years after his death.1 This was the reward of a life devoted to the apostolate of popular preaching, which first hit the headlines, as it were, in the very year in which the Council of Constance closed, 1418. Thus the thematic unity of the thirty years after Constance reflects not only the resolution of the relations between the Franciscan factions, but also the phenomenal success of the Observant apostolate in Italy; and if Bernardino was its
first and ablest exponent, he was followed, with scarcely less success, by the other three outstanding Italian Observants, John of Capistrano, James of the March and Albert of Sarteano, and by other less celebrated figures.

The popular preaching of these friars was one of the wonders of the early Renaissance period in Italy, and there fostered a great expansion of the Regular Observance movement, in terms of both men and foundations. But if the advance of the Observance was most spectacular in Italy, it was in evidence throughout Europe. In France and Spain, where the movement already existed, the number of reformed friaries steadily increased; and at the same time the reform found a footing in new regions. Its first recorded appearance in Germany was at Heidelberg, in the Province of Strasbourg, whither it was brought by friars of Touraine in 1426, and whence it spread to Ruffach in, probably, 1435, and Pforzheim and Basel in 1443; and by the end of 1427 the movement had its first settlement in the Province of Saxony, at Brandenburg. The first known papal licence for a reformed foundation in Hungary was issued in December 1423, the second in June 1425; the first for a foundation in Bosnia was still earlier, being issued just after the close of the Council of Constance, in May 1418. The Observance was established as far afield as Ceuta, in Morocco, by 1420, in Crete by 1431, and in 1434 one of its members was put in charge of the friaries of the Holy Land.

The progressive gaining ground of the Observance - if one wishes, its "catching up" of the unreformed main body - plainly
had a critical influence on the question of the relation of the two groups. And, whatever other factors may have contributed to it, it was fundamentally due to the superior religious zeal of the Observant friars - the concrete recognition of the fact that they fulfilled their obligations under the Rule, declarations and statutes, and that the Conventuals did not. Looking at it another way, it was but the practical outcome of that current of specifically Franciscan spiritual renewal which, as we saw, was at the root of the whole movement.

This was true throughout Europe; but it is clearest in the case of the Italian Observance. The brilliant achievement of her leading friars was none other than the brilliance of the spirituality of St. Francis, made common currency again in the epoch of the Great Schism.

This was the case with the friars' popular preaching, the spearhead of their movement's advance, as well as their greatest single contribution to the life of the Church; for this was, especially with its greatest exponent, Bernardino, simply a "return to the origins of Franciscan preaching" with Francis and his companions, albeit a return conditioned by the specific circumstances of the 15th century.\(^6\) The point is evident, first, in the manner of the Observants' apostolate: throwing off the localisation which, hand in hand with urbanisation, had gradually settled on the Franciscan preachers of the 14th century, they became entirely itinerant, seeking a lodging in whatever friary they might happen to be near; and their freedom of movement was made possible by a complete devotion to the preacher's vocation, unhindered by the ties of regular conventual
duties; in both respects their practice was similar to that of the first Franciscans. More telling in this respect, however, was the matter of the Observants' preaching; for it was in this that lay their great contribution to the life of the times, and also their greatest originality. Briefly, they avoided doing what others did. At their most characteristic they eschewed specialisation, in either teaching systematic theology, giving instruction to religious, or combating heresy; their message was addressed to all the faithful, both high and low, whether of birth or of brow; and its content was as universal as the audience envisaged: the call to "penitence" - in other words the basic summons, from which every individual might profit, to a more faithful and Christian life. It is plain that this was, adapted to the circumstances of the day, the very echo of the message of St. Francis.

Nor should this be thought in the least a superficial matter; in the particular case of Bernardino it may be said to have coloured the whole of his intellectual activity and output. He was not, as has sometimes been thought, a great theologian: he was neither original, systematic nor profound; his achievement was that of the vulgarisateur. All his theology was spoken from the pulpit - never from the University chair; the only University-style course he ever gave was on canon law. This was partly a reflection of his own background, since the only systematic training he had was in the law, whereas his theology was the result of purely private study; but it was also no doubt a matter of temperament: Bernardino was no academic, not even perhaps an "intellectual". The same picture emerges
from the saint's literary output, which was considerable - eight fine folios in the modern edition: practically the whole consists of as it were "ideal" sermons, intended (and certainly used, as the number of surviving manuscripts shows) as an inspiration and model for others. In short, the flame which shone in Bernardino was not intellect, but Christian love: his aim was by the ardour of his words to spread the Word of truth to the mass of the people, and so save them from the darkness into which they were otherwise all too liable to fall. The correspondence with the aim of the founder of his Order need not be stressed.

It is the same aim which underlies the outstanding innovation of Bernardino's apostolate, and chief sign of the re-born Franciscan spirituality within it: his cult of the Name of Jesus. This concept summed up for him what mattered most in theology, the life of the Saviour from the cradle, through the grave, to ascension and glory; more briefly, "This Name reveals to you God in Man". Accordingly it was enough for the purpose of his apostolate if he could only impress it in the souls of his hearers; as he put it to the Florentines in 1425, bring them "always to have in your hearts, your works and your words the Name of Jesus". The means he used to achieve this end accorded perfectly with the popular character of his mission, and with the nature of the times, when every cause had its visible emblem: pictorial representation of the sacred monogramme, used as talisman and symbol - "the letter YHS, standing on a blue ground ... in the midst of a sun made up of twelve large rays and numerous smaller ones, arranged like organ-pipes, and surrounded
by an outer circle bearing the inscription: 'In nomine Jesu omne genu flectatur coelestium, terrestrium et infernorum'\(^\text{10}\). From 1424 till 1431 the doctrine and its representation gave rise to serious charges of heresy and idolatry against Bernardino, and it is noteworthy that the cult of the Holy Name was not mentioned in the articles for his canonisation, and not accepted into the liturgy until 1530; but of its popular success there is no doubt: during his lifetime the monogramme spread throughout Italy, from the Alps to Sicily; St. Colette made it known in France, and later John of Capistrano took it with him to Germany and Hungary, and James of the March to the Balkans. It is then quite accurate to say that at the heart of Bernardino’s apostolate was the Sacred Name;\(^\text{11}\) and once again we find that the basis of his work was the spirituality of St. Francis, who had shown especial devotion to the nomina divina.\(^\text{12}\)

Bernardino was not however the first Franciscan to develop this aspect of their founder’s spiritual message, and his exposition drew heavily on earlier works. Important among these was the outstanding devotional treatise produced by the Spiritual movement, composed by one of its three outstanding leaders – the Arbor Vitae of Ubertino of Casale. This fact may serve to introduce a fundamental feature of the Observant success after Constance: just as in the beginnings of the movement, the rediscovery of Franciscan spirituality which it embodied was nourished on sources either produced by or favourite with the Spirituals, and so made possible in the last resort only by the copying of those sources which was so striking a feature of the 14th century.
The case of Bernardino is one of the clearest. A comparatively heavy dependence upon earlier writers was implicit in his function of vulgarisateur, and accordingly his written works represent a fusion of many sources; but there can be no mistaking that in the front rank of these were Ubertino, and that other great Spiritual Petrus Iohannis Olivi. In the modern edition, each of Bernardino's sermon cycles is introduced by a list of the main sources the saint used in its composition: Olivi and Ubertino figure in every one. With Ubertino it was always the Arbor Vitae; but in Olivi's case the whole range of his output was covered - Scriptural commentary, the short devotional treatises, the Quaestiones de perfectione evangelica. Nor was it just a case of picking up occasional ideas here or there; detailed textual comparisons have shown that Bernardino put to use whole sections of the work of his predecessors, often word for word. The basis for this practice - and the true measure of his dependence upon the Spiritual writers - was Bernardino's collection of their works in his personal library of manuscripts. One surviving codex contains the first four of the five books of the Arbor, with Bernardino's own annotations; another, containing several of Olivi's pieces, has corrections added by the saint. Most striking of all, two particular codices, also containing works of Olivi, and an abbreviation of the Arbor's fifth book, were written by the saint in his own hand. There is every reason to believe that these two manuscripts were used by Bernardino to record whatever suitable devotional material he came across in the course of his apostolate through the length and breadth of Italy; and his
whole collection of such extracts was nothing but his *summa
praecipabilis* - the raw material from which he put together the
vehicle of his spiritual crusade, his sermons, whether spoken or
written. 17

Of Bernardino's esteem for the Spiritual writers there is
domino's esteem for the Spiritual writers there is
thus no doubt. But he was well aware that, by reason of their
role in the Order's history, it was far from universally shared.
Therefore, despite his considerable debt to them, and in contrast
with his practice regarding less controversial figures, he never,
in his writings destined for publication, cited them by name.
In addition it should be noted that he used their works with
discrimination, avoiding anything suspect: the two autograph
manuscripts already mentioned simply leave out, from both Olivi
and Ubertino, passages of doubtful orthodoxy. 18 With these
qualifications - anonymity, and a measure of censorship -
Bernardino of Siena founded some of the fairest Observant
achievement on the devotional theology of the two great
Spirituals; and he thus confirms that the roots of the 15th
century Franciscan renewal were found in part in the zeal of the
reformers of the 13th century. No doubt it was inevitable that,
sooner or later, the devotional and doctrinal treasure contained
in their works would be recognised and put to profit. In
doing this, with the qualifications mentioned, the Italian
Observance may be said to have restored the Spiritual movement
to the mainstream of the Church's life; it may be held symbolic
that they actually preserved several works of Olivi which would
otherwise be lost. It was, after a century and a half, surely
no more than the Spirituals deserved.
And Bernardino indeed, although the most conspicuous, was not the only member of the movement who carried out the task. John of Capistrano also had important Spiritual writings in his personal library. For example, one particular manuscript contains five of Olivi's *Quaestiones de perfectione evangelica*, his Exposition of the Rule, and a treatise on the *usus pauper*; another includes no less than eight of the same writer's devotional tracts. For his part James of the March, in a sermon, delivered in 1449, "on the excellence of the Order of St. Francis", placed Ubertino of Casale among Franciscans illustrious for their biblical commentary, and also gave honourable mention to Olivi and, under the name Gentilis de Cingulo, the third of the great Spiritual trio, Angelus Clarinus.

Nor was it only south of the Alps that the Observant apostolate was fed by the literature issuing from the Spiritual movement. A northern figure comparable in many ways to Bernardino and the rest was John Brugman, who joined the Observance at St. Omer in the early 1420s, was a lector in theology and then Guardian, and became the outstanding Observant preacher in the Netherlands. Probably just after the middle of the century he composed a tract entitled *Speculum Imperfectionis Fratrum Minorum*. It belongs to a recognisable literary type, the denunciation of the evils of the present by reference to the supposed virtues of the past; but, discounting its deeper tinges of gloom, it still has much to tell us.

First, its chief concern - the loss which it particularly bewails - is that very sense of Franciscan spirituality which we
have seen to be essential to the whole 15th century reform: "the fountain of the living water of prayer and devotion and recollection and compunction", the "spirit of devotion, which the Rule strongly approves". And secondly, it mentions some of the works suitable to develop and sustain such a spirituality, but neglected by the "modern" novice, and - by a historically important implication - used in the "good old days" of the movement: the "Legenda sancti patris" (presumably Bonaventure's Life), and those classic Spiritual productions, the Arbor Vitae, Actus b. Francisci et Sociorum eius, and Speculum Perfectionis. We saw before how the second and third of these - by nature a "reformist" literature - were spread to the Netherlands in the 14th and 15th centuries, in the form of the "Compilation of the Province of Cologne"; John Brugman shows how, with the Observance, they did indeed sustain a reform, and it will be noted that their use in the formation of novices puts the Observance, in this particular at least, on a par with the Recollectio Villacreciana. Moreover the title of Brugman's tract is manifestly a play upon that of the most successful of all the Spirituals' biographical compilations; such a literary device must be taken to indicate universal familiarity among Brugman's audience with the Mirror of the Perfection of the Friar Minor.

The apostolate of popular preaching was the most characteristic outflow of the Observants' rediscovery, through Spiritual works among others, of an authentic Franciscan spirituality; but it was by no means the only one. Just as in the 13th century, the pristine enthusiasm of the friars was harnessed to numerous services on behalf of the Church, and it would give an
incomplete picture not to mention some of them; besides which they had considerable historical importance, by establishing the reputation of the Observance where it mattered most, in the headquarters of the Church. Thus in 1435 James of the March was dispatched as Inquisitor to Bosnia by Eugenius IV; his zeal in pursuit of Manichaeans led to attempts to kill him, and to a series of further commissions of the same kind: in 1436 he was pressed into the fight against heresy in Hungary by the Emperor Sigismund, and from 1437 to 1439 pursued it with the additional backing of the Pope; in 1440 his Inquisitor's beat became Cyprus and the eastern Mediterranean. John of Capistrano, the ex-judge and politician, was particularly suited to diplomatic tasks; in 1435 he was legate of Eugenius IV in the strife of Aragon and Anjou over the Kingdom of Naples; in 1439 he was the choice of the Order's Cardinal Protector to sort out the disorderly situation which had arisen amongst the Franciscans of the Holy Land; in 1442-3 he was again papal legate, this time in Burgundy and Flanders, with the task of winning support for Eugenius against the Council of Basel (a task already undertaken with notable success in Italy in 1440). However this last commission, it may be said, points us towards the function which above all he made his own, and which would bring him his most lasting fame: the battle against (as he saw it) the enemies of the faith. More even than that of lawyer and politician, his early formation had been that of the soldier; and the warrior's instincts were not removed by his conversion to the religious life, but given a new end, which he saw as the supreme one in his life: the defence of Christendom. This task, after his final
departure from Italy in 1451, led first to the struggle with the indigenous enemy, the Hussites in Bohemia, and then to the infinitely more serious battlefield (as it must have seemed) with the external enemy, the infidel from the East; the life of the soldier turned friar was fitly crowned when in 1456 he was the inspiration of the heroic defence of Belgrade against the advancing Turks. It was also the affairs of the East that brought Albert of Sarteano into the service of Eugenius IV. He had been one of the Pope’s ambassadors to the Greeks to prevail upon them to attend the Council of Ferrara – Florence; and in 1439 he was dispatched to Ethiopia and India with the fabulous task of bringing their peoples – among them the Copts under the legendary Prester John – to union with the true faith against the infidel.

A common thread runs through all this activity of the leading Italian Observants: the fight for the faith and the lawful authority of the Church. The impulse had one specific outlet which, as Franciscans, they were inclined to make peculiarly their own, and which, in the context of this study, was of particular and perhaps poignant significance: the campaign against their heretical rivals to the title of Franciscans living in true observance – the Fraticelli. We saw on an earlier page that the period of the Great Schism marked probably the high point in the success of the sect; and yet within 50 years (the last recorded appearance of Fraticelli was in 1466) it was no more. The Observants, more than any other single group, were responsible for its destruction; and they were acting according to the dictates of the Holy See, as well
(no doubt) as of their own inclination.

An Observant campaign the Fraticelli was already under way in the last year of the Council of Constance. Nothing is known about it in detail, but the fact itself emerges from the bull, dated September 1418, in which Martin V in effect gave the friars the reward for their work in "the province of Rome and elsewhere": possession of the settlements from which they had themselves expelled the heretics.32 Within a month the opponents of the Fraticelli acquired their most powerful leader: John of Capistrano, the former lawyer and judge with the ideal of a Christian soldier. It was a mere three years earlier that he had joined the Order as a novice, and but the previous year that he had taken priest's orders and begun a preaching career; yet in October 1418 he presented himself at Mantua to the new Pope - making his slow progress southwards from Constance to Rome - , reported to him on the Fraticelli threat, and requested Inquisitorial powers to proceed against them. These were granted, in the last week of October or the first of November; and it is impossible to doubt that the friar's initiative was largely responsible for the issue, on 14 November, of a papal circular to all bishops and Inquisitors, ordering them to proceed with all severity against the defenders of the sect, however exalted their standing.33 It is difficult to decide which aspect of these events is the more remarkable: Capistrano's discovery so early of his own proper task as defender of the faith, or the hand-in-glove co-operation of Papacy and Observance in carrying out that task, established in the very year of the termination of the Council of Constance.
At all events it can be said that the period 1418 - c.1450 was not just that of the resolution of Franciscan factionalism, or that of the general apostolate of the Italian Observants, but also in particular that of the latter's assault on the Fraticelli. To the fore were Capistrano himself, and James of the March, both of whom were deputed by Martin V in 1426 to preach against the sect. James set out at once for the Marches, his own native Province, and as we saw the fortress of the Fraticelli; Capistrano was initially occupied with other business, but in 1428 the Pope again pinpointed the Marches as the area of concern, and the next year Capistrano took up the challenge; he is said to have destroyed no less than thirty-six villages in the stronghold of the sect, around Maiolati. Driven to desperation by the action of the two friars, some of the heretics reportedly tried to have them assassinated, and many took flight to Greece. It was a crippling blow against their movement, but not the coup de grâce; Capistrano had to be given renewed powers to seek them out in 1432, and James likewise in 1441. A decade later James felt that the threat from the sect still warranted the composition of his Dialogus contra Fraticellos.

The Observant campaign against the Fraticelli was no more than the continuation of the policy inaugurated - with decisive consequences for the future of his movement - by the founder of the Italian reform, Paoluccio dei Trinci. The success of the policy in the 15th century may be said to represent the triumph of moderate Franciscan observance over the heretical movement whose origins lay in the cause of literal Franciscan observance.
There is a certain tragic irony in this turn of events; but it is as nothing to the irony involved in the apostolate of the Italian Observance as a whole: for the effect of its general success was to suppress the cause of literal observance, not among heretics, but in the movement itself – where it had been planted by the same Paoluccio, its founder. In this sense Capistrano, James of the March and the rest were the enemies, not only of heresy, but of their own spiritual father.

This may seem an extraordinary assertion; but a moment's thought will show that it could not have been otherwise. Until the end of the Schism the movement led by Paoluccio dei Trinci and John of Stroncone was a comparatively quiet affair – overshadowed, as we noted, by the new reforms of France and Spain; its members lived mostly in remote hermitages, and were plain and simple men, with a strong lay element. The end of the Schism was followed, all of a sudden, by the outburst of the Observant apostolate, great expansion in numbers, a corresponding move towards centres of population, and the receipt of important ecclesiastical commissions from the Holy See. It amounted to the transformation of Paoluccio's movement, exactly analogous to the process which had turned St. Francis' little band of penitents into one of the greatest Orders of the Middle Ages; inevitably then, just as in the 13th century case (if not quite so drastically), changes in the "tone" of the reform were accompanied by changes in the detail of observance itself. In brief, the literal observance gave way to that of the papal declarations.

The process as such is perfectly clear; it may nevertheless be thought extraordinary that the threat posed by the Observant
apostolate to the original nature of the Italian reform was appreciated at the very moment that that apostolate can be said to have begun. Bernardino of Siena joined the Franciscan Order in his native town in 1402, and within months transferred to complete his novitiate at the Observant hermitage of Il Colombaio. Perhaps two years later he became Guardian of the settlement, and in 1405 followed the decisive event: he was appointed one of the Order's official preachers. He set about fulfilling his new obligation; and at once ran into opposition from his confreres in the hermitage. These were the reasons for their disquiet: they did not have the books which were a necessary preliminary to effective preaching; the devotion of one of their fairly small number to study and preaching meant that the life of the community would be upset, both spiritually and materially (by his absence from respectively divine service and the necessary collection of alms); finally - and perhaps most powerfully - they saw the active life of preaching as inimical to the properly eremitical spirit of prayer and solitude which was their own highest aim. In a word, Bernardino's brethren felt that the life of the apostolate was incompatible with that bequeathed to them by Paoluccio dei Trinci.

Their doubts were prophetic: the nature of the movement was indeed to be transformed by its success, and the result was a division of opinion within it precisely similar to that between Spirituals and Community in the 13th century.

 Appropriately, the best evidence comes from the pen of Bernardino himself, and from the other end of his life, when his devotion to the active life of preaching had had full chance to
take effect. It takes the form of an encyclical letter on contentious points of observance which, as their Vicar General, he issued to the Italian Observants in 1440, and which in fact carried greater weight than that of his own person and office, since it had first been drawn up by a leading Observant of the second rank, Nicholas of Osimo, at the command of the Pope, and then thoroughly discussed by the Order’s General, and by John of Capistrano and other friars; thus it was peculiarly authoritative. 42

The fundamental feature of the letter is its acceptance of the papal declarations of the Rule. The points it discusses are laid out in seven paragraphs, of unequal length; the declarations are appealed to in the four most substantial ones. Here at one stroke was the rejection of the literal observance which Paoluccio dei Trinci had devoted the whole of his long life in the Order to achieving.

As we saw when discussing them, one of the most powerful motives for the issuing of the declarations had been conscientious anxiety among the brothers as to the extent of their obligations under their vow. 43 It was, according to the prologue, to remove just such anxiety that Bernardino produced his encyclical; and he took first the same doubtful point as the 13th century Popes had placed first - the friar’s obligation to the observance of the Gospel. Like them, he ruled that the Franciscan is bound to observe only those Gospel precepts and counsels contained in the Rule; and he added one specific case: they were not bound to fulfil the injunction nihil tuleritis in via.
It had been the Spirituals who, in line with their general policy of remaining as close as humanly possible to the example of Francis himself, had held that, like his master, the friar should try to follow the whole perfectio sancti evangeli; and they did so in accordance with the testimony of their favourite source about the intention of Francis, brother Leo. Moreover, if there was one Gospel directive which might be held to have a special claim on Franciscans, it was precisely the nihil tuleritis in via: as we have seen, the critical passage in the conversion of Francis himself, and in his acceptance of his first disciple, Bernard of Quittavalle, which is mentioned in all the chief biographical sources and the First Rule, and which, according to Leo's Intentio Regulae, Francis wished to include in the Regula Bullata, only to be frustrated by certain Ministers. Just over a decade before Bernardino issued his encyclical, the Coletan leader, Henry de Baume, had enjoined the observance of this passage in his Statutes. Bernardino's reference to it must imply that there were Italian Observants who wished to do the same as the Coletan friar; in their case, as in his, the desire marked a re-appearance of Spiritual ideas, and we are bound to suspect that it was based on the testimony of Francis' chosen companion Leo, made available to the whole Order by the copyists of the 14th century. Bernardino's adherence to the papal line, against that of the protagonists of literal observance, is the more striking by contrast with the attitude of Henry de Baume.

A central issue for the Spirituals, in the controversy with the Community, had concerned the quality of the friar's use (usus) of material goods; their rigorous doctrine on the question, that
of the *usus pauper*, had indeed become one of their two crucial slogans. Bernardino's encyclical was much concerned with the same question, and it followed a notably more easy-going line than the Spirituals did. He laid down that, in accordance with *Exivi de paradiso*, the Franciscan was bound to no "strict" use other than those explicitly mentioned in the Rule, and that, in accordance with *Exiit qui seminat*, their general standard should be "moderate" – *usus moderatus*. Nor was *usus moderatus* to be judged a standard of "superfluity" or "curiosity", and hence blameworthy. Further – plainly with an eye to the sorts of problems which arose when the reform took over friaries previously inhabited by Conventuals – he declared that genuinely excessive "superfluity" or "curiosity" only represented a transgression if the Observants positively consented to them. Thus to put up with them out of "necessity", or to avoid "scandal", was not illicit, and moreover – in a practical sense the critical point – superfluity and curiosity, even if plainly excessive, were not of themselves sufficient grounds for refusal to reside in a given friary. This, however practical in common sense terms, was, we may feel, an extraordinarily lax position: it amounted to saying that no breach of the standard of *usus moderatus*, however flagrant, was really a contravention of the vow, and hence to be resisted at all costs. This, surely, was to give the point up altogether.

A similar erosion of standards on the question of *usus* had, in the 13th century, been facilitated by Superiors' exercise of discretion in particular cases, and conversely the Spirituals' doctrine of *usus pauper* had, against the trend of western
ecclesiastical thought, including St. Francis' own, severely limited Superiors' powers of discretion. The point proved even more important to them than they knew: for it was the very principle of Superiors' discretion that afforded John XXII the opportunity to suppress the zealot cause in 1317. In his encyclical Bernardino of Siena stressed the same principle. Commenting on the term usus moderatus, he wrote: "And since the moderation of the said use needs to be observed according to the quality of persons, and the variety of weathers and of the conditions of places, and other accidental circumstances, the limit of superfluity and curiosity is difficult to determine. Therefore it cannot and should not be judged by subject friars, but by the Ministers and custodes, or those appointed by them to do it, who have to judge strictly of these things, on their conscience: as appears in the declaration of Nicholas ..."

To drive the point home, his final paragraph was devoted to it: "Seventh: that in all doubts that can indubitably be declared, subjects are bound to abide by the judgment of their Prelates, and obey. And therefore those who do the contrary are transgressors of obedience and are justly punished with ecclesiastical censures, or other appropriate sanctions, by their Superiors." If the justice of Bernardino's comment on the indeterminacy of the concepts "superfluity" and "curiosity" is undeniable, one must wonder whether his emphasis on obedience could be squared with St. Francis' insistence on the individual's absolute right to disobey commands going against his soul or the Rule. Irrespective of these judgments, one thing is clear: on the question of poverty in the use of goods, as on the
other questions it raised, Bernardino's encyclical of 1440 adhered, not to the literal observance inherited by Paoluccio dei Trinci from the Spirituals, but to the Order's moderate observance, identified particularly with the moderate wing of the 13th century Community.

The same standpoint was taken by the foremost Italian Observants on one more vital aspect of the transformation both of their own movement, and of the Order in the 13th century: the question of studies. The family of hermitages founded by Paoluccio dei Trinci at Brugliano in 1368 offered neither the physical resources, nor, perhaps, the right spiritual climate for any serious book learning; like the earliest followers of Francis himself, the concern of the fratres devoti was rather indeed the life of devotion, leading to right action; and, as we have seen, this spirit still prevailed at Il Colomboio when, in 1405, Bernardino of Siena first offended his fellow reformers by applying himself instead to preaching and the reading which, inevitably, went with it. Here, exactly, was the rub: a full apostolate, such as Bernardino and the rest made almost the hallmark of the Observance, was no more possible without theological and pastoral study in the 15th century than it had been in the 13th; the need was if anything greater, when the foremost enemy was error against the faith, and in a period which saw the growing challenge of Humanist scholarship, and in which the ignorance of friars had become a byword. There was only one answer, and Bernardino and John of Capistrano — prompted and supported by Pope Eugenius IV — took the lead in giving it. The former issued a decree depriving all unlettered friars of the
right to hear confessions and give absolution, and instituted a course of moral theology in S. Francesco al Monte at Perugia in 1440, beginning the lectures himself with a course on ecclesiastical censures (it was, significantly, the one academic course he ever gave). Some Observants, cast in the simpler mould of Paoluccio dei Trinci himself, protested, just like the Spirituals, that Bernardino was going against the will of their founder, who had always found room among his disciples for the simple and unlettered, and indeed preferred them to remain so; Bernardino's reply demonstrates his kinship, not with the Spirituals, but with the Community moderates: "Our Father St. Francis, seeing mature men of coarse intellect coming into the Order, ordained in his Rule that the unlettered should not try to learn ... But our Fra Bonaventura ... in reply to a friend who had said that the friars were not to study, said that this was meant by St. Francis for men who were not fit to learn, but not for the young who were able to do so. Those who are able to learn and to do honour to the Church of God and to our Order, are following God's will." There will be no doubt that, in view of the apostolate undertaken by the Italian Observance, Bernardino's approach was necessary and right; this judgment will not prevent us from concluding that it was his simple-minded subjects who had the better appreciation of St. Francis' own attitude. In his turn John of Capistrano, in an encyclical which he issued as Vicar General in 1443, required a house of studies to be set up in each Province of the Italian Observance. Again there were protests, and Capistrano replied in the following year with a further encyclical, severely
condemning the doubters, and giving a thorough-going defence of
the practice of study.  This was, in terms of the Observant
apostolate, irrefutable; and it also retained the true stamp
of St. Francis, in the way Bernardino's comment just quoted did
not: Capistrano recalled that Antony of Padua had studied
theology with the founder's permission, and, in line with the
Rule's concern for "the spirit of devotion", stipulated that
learning should be pursued within the limits set by "regular
observance and spiritual discipline".

This approach to the problem of study in a sense symbolises
the impact of the policy of the outstanding Italian Observants
upon the congregation of Paoluccio dei Trinci. We have seen
that they abandoned some of its fundamental characteristics -
the literal observance itself, extreme poverty, the simplicity
of little learning, the withdrawn life of the hermitages. The
one thing they did not lose was a real spirituality: on the
contrary, this was the foundation of their contribution to the
Church's life, and so in a way the reason for their forsaking the
other primitive characteristics. In this observation we may
also find the essence of the Observants' relation with the
Spirituali: what they borrowed from Ubertino of Casale and
Petrus Iohannis Olivi was a spiritual treasure, their devotional
theology; in all else, and especially the question of observance
as such, they represented, not the Order's strict standpoint, but
the great via media associated with the achievements of the
moderate wing of the 13th century Community. It can hardly be
doubted that the transformation of the Italian Observance from a
strict into a moderate party, on top of its other undoubted
qualities, was all that was necessary to ensure it the support of ecclesiastical authorities, above all the Holy See. The point could not fail to have its influence on the relations between the three factions within the Order.

We now turn to the history of those relations. As has already been mentioned, they largely revolved around the office of the Vicars, established in three French Provinces by decree of the Council of Constance in 1415; for on the one hand these were the symbol of Observant independence of the Conventuals, and on the other the independence of other sections of the reform from the Observance involved repudiating the Vicars' authority. It should however be remembered that a similar office, that of the Visitors, had been set up in the Province of Castile by Benedict XIII in 1417, and that under a leader entitled Commissarius the Italian reform enjoyed an autonomy not much less than that of the French and Spanish Observance, with the one difference, evidently important to contemporaries (and historians), that it had been conceded by the Order's own authorities, not the Holy See, and without accompanying bitterness. It may also be remarked in advance that the story of the relations between the Franciscan factions falls into two main parts, with a climactic dividing line represented by the General Chapter of 1430 and the events which immediately followed.

In one sense, as has already been observed, the decisive factor underlying the whole story was the success - based on undoubted merits fully recognised by the highest Church authorities - of the Regular Observance. We may fairly judge, with the advantage of hindsight, that by 1418 the moderate reform
impulse embodied in the many Observant friaries politically could not be — and morally ought not to be — eradicated from the Order. This being so, there were only two lines of action open to the Conventual majority, if it wished to avoid forfeiting its authority over the Observance, and thereby producing a division of the Order: either itself to be reformed, in which case the two distinct families would simply merge into one — which would be a case of "if you can't beat them, join them"; or else, while remaining unreformed, to encourage the reformers — including giving them as much autonomy as they needed to pursue satisfactorily their different and more austere life-style — so that friction and strife would not arise: the policy to date most strikingly realised in the peaceful development of Paoluccio dei Trinci's movement, and also apparent in the first decade of the Mirebeau reform. To do them justice, the Conventuals, more or less under duress, made some attempt to pursue first the one and then the other line of action. The former represented in the main the policy of two influential outsiders and one insider, Popes Martin V and Eugenius IV, and John of Capistrano; the second was followed by two friars of hardly less influence, William of Casale, Minister General from 1430 till 1442, and Bernardino of Siena. However, when the chips were down, the Conventuals proved not to have the constancy — perhaps we should say the moral and spiritual fibre — to pursue either course to the end; they neither reformed themselves (indeed in 1430 they secured the first full legal recognition for their unreformed way of life), nor did they leave, still less encourage, the reform to develop unhindered. They thereby made inevitable the
formal exemption of the Observance from their authority. Thus
the division of the whole Order in 1446, like its partial division
in France during the period of the Schism, was the responsibility
of the Conventuals.

Their failure to rise to what the occasion demanded was
evident directly upon the termination of the Council of Constance
(and the Schism with it). The General Chapter met at Mantua in
May 1418, presided over by the old opponent of the French
Observance, Antony of Pireto, and in the presence of the recently
elected Pope, and proceeded, "since every Province ought to
rejoice in one and the same undivided obedience, and lest
diversity appear", to decree that all friars must without
exception obey their Provincial Ministers, attend Provincial
Chapters, and accept the Guardians there given them. This was
in flat contradiction to the Constance decree of 1415; it was
therefore pointless to add an exhortation which, by itself,
showed a willingness to give some encouragement to the reform:
"And let the Ministers benignly and charitably receive the same
brothers [scil. the French reformers] nor expel them from their
settlements nor transfer them without legitimate cause." The
value of such an appeal must in any case be thought highly
questionable: comparable ones issued by Popes John XXIII and
Clement V had simply been ignored.

The contradiction between the decrees of the General Chapter
and the Council cannot have escaped notice, and may have given
rise to the rumour which soon began to go about (and which
Conventual friars will have been only too willing to encourage):
that the Constance enactment had been revoked by the Pope. The
French Observants, seeing their whole movement yet again at risk, appealed to Martin to set the record straight, and accordingly in May 1420 he solemnly confirmed the Council's decree.\textsuperscript{54}

One might have thought that that would put an end to the matter; but not a bit of it. The General Chapter of Forli, of 1421, followed the example of its predecessor, but did not scruple to go further: appealing again - as the Conventuals had done since at least the reform of St. Omer in 1408 - to the principle of obedience, it enacted that all friars must accept the authority of the Order's General, Provincials and "other Prelates", on pain of excommunication, from which the General alone might give absolution. Perhaps the capitular Fathers felt entitled to this illegality on the grounds that they had in mind the reform of the Order. This task had in fact been insistently enjoined upon them by the Pope.\textsuperscript{55} In the event a whole string of reforming decrees was passed, mostly of minor significance, but collectively painting a picture of a remarkable state of slackness within the main body of friars; yet the point of the exercise, we may think, was utterly vitiated by the final provision: that if any of the decrees should prove "difficult to observe", the General might dispense from them - a concession hardly saved by the concluding "always however saving the good reform of the Order".\textsuperscript{56}

A yet more damning comment on the Community's aspiration for reform was afforded by the succeeding General Chapter, held at Ferrara in 1424: in Antony of Massa - implicitly, it is true, the candidate of Martin V - it elected a Minister General with an unrivalled reputation for laxity. As Wadding put it, as
kindly as he might, "placid and beyond measure benign in nature, he would agree to everything, and nothing pleased him more than to displease no-one". In the interests of historical truth it must be added that there was one thing with which he was not in agreement, namely the exemption of the French Observants, and that he accordingly summoned the courage to displease them: the Chapter of Ferrara re-enacted sentence of excommunication for those who rejected the authority of the Ministers, and compounded the fault by decreeing that all such sentences actually passed should be publicly announced, both inside and outside the Order; and the next General Chapter, held in 1427, ordained that there must be no distinction either in dress or in nomenclature among the friars. Both points were aimed against the Observants, the second against their very title of "Regular Observance". On the first matter the Chapter had, as we noted in connection with Alexander V's comparable Ordinum Fratrum Minorum, a powerful, but not unanswerable case; its stand on the second was less defensible, since it went against the practice long since rendered canonical by Benedict XIII and the Council of Constance, and was really nothing more than obstructive.

It is thus evident that the Council of Constance's decree of 1415 in favour of the French Observance, despite the precautionary measures enacted in the document itself, was at a general level nothing but a source of discord between the reform movement and the unreformed majority. There were however two particular friaries in which discord was magnified into open and ultimately violent conflict, namely Liérebeau and Dôle - the very settlements which, we earlier saw reason to believe, were before 1415 actively
disputed between the rival branches of the movement of moderate reform, the Observants and the Coletans. 60 This is our first evidence that a more bitter hostility might divide the partisans of reform under respectively the Vicars and the Ministers, than divided any reformers from the unreformed majority.

In 1415, we have surmised, Mirebeau was in the hands of the Coletans; yet the decree of the Council of Constance made a particular point of insisting that it must join the Observance, on the grounds that it had been the cradle of the movement. Here was, to say the least, a ticklish matter; in approaching it the French Observants showed, not the tact which might seem requisite, but rather a concern for the enforcement of their rights, for their choice as Guardian of Mirebeau was the stormy petrel of the early French Observance, William Josseaume—a highly successful Parisian lawyer in earlier life, whose litigious spirit was not eradicated by conversion to religion, but merely given a new field of action, and whose intemperate zeal for reform (as he saw it) made him repeatedly the centre of controversy. 61

Fortified by the decree of the Council, the former lawyer succeeded in reintroducing the Observance to the home in which it had begun, a step which involved the expulsion—forcible, so they later claimed—of the existing community. The latter naturally moved heaven and earth to turn the tables: just as the Observants had done in the previous period of strife, they appealed, first to the Council itself, then to the Pope whom it elected in 1417, citing the grounds that "they had long since been placed and instituted in the said friary of Mirebeau by
order of the General Minister of the said Order". The Council was not convinced, but, if the Coletan version may be believed, Martin V was, and so he ordered Mirebeau to be returned to the obedience of the Ministers, "declaring that it was neither his nor the Council's intention that by the aforesaid bull the ancient state of the Order should be in any way subverted".

It was the Observants' turn to appeal. The outcome was the bull of May 1420, already mentioned, in which the Pope, reversing the previous decision, solemnly confirmed the conciliar decree.

Once again therefore Mirebeau changed hands, and Josseaurae took up residence as Guardian for the second time. Perhaps the rival party felt that it had come to the end of available legal processes; at any rate, in 1421, profiting by the absence of Mirebeau's Guardian at a Council called by the Dauphin, the future Charles VII (brother William's legal experience was evidently still valued in secular circles), they resorted to armed force. Just as at St. Jean d'Angély during the troubles before 1415, a dawn coup de main took place. According to the Observants, a party of some forty friars had been assembled by the Provincial of Touraine and custos of Poitou; with the aid of certain local inhabitants (no doubt the allegiance of Mirebeau was divided between the two groups of friars) they were infiltrated into the town over a period of some days; finally, shortly after midnight, with ropes and chains, they burst into the friary, and the unfortunate residents were unceremoniously ejected.

No doubt the Minister and his accomplices regarded the action as merely restoring their lawful rights. On the other
side Josseanne was now mindful of his former profession, and turned to the one authority which he thought might guarantee his position: the justice of the Dauphin. He brought a case against the Minister’s party before the Parlement, assembled at Poitiers (the record of which is our source for the whole affair). The decision was in his favour, and thereafter, it seems, the Observants were left at Mirebeau in peace.

The course of events at Dôle has striking similarities with those at Mirebeau, except that the roles of the parties were reversed. The friary was, as we have seen, among those included in the Constance decree of 1415; it is however likely that this was as a result of a fairly recent transfer of allegiance from the Coletan standpoint, and that at least a substantial minority of the community were not in agreement with the transfer. The conciliar decree having been issued, representatives of the Observance proceeded to claim Dôle for their own. The Coletan faction resisted, claiming (with, as we saw, at best partial truth) that no-one had been authorised to include them in the Observant petition to the Council, and that their title to the place antedated the Vices (this was correct, even if the detail of their claim - that Dôle had been conceded to St. Colette by Benedict XIII at the outset of her reform mission - must be doubted). The local population, as probably at Mirebeau, was divided in its allegiance; the majority took the side of the Observants, and it began to go hard with the Coletans: according to Sister Catherine Rufiné no-one would give them alms, and they were saved only by the spirited action of the Colettine nuns of neighbouring Auxonne, who sent provisions four times a week by
donkey. At the same time, it seems, St. Colette set her great political talents to work, and gradually won over the lords of Dôle to her side. Finally, it is reasonably clear, the matter, as at Mirebeau, went before the Parlement, and this time the decision was in favour of the Coletans.

In this case however there was at least one Observant who refused to accept the legal sentence as definitive, and that was the one-time lawyer, and instigator of the comparable Mirebeau judgment, William Josseaume. By 1425 his eminently partisan talents had gained him the highest authority within the French Observance, that of Vicar General, and he thought to repeat his Mirebeau success in the Burgundian friary. By means which are unknown – they wrote subsequently of their "terror at his threats" – he prevailed upon the community to return to the Observance. Thereupon – so they said – he brought other Observant friars to Dôle, who proceeded to elect a new Guardian and introduce various "novelties" in observance. Such trouble ensued that several Coletan brothers gave up and went elsewhere; however others took the whole sad story to the Pope, and in July 1426 he decreed that Dôle should be restored to the "pristine state" of obedience to the Ministers which it had enjoyed prior to 1415. And this time the sentence was definitive.64

It was, we may judge, a signal victory for the Coletan movement, and it sets the tone for the situation in the Province for the rest of the century. Already in 1422 Martin V had, at the instance of the Minister and others, by a roundabout formula effectively forbidden the Observance to receive further settlements in Burgundy.65 By 1427 the Coletans had already, in
circumstances unknown, acquired four friaries in the Province besides Dôle, and from then on their movement, and not the Observance, was its dominant reform.

There is however one very strange fact about the further development of the Coletan movement: sworn enemy though it was of the Observance, above all on the issue of obedience to the Ministers, it nevertheless enjoyed a constitutional position that was almost identical — particularly in regard to independence of the Ministers. For in 1427 the lamentable General Antony of Massa, stern only in relation to the Observance, created Henry de Baume his Commissarius over the friars serving St. Colette's sisters — it was the same title as Paoluccio dei Trinci received in 1380 — and invested him with "plenitude of power" to govern them, stipulating that no friar other than the General himself might interfere in the exercise of that power — thereby lending him a far greater authority than Paoluccio ever enjoyed. In particular the Confessor of St. Colette was authorised to admit recruits to the Order and receive their profession, accept entrants to his community from other friaries, and advance his subjects to holy orders; and the continuance of the arrangements was ensured by the provision that, on brother Henry's death, a successor should be elected by the friars serving in nunneries, together with the latters' abbesses.

Here then was a reform movement, theoretically "under the obedience of the Ministers", which actually was hardly less autonomous than the Observance, and whose leader, under a different title with canonically the same meaning, might for all the world have been an Observant Vicar General. And yet the
arrangement was established by the enemy of the Observant exemption, under whose presidency the General Chapter of 1424 had decreed excommunication for any friar who rejected the authority of Provincial Ministers and other prelates. The inconsistency of his position was, perhaps, not lost on Antony of Massa, for in his commission to Henry de Baume he wrote: "We do not intend to revoke the aforesaid graces in General Chapters or elsewhere, unless they are expressly quoted word for word, in writing." In fact the General's inconsistency is a classic illustration of the fact that the great casus belli among Franciscans has not been the division of the Order as such, but rather how and by whom it has been given. There is an important historical corollary, which must be noted: with the formal foundation of the Coletan family, the thrust of moderate Franciscan reform in France was split into two parallel channels, supposedly divided by their attitude to obedience, but in reality identical even in that. Logically, it was an unnecessary and wasteful duplication of effort.

The events surrounding the friary of Dôle, and the establishment of the Coletan congregation, represented a victory for the Franciscan faction advocating "reform under the Ministers" over the advocates of "reform under the Vicars", i.e. the Observance. And at exactly the same time, an identical development took place in Spain. The outstanding Castilian exponent of reform according to the literal observance and "under the Ministers", Peter of Villacreses, whom Martin V had granted all that he desired in 1418, died in 1422. For five years his congregation remained restricted to the two hermitages which he
had founded; but in 1427 his favourite disciple, whom he had
groomed for future leadership, took the decision to spread his
master's teaching further afield: Lope de Salazar started to
make foundations on his own account, and thus the **Recollectio
Villacreciana** acquired its second, ultimately more numerous, and
better documented wing. Permission for the new enterprise was
given by the "regular Superior", the Provincial of Castile; and
his commission to brother Lope was the title of Vicar, and
plenitudo potestatis over all foundations he should make. By
1430 these numbered three, and thus a reformed family in an
identical constitutional position to the Coletan came into being,
with the difference - setting it apart from the Observance as well
as the Coletans - that its basis was the literal observance, not
the moderate observance of the papal declarations.

The members of the two wings of the **Recollectio Villacreciana**
were not the only Castilian friars to receive at this time
canonical approval for the literal observance, pursued (more or
less theoretically) under the normal Superiors. A bull of
Martin V, issued in July 1428, tells its own tale, in terms
which, apart the Villacrecian concessions of 1418, represent the
fullest papal expression to date of the literal observance ideal.
It is concerned with friars living in (unfortunately unnamed)
"solitary places", and expresses their intention thus: "sub
experientia paupertatis extremae, iuxta primaevam institutionem
per b. Franciscum dicti Ordinis erectorem et regulam et normam
vivendi per illum traditam et servatam, habitum gestare et vitam
ducere regulares et nihilominus eorum prelatis et superioribus
iuxta illam humiliter obedire." The principles of obedience to
the Ministers, and return to the primitive practice of Francis and his companions, are plain enough; and one must wonder whether the normam vivendi mentioned is not some specific writing other than the Regula Bullata, for example the First Rule, or the De religiosa habitacione in eremo; if so, it is the proof, otherwise lacking, that other Castilian reformers than Peter of Villacrezes took their stand on these strictly uncanonical texts. In any event Martin V gave his support and confirmation to the austere purposes of the solitary Castilian friars. 68

Nor was it only in Castile that the eremitical Spanish reform of literal observance was making progress. The family of hermitages founded in Santiago by Gonzalo Mariño seems to have gained four settlements and lost one between 1418 and 1432; 69 and in 1426 licences for two foundations were extended to an Aragonese friar who, four years later, was to show himself a most outspoken partisan of the literal observance, and heir of the Spirituals, Philip Berbegal. 70

Almost all the developments discussed so far ran contrary to the interests of the Regular Observance. However they also had their successes in the matter of the judicial standing of the rival Franciscan factions, in addition to the autonomy granted to the French movement in 1415, and the Castilian in 1417. In 1424 Martin V created the first Spanish Observant custody, in the Province of Aragon. The request that he do so was put forward by the bishop (a Franciscan), dean and chapter of Segorbe, the magistrates of the city, and Frederick, count of Luna, and referred to four friaries living in "regular observance" - the
two founded, as we saw, under Benedict XIII, Santo Espíritu and Segorbe, and two, Mantanera and Xelva, which presumably had accepted the reform since the end of the Schism. The constitutional position given to the group was different in some ways to that which Benedict XIII had been in the habit of establishing in individual friaries; it involved approximately the same level of autonomy, but incorporated it in a neat and wholly satisfactory way into the main body of the Province. It was established that the reformed brothers should elect their Guardians, and other local officers — "lectors and vicars and other officials"; and in addition — the positive step which Benedict did not take — they were to elect their own Observant custos. All these elections were to take effect without any confirmation being required, and the custos was empowered to "rule, direct and govern" his small family: provisions which, although not in detail, indicate that the friars and their custos together constituted a kind of reformed enclave amongst the unreformed friaries. On the other hand, from the level of custos upwards the stricter brethren were fully "of the body of the Province" and "under the obedience and care of the Minister": their elections were to be included in the written record presented at Provincial Chapter — with the important provision, necessary to safeguard their autonomy, that no changes be introduced in the record without the express consent of the custos and Guardians — and they were to eschew any peculiarities in food and clothing, the classic causes of dissension, and, generally, any likely sources of discord. Here was a neat and well-balanced scheme for allowing the reform to develop.
unhindered, yet retaining it within the larger Franciscan family; and it was designed, in the words of its promoters, to ensure the "happy conservation" of the reform.71

In the following year, 1425, Martin V pursued the same goal with a fuller and wider concession of autonomy: at the request of the brethren themselves, but in circumstances otherwise unknown, he extended the provisions of the Constance decree to the whole Province of Aragon, embracing three Observant friaries in addition to the four of the recently established custody.72 It was an important step, creating the first Observant Vicar Provincial outside France; and the precedent seems to have been followed a little later - probably after 1427 - with regard to the Province of Castile: although its evidence has been doubted, a bull issued by Eugenius IV in 1434 states in the plainest terms that his predecessor had applied the Constance provisions to that Province.73 The available evidence does not indicate whether the concession to the Spanish Observants of the far-reaching autonomy enjoyed by their French counterparts was provoked by Conventual molestation; even if this were not the case, it could be plausibly argued that the consolidation of the Observant impulse would be best served by bringing its French and Spanish wings into line in the same constitutional arrangement, and by a more extensive autonomy than was granted the Aragonese custody of 1424.

In Italy a situation developed that was sui generis. We have seen that as early as 1380 - before any of the other movements had come into existence - the Italian reform (which it is at this point incorrect to call the Regular Observance, since it
was not based upon the papal declarations) had acquired an extensive autonomy, under a Superior with the same legal status as a Vicar, namely a Commissarius; however the position had been created by the Order's own Superiors, and had depended on their goodwill and that of the unreformed majority generally. The Constance decree of 1415 had no direct bearing on these arrangements; and yet its influence was so pervasive that they could not long remain unaffected. Most important, there was the question of the status of the Commissarius who had followed Paoluccio dei Trinci, John of Stroncone (d. 1418), and the successor and deputies he seems to have had: were their powers terminated with the decrees of the General Chapters of Mantua (1418) and Forli (1421) that all the friars must obey their Ministers? The question was answered in 1421, and the manner of its answering reveals important changes in the relation of reform and majority: it was the Pope himself who had to command the Minister General to institute Provincial Superiors of their own kind for the strict friars, and the title they used was the French one, Vicars. Among the individuals nominated to the position were both Bernardino of Siena and John of Capistrano, and it was with this official standing that they set about spreading the Observance from one end of Italy to the other. Their success in carrying out the task undid the remaining characteristic of the situation established under Paoluccio dei Trinci, the harmony between the reformed and unreformed friars: as soon as they entered into serious competition for the respect (and financial support) of the mass of the faithful, friction and hostility automatically arose, with complaints on both sides.
It was historical proof that only factual "separation of dwelling", made possible by the reformers' isolation in abandoned hermitages surviving from the 13th century, had allowed the concord of the earlier period to develop. In 1429 matters came to a head. The General and Provincials of the Franciscans and the three other Mendicant Orders combined to accuse the Observance of "poaching" on the territory of their own existing friaries, and obtained a bull forbidding them to do so in future; the Observants for their part complained to the Pope that the Conventuals were harassing them and obstructing their pursuance of a reformed way of life. Something plainly had to be done; Martin V instructed three Cardinals to see to it, among them Giordano Orsini, the Order's Protector (and in 1415 a member of the Constance commission which had decided the case of the French Observance). Representatives of both parties were summoned to a conference, and some eighty friars of either side duly appeared in Rome in June 1429. At first it went ill for the Observants: they were subjected to a well-prepared tirade which went on for three hours, and in which they were depicted as no less than incipient heretics; and the presiding Cardinals then declared that they had heard enough for one session. At this point John of Capistrano sprang up and saved the day for the Observants: he insisted that their case be heard forthwith, proceeded to make it himself, and off-the-cuff destroyed the arguments of his opponent one by one. At this dramatic but inconclusive point the proceedings were brought to a banal conclusion with the exhortation to both sides to bury their differences and live in concord, the Cardinal Protector
giving the lead by inviting Capistrano and the Conventual spokesman to dine together with him.78

Despite this formality it must have been clear that at bottom nothing had changed in the relation of the opposing parties, and the decisive effect of the proceedings seems to have lain in another direction: they evidently convinced John of Capistrano that some much more fundamental approach was necessary to tackle the problem of the rival Franciscan factions. Probably he was himself aware of only two of the factions, namely the Observance and the Conventuals; we, who through hindsight know the strength of the third faction, can see that its existence simply confirmed the accuracy of his assessment: the Order was riven with internal divisions, to an even greater extent than he realised. In any case it was not many days after the conclusion of the Rome conference that he put to Martin V his master plan for ending dissension and the consequent divisions: the reform of the whole Order, on the basis of a moderate level of observance which all Franciscans might reasonably be required, and expected, to fulfil - a plan for unity on the basis of unanimity, and as such identical to the arrangement with which, in 1312-3, Pope Clement V had hoped to end the dissensions among the Franciscans of his day. It was exactly a month after the Rome conference that Martin V set Capistrano's plan in motion: on 8 July Cardinal John Cervantes was named Reformator ordinis Minorum and nominated President of the General Chapter to be held the following year at Assisi, and, since reform was to be its matter, Observant as well as Conventual representatives were summoned to attend it.79

Thus the stage was set for the last and perhaps greatest medieval
attempt to hold all Franciscans together.

The bond of their unity was to be the common observance defined in the Constitutions drawn up at the Chapter. The level of this observance was in a sense predetermined by its function: it embodied the Order's moderate position - the via media between two extremes, the strict and the lax, defined by the 13th century papal declarations. Inasmuch as it took the middle standpoint, it could be described as a compromise level of observance; it was in this sense that, over a century before, it had been Clement V's chosen instrument for the union of the entire Order.

The embodiment of this standpoint, the Charteres Martinianae (as they soon became known), were essentially the work of Capistrano: he led the committee which put them together. They take the form of a commentary on the Rule, chapter by chapter - an approach whose net effect is notably less clear and coherent than that of the systematic or topical approach adopted in the great papal declarations. Even so the Constitutions' general principle of a return to the standards of the declarations emerges with clarity and force, especially on the question - in many ways the central one - of poverty. In commenting on the first chapter of the Rule, the Constitutions require observance of the major part of Exit qui seminat, articles 2 to 16 inclusive (the declaration consists of 24 articles): by this single enactment the whole of Nicholas III's dispensation on Franciscan poverty was again enjoined on the entire Order - the prohibition on the use of money (effected through the office of the nuntius), on the holding of property (effected through the office of the Procurators), on the enjoyment of permanent incomes,
and on lavishness in use of goods. After this there was nothing fundamental left to say, and the remaining sections of the Constitutions simply repeat, or elaborate on details. It was stated that every friary must have its Procurator (not a member of the Order), and that the brothers must have nothing to do with money; accordingly "pecuniary exactions" - a prime source of strife in the pre-Constance period of the Observance - were explicitly forbidden, for good measure in relation to three separate areas of authority in the Order, those of the General, Provincials and all lesser officials, and Procurators resident at the curia. The, for the Conventuals, most devastating implications of a return to Exiit were recorded: there must be expropriation of any assets - vineyards for example - which promised a secure income; it was unacceptable for a friary to have landed possessions, exercise parochial responsibility, store provisions against the future, or collect money during preaching tours. All these poverty regulations represented a frontal attack on the position of the relaxed majority of the Order; but on two important points the Constitutions' reinculcation of the declarations was directed against the Order's strict standpoint: the obligation to observe the Testament of St. Francis was denied, with reference to the major papal decisions from Gregory IX's Quo elongati (1230) to Exivi de paradiso (1312); similarly, the obligation to Gospel counsels and precepts other than those in the text of the Rule was denied, according to the comprehensive formula of Exivi.

Here is the clearest illustration of the sense in which the standpoint of the declarations, disavowing both the relaxed and
the strict standpoints, represented a compromise position on the
question of observance. On the other hand it will be clear
that, as regards the major split within the Order, that between
Observance and Conventuals – the split which, in the mind of
its authors, the Chapter of Assisi had really been called to
heal – the *Constitutiones Martiniae*, far from representing a
compromise between the views of the two factions, came down
wholly on the side of the Observance. For, as we know, the
Observants could actually be defined as the party of the
declarations, and the Conventuals as the party of those who
broke them. In other words, the solution which Capistrano
proposed to the division between Observance and Conventualism,
and which Martin V seems to have backed, was – in the guise of
the reform of the whole Order – the elimination of the
Conventuals. To make the point more sharply, it could be said
that the proposition put to the relaxed friars was that they
should cease to be Conventuals and become Observants: a literal
implementation of the maxim "if you can't beat them, join them",
and the more remarkable in that, a mere decade before, the
Observance had been, at least in Italy, an inconspicuous movement.
There is a certain pleasing symmetry in the fact that, in the
early 14th century, John XXII had sought the unity of the
Franciscans by the elimination (forcible, indeed brutal, by
comparison with Capistrano's project) of one of the rival
parties – in his case the party of the opposite extreme on
observance, namely the Spirituals. 81

There is no need to stress the extraordinary self-denial
which the *Constitutiones Martinianae* demanded of the Conventuals:
it amounted to capitulation to their rivals — the literal self-sacrifice of their party. Had the Observance any commensurate concession to offer as a quid pro quo?

According to Capistrano's plan, their part of the bargain was renunciation of the symbol of their autonomy, and focus of Conventual hostility to them: the Vicars. There is no doubt that their abolition was fervently desired by the relaxed friars. Nevertheless according to Capistrano's blueprint the step involved no concession at all: for if, in return, the Conventuals accepted the papal declarations, they would in effect (as we have noted) themselves become Observants; and in that situation their Ministers could just as well, apart from the word, be Vicars. The Observants therefore had nothing to lose, provided only that the Conventuals kept their side of the bargain, and ceased to be Conventual.

But would they? That was the question by whose answer Capistrano's policy for uniting the Order stood or fell. There were those among the Observants who suspected that they would not, and it seems that accordingly some of the French reformers — probably with the support of Bernardino of Siena — were most reluctant to give up their Vicars, fearing to lose the chief bulwark of their defence against Conventual oppression, and gain nothing in return. Capistrano however would brook no resistance on the point, since the abolition of the Vicars was so to say his bait to capture the most glittering of all prizes, the ending of Conventualism — the return of the whole Order to the path of pure and lawful observance. If the elimination of the Vicars was a gamble, Capistrano was surely right if he
reckoned it an almost infinitely justifiable one.

By themselves, Capistrano and his supporters might not have overcome the resistance of the sceptics, and it seems likely that one further concession from the Conventual side was necessary to tip the balance in favour of the Capistrano plan. This was the deposition of the un lamented General Minister Antony of Massa (he was consoled with the bishopric of his native town), and his replacement by William of Casale. Brother William was a man of a very different stamp. Already in 1429 he had been appointed Massa's Coadjutor, with effectively a power of veto over all the General's acts. He was of high personal qualities, both as religious and as man of government; he had the reputation of being favourably disposed towards the Observance, and seems as Coadjutor to have gained the confidence of its leaders. If anything could guarantee Capistrano's policy of the reform of the whole Order, it was the tenure of its highest office by such a man. His elevation, added to the pressure from Capistrano himself, carried the day, and the result was that the Martinian Constitutions enshrined not only the papal declarations, but also the suppression of the Vicars.

The gamble immediately paid off. On 21 June, at the order of the presiding Cardinal, Capistrano himself read out the Martinian Constitutions before a great throng of friars and others. The response was vociferous enthusiasm; there were cries of 'These we will keep; we shall again live and die in the Order together!' Cardinal Cervantes struck while the iron was hot; each member of the Chapter took an oath, binding not only himself, but all those for whom he spoke, present and to come,
to "abide, live and die fraternally in this Order according to the aforesaid Constitutions, reformationes and ordinances"; and in addition the new Minister General, William of Casale, was required by Cervantes to swear that he would not seek any cancellation of the delegates' oaths. The edifice was crowned with arrangements to put the Chapter's decisions into practice: as soon as it closed, the General was to undertake a visitation of the Provinces, to see that reform was implemented; and he was to be accompanied by John of Capistrano.

In that hour the Franciscan Order, as represented by its General Chapter, was united: it had throughout a single structure of authority, administering what had been since the 13th century its canonical level of observance, that defined by the papal declarations; and so the whole body stood in "regular observance". It was an unheard-of achievement, and it was fundamentally the work of a single man, Capistrano. Although contemporaries may not have registered the fact, it could be accounted one of the outstanding personal triumphs in the history of the religious Orders.

The disenchantment which succeeded was commensurate. As the euphoria which had greeted the Constitutions died down, and the full implications of what they had undertaken began to sink in, many Conventuals were smitten with second thoughts. What they had willingly agreed to in the heat of the moment, was unable to survive in the cold light of day: they had not the resolution to immolate themselves, and cease to be Conventual. Even before the Chapter was over some secretly requested from Cardinal Cervantes, and obtained, dispensation from the oath they
had taken; and their lead was followed by none other than the General Minister. On 27 July Pope Martin V released him from the two oaths taken publicly at the General Chapter.

Here was the failure of Capistrano's great gamble, and the justification of the French Observants' reluctance to yield up their autonomy. The Conventuals had achieved their goal, the elimination of the Vicars; now, with the General at their head, they would refuse to fulfil their side of the bargain, and submit to the austere discipline of reform. Such dishonourable conduct has naturally led to charges against them of bad faith - to the suspicion that the promise of reform was never more than a ruse, directed against the Vicars, and was at no point seriously meant. In the writer's view such suspicions are unnecessary, the Conventuals' behaviour being adequately explained as the outcome of a genuine, but ill-considered enthusiasm, which could not survive calmer and more realistic consideration. On the other hand, it will hardly be doubted that, once the Vicars were out of the way, they saw less and less reason for screwing up their resolution to the task of reform.

That, however, was not yet the full measure of their retreat. In bringing them, however temporarily, to give up their way of life and accept the papal declarations, Capistrano seems to have committed the tactical error of pressing them too far; and, as happens in such cases, the result was a rebound to a situation worse than that with which events began. At Assisi the Conventuals gave notice that they would not submit to reform; two months later their unreformed standpoint, which hitherto had been in breach of the Order's official legislation, was given
canonical recognition, and thereby ceased to be in any sense illicit. In the bull _Ad statum_, of 23 August 1430, Martin V conceded to the Franciscans generally the right to possess and administer landed property and permanent incomes, including money. It was the legalisation of the Order's relaxed standpoint on observance, which previously, although held by the majority of friars, had been strictly an "abuse". It will be noted that, with this decision, two different levels of Franciscan observance had achieved general canonical recognition, the relaxed and the moderate.

It was as though the whole imposing apparatus of the papal declarations had never been; for here was no "explanation" or "interpretation" of the Order's Rule: it was a breach of the Rule's prohibitions pure and simple. Now in practice those prohibitions, as interpreted by the declarations, had been widely disregarded ever since the 13th century; yet when, a century earlier, in 1331, the General Geraldus Odonis had proposed that the fact be recognised both publicly and legally, he had been almost universally vilified. So it was not until 1430 that Franciscans could face the public admission that they were unable to adhere to their Rule; and the man who could be said to have goaded them to do so was Capistrano. In its way it was a service to honesty and common sense.

That, however, was not how the friar himself regarded it. _Ad statum_ summed up the failure of his master-plan for the union of Franciscans in a purified observance. At his insistence the Observance had lost its autonomy; and not only had the Conventuals rejected reform, they had secured legal standing for their
unreformed position. Well might ill-disposed Observants point out that "they had told him so", and for the rest of his life taunt him with the failure of his grand strategy. And when, at the start of September, he and the back-sliding General embarked on the visitation which had been intended to consolidate the Martinian Constitutions, William of Casale brought with him the bull which was the foundation charter of Conventualism; and Capistrano was forced to acquiesce. Disappointment and humiliation are supposed to be welcome to the Franciscan friar, but it will cause no surprise that Capistrano left the General's retinue after a mere four months, and that the memory of the events of 1430 was ever after distasteful to him.

Nor was his cup of bitterness yet empty. The Martinian Constitutions had failed to win the allegiance of the relaxed party within the Order; it was soon made clear that they were to have no greater success with the strict party. The revolt against the Constitutions of an Aragonese friar, Philip Berbegal, symbolised the rejection of moderate observance, based on the papal declarations, by the Spanish movement for reform according to the observance ad litteram.

Berbegal had been described as an Observant when, in 1426, he had received from Martin V licences for two new foundations. In and after 1430 historians normally assign him to the Fraticelli, but this is an over-simplification: in his own eyes, as is clear from his Postills on the Martinian Constitutions (of which more shortly), his way of life still constituted "regular observance"; the only point was that his definition of the term differed from that which Benedict XIII had made canonical.
His definition was, in brief, identical to that of the more extreme Spirituals of the 13th and 14th centuries, and seems clearly to have been based on knowledge of the party's writings. He had become the leader of a recognisable group of Spanish friars (who, to judge from a bull Eugenius IV directed against them in 1431, 90 may not have been confined to the Province of Aragon); they were characterised by the two great marks of the Spiritual cause, disavowal of the declarations on the Rule, and the distinctive habit—in this case, one with a peculiarly pointed hood. The latter was indeed their most striking feature, and gave them their popular name, the Congregation de la Cappuciola; Berbegal probably went so far as to assert that this style of dress was that which St. Francis himself had worn, and that those friars who adopted anything else were in a state of damnation. 91 If these views are reminiscent of the extreme Spirituals and Fraticelli, it remains true that the distinctive habit as such, as well as the rejection of the declarations, was typical of the whole Spanish literal observance movement which is most clearly visible in the Recollectio Villacreciana. And there is one particularly striking shared characteristic, which hitherto seems to have been passed over by historians: according to Eugenius IV's bull, Berbegal's Congregation claimed to rest on the authorisation of Pope Martin V. No bull now known gives such an authorisation to the Aragonese movement; but Martin issued something very similar to Peter of Villacreses in 1418, and to unnamed Castilian followers of the literal observance in 1428. It is perfectly plausible that he should have regarded Berbegal's case as identical, and treated it accordingly.
That Berbegal was in any case a champion of the literal observance, very much according to the pattern of the Spirituals, comes out clearly in his comments of the Constitutiones Martinianae - the embodiment of the declarations. His Postills are not now known in the original form, but we are fortunate in that they are extensively, if not completely, transcribed in the counterblast which John of Capistrano completed in May 1431 (and since Capistrano also quotes the text of the Constitutions glossed by Berbegal, his treatise is made up of three strands of argument - the text, Berbegal's Postill, and his reply). 89a

Berbegal's attitude to the apparatus of the papal declarations is best expressed by his crisp dismissal (at two points) of the role of the Procurator (the nuntius of Exiit qui seminat) in relation to money alms: "Contra regulam est manifeste"; "Contra regulam est manifestissime". 90a The principles underlying his stand, and their kinship with those of the Spirituals, are revealed in the following exchanges:

Berbegal: "Sed reformatio secundum puritatem regulae habet fieri ..."

Capistrano: "Quare igitur reformatio habet fieri non solum secundum puritatem regule more tuo, sed etiam secundum declarationes summorum pontificum concernentes puritatem regulae ..." 91a

Constitutions: "Talis reformatio fiat, quae Deo accepta."

Berbegal: "Deo accepta nulla alia potest esse nisi pure regularis et vera, justa et sancta, quia talis est voto solenni Deo promissa."

Capistrano: "Unde ex eo quod dicis nisi pure regularis, adeo
videtur quod te restringas ad regulam, ut nulla constitutio
ecclesiae vel declaratio locum habeat ... Illa igitur reformatio
erit Deo accepta ... quae sic a vero Deo et suo vero Vicario
Summo Pontifice fuerit approbata ..."92

Constitutions: "Teneantur firmiter obedire in his omnibus
supradictis et aliis licitis et honestis, quae non sunt contra
animam suam et regulam dicti Ordinis."

Berbegal: "Hic dominus Cardinalis, a Spiritu Sancto inspiratus,
liberat omnes pure et perfecte volentes regulam observare ab omni
ordinatione veritati et puritati regulae contraria; sed puram et
liberam et plenam dat omnibus facultatem in observantia
regulari ..."93

In these short passages we may find, along with the new
definition of Franciscan "regular observance", the consummation
of the failure of Capistrano's master-plan for the union of all
Franciscans. The historical importance of the General Chapter
of 1430 is that it achieved the opposite of what had been
intended. It had set out to draw the whole Order together on
the basis of a shared observance, the via media of the papal
declarations; it ended by confirming the divisions between
Franciscans, based on the rejection of the via media by the
adherents of the extreme positions on either hand, the lax and
the strict. Thus it became for historians the proof - if such
were still needed - that the Order was irremediably divided
between three conflicting points of view. Logically, therefore,
only one task remained: to recognise the fact in formal
administrative terms.

This was the goal to which Philip Berbegal's Congregation
tended. It was not destined to achieve it, for the action of Eugenius IV brought about its suppression, but, although the evidence is patchy, it is plain that the fight was carried on by other groups adhering to the literal observance, and that, as before 1430, it was conducted under the general aegis of the Ministers, and in opposition to the moderate party, the Regular Observance. The clearest case is the family of hermitages under Lope de Salazar – the second wing, as we might say, of the Recollectio Villacreciana. It was in 1427 that the family had been established, with the foundation of Briviesca, and by 1430 two more foundations had been added. After 1430 the pace of advance was more modest, but it was still perceptible. In 1432 Briviesca received the confirmation of Eugenius IV, and even in his short and formal document we can detect the constitutional essentials of the Recollectio, the theoretical subjection to the regular Superiors, and considerable practical independence of them: it is stated that the Guardian of the friary is to be elected, with the Provincial retaining only the right of confirmation, and that the community shall be visited only by the Provincial and the General Minister. Ten years later the same Pope gave his confirmation to another of the communities which had been established before 1430, and it is intriguing that, although the essence of its position was to reject the declarations, it is nevertheless described as living in "regular observance": here then was the same alternative definition of that self-justifying term as had been given by Philip Berbegal. It was at about the same time that two further foundations were made, one of which received Eugenius IV's approval in 1442.
Two years later, finally, the Provincial of Castile gave formal notice of the authority under which the existence and expansion of the congregation had continued: he renewed the patent in which, in 1427, he had created Lope de Salazar his Vicar with plenitudo potestatis.²⁸

Thus in one wing of the Recollectio Villacreciana the pursuit of the literal observance seemed assured, in technical dependence on the Ministers, but practically speaking with as much autonomy as ever the Regular Observance had enjoyed prior to 1430. What of the other and original wing of the Recollectio, namely the two hermitages of Villacreces himself, La Aguilera and El Abrojo? From shortly after the death of their founder (1422) until well into the 1440s, their history is largely obscure. Even so one general trend does emerge: the very thing which Villacreces had feared and hoped to forestall, namely a decline from the strict practice he enjoined towards the more easy-going one of the Regular Observance, brought about partly by disregard of the limitation on numbers on which he had insisted.²⁹ However in 1441 or 1442 the family of two hermitages received as its Superior a friar who had belonged to it since the early years of the century (and thus had been for some time the intimate of both Villacreces and Lope), and who was to become the only canonised saint of the Spanish literal observance movement: Peter Regalado. Under his leadership the small family experienced something of a renaissance, which came near to restoring the observance originally given to it by its founder; the process involved it in a running fight with the Regular Observance to preserve its technical subjection to the Ministers, and the real
independence which had been granted to Peter of Villacreces in
the first year of Martin V's pontificate. 100

A rather similar pattern of events can be traced in what is
known of the fortunes of certain unattached Castilian hermitages
(as they may be described). We have already seen that, although
its members cannot be specified, there was a Castilian literal
observance movement apart from the Recollectio Villacrecesiana,
both during the Schism, and in 1426, when some of its
representatives received papal confirmation for their adherence
to the normal "prelates and Superiors" of the Order. However in
1434 Pope Eugenius IV restored to the Castilian Observants the
office of Vicar which, as we saw, they had probably gained not
long before 1430, only to lose it at the General Chapter of that
year; 101 and it seems likely that this was the signal for the
beginning of an Observant campaign against the advocates of the
Order's strict standpoint, in which control was gained of
Arricafa, Constantina, Villaverde, la Rabida, and one of the
hermitages "del Monte" (either the first of all, S. Francisco,
or S. Miguel). If so, there was before long a counter-attack
led by the Provincial of Castile, such that between 1438 and
1445 the Observants were forcibly expelled from the five above-
named settlements; and we may suppose that, for a brief period,
they again housed adherents of the literal observance, living
under the formal jurisdiction of their Minister, until in 1445
Eugenius IV decreed that the dispute should be settled in
favour of the moderate reform movement. 102

In the Province of Santiago meanwhile, if there was no
conflict, there were certainly two parallel currents of reform
endeavour, the one according probably to the literal observance, the other certainly according to that of the declarations. The former was embodied in the original group of hermitages founded around the turn of the century by Consalvo Mariño, and still, although little is known about it, evidently in good heart, since it gained new settlements in 1439, 1451 and 1452; the last two were—significantly in the light of events elsewhere—declared to be subject to the Provincial and General Minister, yet they were described as living in "regular observance": it was, we must suspect, the same alternative usage of the term as had been employed by those two leading champions of the strict standpoint, Philip Berbegal and Lope de Salazar. The latter reform movement, the Regular Observance properly speaking, was what might be called a foreign import, and arrived much later than the indigenous reform, for it seems to have been introduced by a leading Castilian Observant, Luis de Saja, in and after 1441.

The evidence of all three Spanish Provinces points to the same conclusion: as before 1430, there was within the general enterprise of Franciscan reform one faction which, in order to preserve the literal observance of the Rule, repudiated the Regular Observance and its Vicars, and, while remaining theoretically subject to the Ministers, enjoyed in practice an autonomy comparable to that of the rival movement. At the same time, elsewhere in Europe, there was another reform faction with an identical relation to the Ministers and Vicars, but which shared the actual observance of the movement it opposed, and took its stand against the Vicars on the sole principle of obedience. The existence of this faction meant that the total movement for
reform according to the Order's moderate standard, that of the papal declarations, was weakened by being divided between two parallel channels.

What may be called the original members of this faction were the Coletans. It is enough to say that their fortunes after 1430 were very similar to those of the Spanish opponents of the Observance. In 1427, we saw, they held four friaries; twenty years later, at the death of St. Colette, their number had risen probably to seven; a bull of Pius II, dated 1458, puts the total at thirteen. As their professed subjection to the Order's normal Superiors would lead one to expect, they enjoyed the support of the General Minister, William of Casale, despite his inability to press for the implementation of their moderate reformed observance among the main body of his subjects; and the form his support took was the Coletans' practical exemption from that very obedience which they professed: in 1434 the General confirmed the authority over the family extended to Henry de Baume by his predecessor Antony of Massa — the post of Commissarius, vested with "plenitude of power". Already in 1431, when directing Henry de Baume and his colleague Pierre de Vaux to reform the friary of Chambéry according to what he called "regular observance", William had ordered that the new community should offer to the two Coletan friars the same obedience as to his own person.

The Coletans, it might be said, were indistinguishable from the Observants save in their title and the manner in which their independence of the Ministers was gained; after 1430 their faction was joined by a stranger group: brothers distinguished
not even by title from the Observance, but only by the manner in which their practical independence was granted. These were German friars, erstwhile Conventuals who, unlike the majority of their fellows, did find the fortitude to accept the reforming Constitutiones Martinianae of 1430, but who nevertheless, with inscrutable logic, determined to remain subject to unreformed prelates: a position aptly expressed by one of the names which they acquired, Observantes sub 'inistri[3] (the other Observants being characterised as sub Vicariis). As will by now be expected, their obedience to the Ministers was more nominal than real: in due course they became to a great extent self-governing, under an official of their own number, freely conceded by the "normal Superiors", the Visitator Regiminis. 107

In all the foregoing movements, north and south of the Pyrenees, despite their different stands on the question of observance as such, we can perceive a common truth: whatever the protestations of their members - or historians - the call for reform had produced a factual division of the Order. How did matters develop with the other distinct reform movement, the Regular Observance?

In 1430 it had suffered, in terms of the Order's internal politics, a formidable setback. It had renounced the office which had been the guarantee of its autonomy and right to exist since 1407, in return for the implicit promise of the reform of the entire Order; and then not only had that promise not been kept, the unreformed standpoint of the majority had achieved its first general canonical recognition.

The injustice of the proceedings - to say nothing worse -
is at this distance in time plain enough. Fortunately for the Observance, it was also apparent to the Pope, himself a religious and a reformer, who in 1431 succeeded Martin V, namely Eugenius IV. Already in close relations with John of Capistrano, he was to be a firm supporter of the Observants till the end of his pontificate.

He lost no time in declaring his policy. Precisely a week after his election, on 10 March, he summoned a General Chapter of the Italian Observants to meet at Bologna, independently of the Conventuals, at the following Whitsun, among other things to set up Vicars anew, as before 1430, and also ordered the institution of a Vicar for the Observants of Bosnia; and five days after that he re-issued the Constitutiones Martinianae, and re-imposed on William of Casale his oath to see them enforced. So with Eugenius IV it was to be a pure return to the status quo ante.

It was a miscalculation. Eugenius had not reckoned with the entrenched power of Conventualism, and such pressure was brought to bear on him that, just over a year later, he found no alternative but to suspend the Constitutiones and, consequently, have the General released from his oath for the second time. There was to be no going back on the legalisation of Conventualism contained in Martin V's bull Ad statum.

Probably this development made Eugenius the more determined to implement the second strand of his policy, the restitution of their autonomy to the Observants. The Italians duly assembled at Bologna at Whitsun and elected Vicars Provincial; no doubt in order to spare the Conventuals, no General was created; but the Pope let it be known that he wished Capistrano to carry out
the functions of the office within the Italian family. And in October the concession of a Vicar to the reformers in Bosnia was followed with a corresponding concession to those in Crete.

Here was the re-creation from scratch, by slow degrees, of the position which the Observance had lost in 1430, and the disappointment of any hopes the Conventuals may have entertained that they put paid to the Vicars for ever. Yet the unreformed friars were no more willing to accept the fact than they had been after the Council of Constance, and now pursued the same policy as they had in the General Chapters of the 1420s. At the first one to follow the assembly of 1430, that of Bologna in 1434, the obligation of all Franciscans to submit to their Ministers was re-inculcated, and at the same time the Conventuals' refusal to offer reform as a quid pro quo was underlined by the ordering of new relaxations.

This was enough to prompt the French Observants to pursue what had always been their policy in such circumstances, appeal to the highest authority. Their most favourable response to date had come from the Council of Constance, and it was therefore natural that on this occasion they should turn to the successor of that body, which had not yet broken with the Papacy, the Council of Basel. A pattern of events took place which was not unlike that at Constance, and indeed at the Council of Vienne over a century before: the Minister General appeared in person, and there was a thorough-going dispute between the two sides, with the exemption of the reformers (as laid down in the bull of 1415) at stake.
The Observant argument is summarised in the chronicle composed in 1508 from their viewpoint by Nicholas Glassberger, and, although much briefer, it is no less impressive than the Quaerimoniae presented to the earlier Council. Its case for the autonomy of the reform is in the present writer's view unanswerable; and it is based, not, as with the Quaerimoniae, on the fact of Conventual oppression, but on the more general grounds of the inappropriateness of attempting to contain different groups within a single structure. It thus becomes a timeless statement of the necessity for reform to be followed by division.

The necessity is founded in human nature. "They argued... that it is almost universal that, where one estate contains different or opposed ways of life, there will be warmth and contention, directed particularly from the lower to the higher, as Esau resented Jacob, the sons of Israel Joseph... and Saul David... And the warmth is sparked off because the better life is an implicit criticism of the worse, and reinforces those who say 'Why don't you live like them, etc'. And this warmth is greatly increased because it is a few poor and simple brothers who are seen by their life to be criticising the majority of powerful and learned brothers, and refusing to follow them; according to that text of St. John, 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?'. The psychological acumen of this passage is undeniable, and it is in passing of some interest that it was partly nourished by study of the psychology of biblical stories; among other things it furnishes a complete explanation of Community hostility to the Spirituals in the
13th century.

What was the conclusion? "Fifthly they said it followed from this that they cannot reside together with them or be ruled by the same government, any more than those who belong to different Orders, since there is greater difference between their lives than between those of two Orders — a point made earlier in the discussion."

Even thus generally stated, the conclusion will be admitted; but to drive the point home a series of particular reasons were adduced to show "that the Observants ought not to be ruled by others"; and several of these are as generally valid as the original psychological analysis of the situation. Thus the reformers argued that it was "against nature" "that the head should be different and inferior to the members, and that the life of the shepherd be inferior to that of the sheep". Leaving aside the metaphors, what were some of the practical realities covered by this statement? How, the reformers asked, could a non-Observant Superior be expected to rule competently those different from himself? For it would only be by experiencing their life as it was lived that he would understand its problems, and know how to deal appropriately with his subjects. Again, assuming his way of life were genuinely different (and inferior) to theirs, would they as subjects not be in some degree morally bound to follow his (bad) example, and would they be in a position to criticise him for specific misdemeanours; and how could he, for his part, refuse his subjects concessions which he himself enjoyed — from all of which relaxation was bound to ensue? Again, one of the great duties of Superiors is to teach
by example, which involves their undertaking as much as or more than they command to their subjects - and certainly not less; but a Conventual set over Observants would be leading from behind.

The Observants then went on to make an essentially political point whose accuracy is demonstrated by the fact that it is all too familiar and relevant in the United Kingdom of the 1970s. They had seen that in a body divided between two communities of unequal size, and in which power is allocated by majority vote, the minority is almost automatically condemned to permanent exclusion from the seat of authority. "... and they said ... that because of their great number the brothers of the community always wish to have a General Minister of their life and persuasion, and if he should show favour to themselves, they would rather depose him. Nor do the Observant brothers have any voice in the election of the Minister General. Again ... even in the election of Provincial Ministers they commonly have no voice, but only the representatives of the friaries of the community. And even if some Observants did have a vote, they would never prevail, because those elections are decided by majority decision; and it is because of this that no Observant is ever elected Minister or custos, although some might be said to be so outstanding, that there are none more famous in the whole world ..." Nor was it simply in elections that the dice were permanently loaded against the reformed minority. One of the serious Conventual accusations they had to face was that they included no Masters of Theology in their number, and were unwilling to study; their reply was that they were on the
contrary desirous of studying, but had not the facilities, because their opponents would not make any of the houses of study available to them. It was precisely this situation which Bernardino of Siena and John of Capistrano undertook to remedy by setting up houses of study among the Observants themselves.

In the face of all these arguments, the Conventuals took their stand on the same one ground as had been theirs from the beginning: the Rule's principle of obedience which, so they asserted, meant that all friars must obey those officials named Ministers. This conveniently overlooked those whom the Ministers had themselves exempted from their own authority, such as the Coletans or the Recollectio Villacreciana; but in any case the Observants had no difficulty in exposing the shallowness of the Conventual reasoning. They argued first that obedience is due to those who live well and not to those who live ill, which is the counterpart to St. Francis' contention that only good commands, and not evil ones, must be obeyed; and secondly, that they obeyed Observant Superiors given them by the lawful authority of the Church, and in addition obeyed the Ministers in those matters in which the Vicars had not been given competence.

All in all the Observant case may be judged irrefutable. Accordingly the vital question was no longer whether exemption were justified, but how far up the Order's hierarchy it should reach, and how and by whom it should be given: by the willing grant of the Order's own authorities, or by external authority, against the Order's will.

It seems likely that the dispute at the Council of Basel
marked a new departure on these questions, which reflected the policy of the Minister General elected in 1430. We have seen that William of Casale attended the Council in person. It has been suggested that his stand on the matter was to permit - even indeed willingly accept - the creation of Provincial Vicars for the Observance, but not to allow the further step of creating a Vicar General. This was a policy to peg the real division of the Order to the lowest possible limit, and at the same time to disguise it by presenting it in an amiable light, as the work of the Order's responsible authority. There was one possible flaw in the programme: given the Observants' demonstration of the impracticality of submitting religious of one persuasion to Superiors of another and less austere one, was it logical to hold their autonomy short of the office of Superior General?

The Fathers of the Council of Basel concluded that it was not, and accordingly their answer to the dispute between Observants and Conventuals was, in favour of the reformers of the three French Provinces involved, to re-issue the decree of the earlier Council just as it stood, i.e. including the office of Vicar General. The same line was followed in September 1434 by Eugenius IV, in his re-creating in Castile the office of Vicar Provincial which, we saw, Martin V had extended to the Province some time before 1430; for the effect of this decision was to add a fourth, and non-French Province to the constituency of the Vicar General, whose responsibilities ceased thereby to be limited to a single nation, and could henceforth be described as "transalpine" in general.

However, although the decision of the Council, followed by
the Pope, was against the policy of the General Minister, his stand had evidently not been without some effect; for the conciliar Fathers declared their judgment to be provisional, pending further decision by either themselves or the Order itself.

What such a decision might be was revealed by the General Chapter of Toulouse, held in 1437: the decree of the Council of Constance was again set aside, as it had been at each General Chapter from 1418 onwards, but this time something not inappropriate was put in its place. It was laid down that the Observance in the Provinces of Franciae and Touraine should unite to form a single Vicariate, under a common Vicar who, as analogous to a Provincial Minister, would be subject to the General in the normal way. This arrangement involved a considerable loss of Observant independence, by comparison with what may be called the Constance dispensation. Most striking is perhaps the absence from it of the Province of Burgundy; this must be assumed to reflect the conflict in Burgundy between Observance and Coletans, and the preponderance of the latter, who, as professed adherents of the Ministers, would be bound to have the General Chapter on their side. Only less notable was the disappearance of the Vicar General, and the reduction of the number of Provincial Vicars to one. Despite this erosion of their position, the new arrangement is said to have gained the Observants' assent, and it may have been so. It was always arguable that four Superiors of the rank of Provincial or above was an unnecessarily large number for the relatively few friars who had obtained the Constance decree of 1415; a single major
Superior for the Observants of two Provinces was a more balanced provision, and it may be judged to have had the further advantage of fitting more comfortably into the general pattern of the Order's authority structure (quite apart from preserving a more extensive unity). However much more important, we may suppose, was the fact that the new arrangement, including a substantial, if not a total exemption of the Observance, was put forward by the body which for the past 19 years had shown the reform nothing but hostility, and was indeed the first sign of favour from the majority since about 1405; it was the first real concession from the Conventual side. Here, in short, in contrast to Capistrano's master-plan of 1430, was a genuine compromise between the two communities, with both making a substantial concession - a via media between the almost complete autonomy granted in 1415, and its complete abrogation. We may think that, at the eleventh hour, the plan offered some chance of preserving part at least of the Order's structural unity, and a good deal of harmony between the two factions involved; and it was a pure implementation of the policy advocated by the General Minister, probably as early as 1434 at Basel.

Events of the following year revealed that the policy would bear modification enough to admit even of an implicit Vicar General among Observants, and that it did indeed, in this form, have the backing of at least one outstanding reformed friar. In 1438 William of Casale, much occupied with the affairs of the Church, as well as those of his own Order, fell seriously ill, and found himself unable to discharge his responsibilities as General Minister of the Italian Observants (which, as by his own
policy he was bound to, he seems to have taken seriously enough). He took the only possible course of action in the circumstances, which in addition he knew would please the Pope, to whom probably it had already been suggested by John of Capistrano: he nominated two deputies to look after the affairs of all the Italian Observants, and, logically but nevertheless dramatically, he chose them from among the reformed friars themselves; his nominees were Nicholas of Osimo (author of the encyclical issued under Bernardino's name in 1440, which we earlier considered), for the reformers in the Kingdom of Naples, and Bernardino himself for the rest.

It was an unheard-of act of favour on the part of the supreme Conventual friar; and in return Bernardino steadfastly avoided any action which might cause affront to the other community, particularly in seeking any external guarantee for his position. In fact Pope Eugenius IV - prompted yet again by Capistrano - was quick to confirm Bernardino's nomination by William of Casale; this gave him a basis of authority other than that lent him by the General, and could if necessary be turned against the latter. William was hurt and indignant; Bernardino left his papal commission unused, and functioned only as the appointed delegate of his General Minister. It was a marvellous fulfilment of St. Francis' wish that subject friars seek to satisfy even the unexpressed desires of their Superiors. And it was also the classic demonstration that what has ruffled Franciscans has not been the fact of division - which in this case was constant throughout - but the mode of its creation.

Bernardino's act has been praised as calculated to preserve
the unity of the Order rather than divide it. Quite possibly it was; but it may also be viewed in a less exalted light - as a product of simple conservatism. The fact is that exercise of vicarial authority through grant of the Order's Superiors, and not through external commission, represented a return to the practice followed by Paoluccio dei Trinci and his successor John of Stroncone, the second of whom had been Guardian of the hermitage in which, from 1403, Bernardino's formation as an Observant took place. If the result was the fostering of remarkably good relations between the reformed and relaxed, that too was part of the original legacy.

Other aspects of Bernardino's behaviour belong to the same pattern. In his letter of appointment the General named him Vicarius et Commissarius; Commissarius was also the title of Paoluccio and his successor. Bernardino normally termed the friaries in his jurisdiction loca devota; this avoided the to the Conventuals offensive suffix de observantia (which the General Chapter of 1427 had sought to outlaw); but it was also the term that had been used for Paoluccio's hermitages from the 1370s onward. Finally, Bernardino was most reluctant to accept the responsibility the General intended for him; Paoluccio's reaction had been no different. Admittedly the reasons in the two cases were not the same - outright humility in Paoluccio's, unwillingness to abandon what he considered his overmastering vocation, preaching, in Bernardino's - but there is no doubt that in both cases the effect on the Conventuals was wholly favourable.

However one regards it - as the product of conservatism, or
high-minded policy, or both — the Sienese friar's attitude was not shared by all his fellow-reformers, and first in line not by his fellow-Vicar, Nicholas of Osimo. Wadding records that in 1440 the latter, who had the ear of the Pope, sought from him the complete exemption of the Observance from the Provincial Ministers, and that Eugenius complied while the General Minister was absent on business in France. On his return William of Casale was deeply displeased, and let the Observants feel the fact, Bernardino among them; the result was that the Pope reversed his decision, and probably with Bernardino's concurrence, which earned the latter a certain amount of hostility within his own party. 125

This may suggest that in Italy Bernardino's conciliatory policy was an anachronism. Elsewhere it was more like an irrelevance. Outside Italy there was no tradition of that particular style of co-operation with the majority which had characterised Paoluccio dei Trinci: the Observance had grown up in the face of more or less outright Conventual hostility, and under the supervision of Vicars appointed, not by the Order, but by outside authority. Here, therefore, there was no place for the compromise put forward by the General Chapter of 1437, and associated with the Minister General and the greatest Observant preacher. The point was conveniently illustrated in 1441, when it was at Eugenius IV's prompting that William of Casale nominated Bernard Iscorial Vicar of the Observance in Aragon, and the Pope himself appointed Sancho de Canales "Visitor and custos" of that in Castile. 126

One way of putting it would be to say that the eleventh hour
was too late to start thinking of compromise; and as it turned out this was also the case in Italy, where, in view of the peculiar tradition in which the reform had grown up, compromise had the best chance of success. The programme of William of Casale and Bernardino of Siena amounted to limiting the extent of Observant autonomy, and creating it through the Order's normal channels, rather than external ones. The success of this programme depended squarely upon the unreformed friars' refraining from all hostility towards their reformed brethren: for the natural response to obstruction would be an increase in the extent of Observant autonomy, and its confirmation by outside authority. Once again therefore - as in France during the Schism, and indeed in the Italy of Paoluccio dei Trinci - the unreformed majority held the key to the Order's fate. Their response was to throw away the possibility of retaining the two families in harmony under a single General Superior. There was almost constant friction between the reformed and unreformed friars, resulting in a whole series of mostly minor incidents of actual conflict; here was actually the cause of Nicholas of Osimo's request in 1440 for the separation of the two families; and even Bernardino - whose conciliatory attitude to the Conventuals earned him the hostility of some of his own subjects - was not spared Conventual obstruction.

Perhaps, after all, the compromise policy was simply not viable - perhaps the two sides were so strong that the best will in the world could not have prevented them colliding with one another over a hundred minor points; if so, the kindest and best, as well as the only solution was formally to separate them.
This was the solution at which Eugenius IV eventually arrived. It should however be noted that historically he came to it, not through the failure of William of Casale's compromise policy, but through the failure of that other recipe for holding the Order together, already attempted with disastrous results at the General Chapter of 1430: the reform of the entire Order. After the legalisation of Conventualism with the publication of Ad statum in 1430, one might have thought that even to contemplate the possibility was a greater anachronism than any of Bernardino of Siena's.

Yet, for a Pope who was himself a religious and a reformer, the situation was extraordinarily tempting. William of Casale, the General Minister, died in February 1442. The General Chapter was due to meet in the Province of Venice the following year, and it was customary in such circumstances for the Pope to institute a caretaker General. Eugenius was in no hurry to make up his mind on a suitable candidate - in the meantime the General's functions were filled by himself and a committee of five - and in due course his delay was providentially rewarded.

There was another important death, that of the Minister of the Venetian Province. The Provincial Chapter assembled in June to find a successor, and by 92 votes to one its choice fell upon one of the "four columns of the Observance", Albert of Sarteano.129

It was an unheard-of, indeed unique event in the history of the Order - and, we may note in passing, belied the analysis presented by the Observants to the Council of Basel: unreformed electors had given their votes to a reformer.

To Eugenius IV it pointed a straight path to the union of
the Order on the basis of reformed observance. He already knew of Albert's outstanding merits, and popularity with Observant and Conventual alike. Now he was Minister Provincial. If he should become General, the Order's supreme authority would, for the first time, be wholly committed to the cause of reform, and it would be hard for the entire Order not to fall into line. As in the plan of 1430, reform and union would be achieved together.

Accordingly in July the Pope wrote to Albert, confirming his election as Provincial. This gave him the opportunity of naming him President of the forthcoming General Chapter - for by custom, which in this instance fell out well for Eugenius, that office was, in default of the General, filled by the Minister of the Province in which the Chapter was held - which happened in 1443 to be Albert's own. And on the following day Eugenius appointed the Observant as caretaker General of the Order (Vicar General).¹³⁰

By what may be called a constitutional accident - the normal procedure for replacing a General who died in office - the Order's supreme office had for the first time, without any process of election, been bestowed upon a reformed friar. Provisional though the arrangement was, it represented the fulfilment of Eugenius' policy. Therefore in his open letter announcing Albert's appointment, he made no bones about revealing his hand: he declared that the divisions of the Order were regrettable, that it was his own firm intention to end them, and that Albert was his chosen instrument for the purpose. As though it were all a foregone conclusion - and also no doubt
so as to offer the Conventuals what concessions he might - he did not renew the office of Observant Vicar and Commissarius renounced by Bernardino in 1442, and went so far as to forbid the reform to accept any further settlements. Like his friend Capistrano in 1430, Eugenius, as he looked into the future, saw the whole Franciscan Order become Observant.

It only remained for the General Chapter to underwrite the Pope's plan, by electing Albert General Minister in the normal way. The assembly was attended by representatives of both parties, and it is clear that as a body the Observants were all set for the fulfilment of Eugenius' plan.

Not so the other side. In the opening session of the Chapter Albert of Sarteano, as President, mounted the rostrum and began to read out a message from the Pope, which may very well have expressed the wish that he be elected General. At any rate he never reached the end of it. With cries of "Liberty! Liberty!", a crowd of Conventuals surged forward, tore the missive from his hands, and dragged him bodily from the chamber; and on the floor of the hall delegates of the two factions came to blows. The situation was saved by the courage, both moral and physical, of Bernardino of Siena, and even more - we may suspect - by the accuracy with which he devised the political realities of the situation. Having managed to re-establish something approaching order, he declared that brother Albert did not desire the Order's highest office, and that in his view it was not the appropriate time for any Observant to receive it; and he then gave his own vote to the Conventual candidate, Antony Rusconi, who duly emerged as the new General; and by
this "climb-down" peace was restored. It may be that Bernardino had foreseen all along that the election of Albert of Sarteano would fail on the rock of Conventual opposition, and it is possible that his view was shared by James of the March; nevertheless there were those Observants who regarded his action at Padua as nothing short of a betrayal, and so his last year — he died in 1444 — was marred by a bitterness which, we may feel, was but ill-deserved.¹³¹

The scandalous events of the Chapter were the Conventuals' answer to Eugenius IV's plan for uniting the Order in reform. He had no alternative but to confirm the election of Rusconi; but there was no mistaking his anger over the affair, and accordingly he seems to have decided that if the Franciscans would not be united, then they should be properly divided, once and for all. It was farewell to the half measures represented by the compromise policy — which in any case, we saw, was no longer viable — of William of Casale and Bernardino of Siena.

The angry Pope was reportedly prepared to give the Observants their own Minister General, and thus effectively make them an Order in their own right; but for the Italian reformers at least this was too drastic a step.¹³¹a As on many previous occasions — for example the Councils of Vienne and Constance — the matter was handed over to a committee of ecclesiastics, who heard the views of both sides; and what came out of the discussions was a temporary arrangement, which in essence followed the format of the Constance decision of 1415. That is to say, a division of the Order was decreed which fell just short of being total.
In contrast to the piecemeal approach of earlier years, the Regular Observance, wherever found, was now apprehended as a whole. Then, for both historical and administrative reasons, it was divided into two wings or "families", the cis- and trans-alpine; and each was provided with a Vicar General, who was to exercise over it the same powers as a Minister General, without intervention from any friar other than the latter (the office was limited to three years - the temporary feature of the arrangements). This one step ensured the two Observant families' independence of the Conventuals for all practical purposes. A number of other provisions preserved some sort of link between the two factions. First was the title of Vicar, which connoted power held by delegation, not on an absolute or self-sufficient basis. Accordingly the two Superiors were officially appointed by the Minister General, even though this was a formality, since Rusconi was simply carrying out the wishes of the Pope (whose choice for the new posts were Capistrano for the cis-alpine, and John Maubert for the trans-alpine). The arrangement being temporary, it was not made clear whether the same procedure would be followed on any future occasion; but a pointer to the possible outcome was given by the regulations for the well-established office of Vicar Provincial: these Superiors were to be elected by the reformed friars, and confirmed within three days by the relevant Provincial Minister - who thereby lost any real say in the matter. The Conventual Ministers were allowed an equally formal power of confirmation in the election by the reformers of their Guardians. The Vicars, General and Provincial, were empowered to hold General and Provincial
Chapters (Congregatio was still the official term used), but here the Ministers retained some vestige of genuine authority, for the calling of such assemblies was made dependent on their permission. As a final token of unity, the Minister General in his own person was allowed a right of visitation over the reformed friars, not excluding his Vicars General (but the possibility that he might use the right as a weapon against them was excluded by the proviso that he might punish them only with the consent of the remaining Observant Superiors); and he received the title "Minister General of the whole Order" (totius Ordinis). The net effect of all these regulations, we might say, was to make the Observance an autonomous, but recognisably junior branch of what was still—just—one Franciscan Order. On the vital question of the prospects of the two branches "on the ground", so to speak, something was conceded to either: individual Conventuals were free to join the Observants, but not vice versa; on the other hand the reform was not to take over any further unreformed friaries.\(^{131b}\)

The foregoing arrangements represented no more than the first draft of a solution to the problem of Observance and Conventualism. This was so in the first place because of their temporary nature, and in the second place because executing them in practice suggested—and most effectively to the cis-alpine Vicar General Capistrano, the trained lawyer become intimate of the Pope—that in one or two ways they could be improved.\(^{132}\) Accordingly when, in January 1446, Eugenius IV came to put his settlement of the Observant problem on a permanent basis, it took the form of a refined version of the 1443 blueprint, very
much as the Constance decree of 1415 had improved upon the proposals contained in the reformers' Quaerimoniae. This meant, among other things, that Eugenius' bull followed the same general line as the conciliar decree, to which indeed it refers. According to Wadding, the document was actually drafted by John of Capistrano.133

Ut sacra is mainly concerned with the lynch-pin of Observant autonomy, the office of Vicar General. Since 1443 this had, according to the Pope, demonstrated its worth; and therefore it was made permanent. The office was to be filled, not - even formally - by the nomination of the General Minister, but by election, carried out, in the Order's normal way, at the Observants' General Chapter (Congregatio); and this was to be held regularly, and without reference to the Minister General. The technical dependence of the Vicars on their Minister was recognised by the requirement that he should confirm them in their office; but the purely formal nature of the Minister's right was ensured by the provisions that confirmation must be accorded within three days, and that if it were withheld - or if a vacancy in the Minister's office meant that it could not be forthcoming - the Vicar-elect was confirmed ipso facto, on papal authority. Two other possible dangers to the continuance of Vicarial authority were dealt with: it was laid down, as in the Constance decree, that (although in theory delegated) it was not to cease on the death of a reigning Minister; and if it was the Vicar who died in office, his functions were to be exercised, and a Chapter to find a successor was to be summoned, by the Vicar of the Province in which his death occurred. Thus guaranteed in
perpetuity, the office of Vicar General was vested with all the powers of the Minister General to rule the Observance, and all friars were forbidden any intervention in the exercise of that power.

These were the essential provisions of Ut sacra, by which the blanks in the arrangements of 1443 were filled in. The question of the Provincial Vicars had been more fully dealt with in 1443, and was in any case secondary; now it was laid down simply that their relation with the Provincial Ministers was to correspond to that of Vicar and Minister General. This meant that, beyond the purely formal confirmation in office, the Ministers had nothing more to do with their counterparts in the reform.

By these arrangements Observants and Conventuals were made wholly independent of one another for all practical purposes. There remained three slender links to hold them together in a single Order: the recognition that the General Minister was Superior "of the whole Order"; the theory, expressed in the formal right of confirmation, that the Observant Superiors were delegates of the Ministers; and the General Minister's right in his own person to visit the reformed friars. This was in logic required by his headship of the whole fraternity, but was made clear to be paternal and wholly a-political: it was to be exercised "pie, benigne et caritativo", and any resultant punishment of a Vicar General was to be not only dependent on the consent of the majority of the Vicars, but such as could be carried out on the spot. This closed the last loophole for ill-intentioned Conventual interference in Observant affairs;
and the Pope's settlement was finally tilted in the reformers' favour by the provision, familiar since Benedict XIII's intervention in 1407, that individual Conventuals might join the Observants, but not vice versa.

Thus in 1446 were the Franciscans, because of their disagreements about observance, divided into two communities, parallel to, and independent of, one another. It was an outcome which had been on the agenda, one way and another, for something like two hundred years.

There was, however, one peculiarity about the situation. Eugenius IV's settlement implied that all Franciscans might be allocated to one or other of two basic communities, the reformed and relaxed in observance. Yet as he surveyed the Order "on the ground", as it were, he saw that the facts did not correspond to this picture; for, far from constituting a single great community of the friars living in due observance of their Rule, the reform movement was fragmented by a number of separate jurisdictions. The position was perhaps most pointedly expressed in the irony that the autonomy just achieved by the Observance, after how many decades of wrangling, had in practice been enjoyed by other friars, of the same observance, for many years, without a murmur from the Conventual side - the Coletans. Their conflicts had indeed been with their fellow-reformers; and it so happened that these were particularly marked precisely in 1445 and 1446.¹³⁴

Thus the Pope was aware of the situation described earlier in the present chapter: the Franciscan reform movement was itself divided into separate units, which in some cases at least had
everything in common bar their jurisdiction.

Eugenius was not satisfied. No doubt he regarded such disunity, which could be ascribed to historical accident, as unnecessary, and a wasteful duplication of effort. For him one great division of the Order, sorting out the reformed and unreformed, was what the situation warranted, and should be enough.

For him the embodiment of reform was the Regular Observance, and accordingly his way of dealing with the situation was to command all reformed friaries to join the Observance, accepting the authority of its Superiors, the Vicars. The command was contained in the bull Vacantibus, issued in December 1446, and the Pope intended it to be universal and comprehensive: it embraced "omnia et singula domos, conventus et eremitoria et alia loca, quocumque nomine senseantur ... a quovis illa quacumque auctoritate reformata, constructa seu fundata sint et ubicumque consistant ac quaecumque, quotcumque et qualiacumque sint ...". Notwithstanding, the Pope was disobeyed. The fact of disobedience in the territory of the transalpine Vicar General was known to him by February, and on the 9th of the month he applied his failing powers to reinculcating his command on the northern friars. It was his last edict for the Order.

Its message went unheeded. In the course of 1447 the new Pope, Nicholas V, freed a number of reformed friars from the yoke of the Vicars; and among these were the residents of two Castilian hermitages with a constitution and tradition all their own, La Aguilera and El Abrojo. The exemption from the Vicars of the original home of the Recollectio Villacreciana
marks the failure of Eugenius IV's attempt to hold the whole Franciscan reform movement together, and at the same time explains that failure. The Pope had misread the situation: he supposed that all reformers could be reduced to a common observance, whereas we know that they were as deeply divided on the question as any part of the reform was from the unreformed Conventuals. In returning the Villacrecian hermitages to the obedience they had always professed, that of the Ministers, Pope Nicholas V implicitly recognised that one division of the Franciscans was not enough: there could be no peace in the Order until approval was given, not only to the relaxed and the moderate, but also to the strict standpoint, the one which had been with it since the beginning, and was in one sense the most authentic of all - that of the literal observance. This truth achieved public recognition in the 16th century.
The events of 1446 and 1447, although they traced the outline of a solution, did not resolve the question of the relations between the rival factions within the Franciscan Order. For another 70 years the dissensions between them continued to cast their shadow on the Order's public reputation and its practical effectiveness, and to demand the time and attention—as well no doubt as exercise the patience—of the leaders of the Church. The stance of the several parties remained essentially as it had been before: the Conventuals, so long as they remained an effective force, sought the suppression of the autonomy of the Observance, while continuing to favour—and to allow a great measure of autonomy to—reformed groups which refused to accept the jurisdiction of the Observant Vicars; and the Observants, while defending their independence of the Conventuals, sought to absorb all reformed groups and hence to subject them to their own level of observance, irrespective of whether they wished to adhere to that level or to one more austere.

The details of this three-cornered dispute need not concern us. It is enough to say that the position was constantly changing, with the aspirations of each faction alternately recognised and refused.¹

Of more interest is to pick out certain constant tendencies underlying the shifting surface of events. First was a gradual
decline in the number and influence of the Conventuals. It is true that initially the tide seemed rather to be flowing the other way: in the 1450s there was, at least in Italy, something of a Conventual renaissance, associated particularly with one more renowned Franciscan preacher, Robert of Lecce (a "convert" from the Observants to their rivals). But it was no more than a flash in the pan, and in the last decades of the 15th century and the first of the 16th the standing of the Conventuals dwindled inexorably; by 1517 they were little more than a rump.

This development, looked at as it were from the other end, represented the gaining ground of the principle of reform. In fact, to put the point in the most positive way, it should be acknowledged that many Conventuals made the effort which earlier in the century had seemed beyond them, and accepted the more austere life associated with the Observance; thereby they earned the name of Conventuales reformati. The remainder of their group were (not very flatteringly) entitled Conventuales deformati; the essence of their position was — as it had been since the publication of Ad statum in 1430 — inability to live without dispensation from the Rule's precepts concerning poverty.

The counterpart to the dwindling of the genuine (i.e. "deformed") Conventuals was the increase of the moderate reform, which — as was perhaps to be expected from the Order's middle party on observance — had by 1517 established itself as the great central majority of the Order. The increase was reaped by the Regular Observance families under their Vicars, but not, it must be noted, by any means exclusively; there was an almost
commensurate growth of those groups which, while following the moderate position on observance, rejected the Vicars in favour of the Ministers. The most important of these groups was the descendant of the Coletan congregation in France, and by the end of the century it was quite as powerful as the French Observance; a situation which gave rise to peculiarly acrimonious disputes between the rival proponents of the same moderate Franciscan reform.

The growth of the Regular Observance, although not without its counterpart in other moderate movements, meant that the Observance established itself ever more firmly in the Order's middle ground. There was one crucial corollary: it was increasingly unable to cater for the aspirations of the friars on the opposite wing to the Conventuals - those namely who desired to follow the strictest style of Franciscan living, that of the literal observance. It can hardly be doubted that this fact underlay, and largely accounts for, perhaps the most interesting of the trends in the Order's life in the late 15th and early 16th centuries: the appearance of a succession of comparatively small groups embodying a life-style substantially different from that of the Observance and its counterparts under the Ministers, and distinguished above all by greater austerity and a strong eremitical element. Such were the movements led by the Portuguese nobleman Amadeo Menez de Sylva, by John de la Puebla and his successor John of Guadalupe in Spain, and by the Italians Antony of Castelgiovanni and Matthias of Tivoli. Their characteristic features included observance of the Rule to the letter, without the papal declarations; a rigorous emphasis
upon poverty, manifested outwardly in clothing (prohibition of footwear, adoption of a poorer habit than worn by the moderates); and in general, pronounced asceticism, coupled with emphasis on the contemplative life. Their common policy was expressed most concisely by John of Guadalupe: to surpass merely "strict" observance, and attain observantia strictissima. Bearing in mind the geographical location of these movements, we shall surely not be wrong to view them as, in the one case, later manifestations of that Iberian movement of literal observance clearly seen in the Recollectio Villacreciana and the movement of Philip Berbegall, and, in the other, a re-surfacing of the original austere reform led by Paoluccio dei Trinci, and subsequently driven underground by the very success of the "four columns of the Observance".

The foregoing developments represented simply the further evolution of those tendencies in the Order which had caused the events of 1446 and 1447, and therefore set the stage for that permanent solution of the problem of Franciscan divisions which had eluded Eugenius IV. That solution, as we discovered at the outset, can be seen in certain events of the years 1517 and 1528, which were the mirror of those of 1446 and 1447.

Pope Leo X's decisive intervention in Franciscan affairs in 1517 began with one last, formal attempt to hold the Order together: the ("deformed") Conventuals were asked if they would adopt the Order's now traditional compromise level of observance, that defined by the papal declarations and adhered to by the Regular Observance. After mature deliberation they refused, declaring that they could live with quiet consciences according
to the papal dispensations from the Rule's precepts on poverty. They thus intimated, for the last time, that the Order must make room within itself for at least two different levels of observance, one easier than the other. So it was made clear that no basis for union with the reform existed, and a formal division of the fraternity ensued. It was effected with two bulls, *Ite vos* (29 May) and *Omnipotens Deus* (12 June). The pattern followed was in essence that of *Ut sacra* in 1446, but with the respective positions of reform and Conventuals reversed.

The first step was to end the divisions which had fragmented the effort of Franciscan reform and created as grave dissensions within it as between it and the unreformed Conventuals. Accordingly all reformed congregations, of whatever size, origin and individual observances, were ordered to unite into a single body, renouncing any distinctive titles or peculiarities in dress; and the creation of any future separate reformed family was prohibited.

The reformed union (as it may be called) which resulted was established on the Order's traditional moderate observance, holding the middle ground between two extremes; numerically (in view of the decline of the Conventuals) it represented the main part of the Order; and the Pope and his advisers were satisfied that it was also the main member of the Franciscan family in its conception of the friar's vocation. This situation could point to only one conclusion, which duly now received canonical expression: the reformed union was declared to be henceforth the Order of Friars Minor. Here was, in historical perspective, a fundamental shift, and clarification,
of vision; for it embodied the realisation that the great central trunk of the Order was represented by the middle position on observance, lying between the strict and the relaxed; and this no longer constituted a distinct part of a larger whole, the Regular Observance, but rather the essential body of Franciscans living in regular observance, i.e. in conformity with their Rule and statutes: in other words the Order of Friars Minor tout court. It followed automatically that the Minister General, whom all Franciscans according to the Rule must obey, must be drawn from the reformed union, likewise the Provincials and all his other subordinate officials; such a body was not ruled by mere Vicars.

It remained to regularise the relations of the central Franciscan Order with the Conventuals – that smaller member of the Franciscan family which stood at one of the extremes on observance, defined by the enjoyment of dispensations from the Rule's precepts concerning poverty. The formal separation of the two bodies was taken one important step further than by Eugenius IV in 1446: the Conventuals were now declared to constitute a distinct Order of Franciscans. In other respects the model of Ut sacra was closely followed (with the roles reversed). The smaller family received its own hierarchy of authority, from an elected General Superior downwards. (The Superiors, no doubt in order to avoid the term which had been at the centre of so much controversy, were to be called, not Vicars, but Magistri; and thus the office which had been created by Benedict XIII in 1407 was eliminated from both the smaller and the larger Franciscan Order). The government of the Magistri,
since exercised over a distinct Order, was not to be interfered with by the Ministri. On the other hand both bodies were Orders of Franciscans; therefore three links between them were retained to demonstrate their ultimate unity, and at the same time to make clear the precedence of the larger one: it pertained to the General and Provincial Ministri to confirm the elections of General and Provincial Magistri; the General Minister received Eugenius IV's title "Minister of the whole Order", and accordingly he was permitted to pay a "paternal visit" to Conventual friars, "if he should chance to be in the vicinity of one of their houses". A possibly more significant sign of precedence was the familiar provision - originally, like the Vicars, the creation of Benedict XIII - that individual Conventuals might transfer to the stricter family at will, without securing the permission of their lawful Superiors. On the other hand the newly created Order of Conventuals was, naturally, intended to be permanent: it was guaranteed possession of all the friaries it held in 1517, including the Sacro Convento, "caput et mater totius Ordinis" - the phrase being in some degree the counterpart and counterbalance to the title Minister Generalis totius Ordinis. By this provision the prospect of a reform of the whole Order on the basis of moderate observance was ruled out for all time.

Leo X's proved the definitive solution to the problem of the tension between moderate and relaxed observance which had in one way or another characterised the Franciscan Order since the early 13th century; it remains in force to this day. We may therefore reasonably say that the "judgment of history" supports
the Pope's handling of the problem, which followed, but also refined, the example of Eugenius IV. Like his predecessor — and indeed like Benedict XIII and the Fathers of the Council of Constance — Leo X had concluded that only the division of the Franciscan community into two essentially independent families, with each its own level of observance, could put an end to the strife which differences over observance fomented. We may say that two premisses underlay the conclusion: that the existence of moderate and relaxed viewpoints within the Order was ineradicable; and that their respective advocates would never be able, in the long run, to live together in harmony. Nearly three centuries of Franciscan history, it can be agreed, supported both assumptions. And if the Order was to be divided, it was logical that the reformed branch should be senior to the unreformed, not vice versa, as under the dispensation of Benedict XIII and Eugenius IV. Thus the verdict of historians confirms the verdict of history: Leo X's handling of the problem was the right one. To those who — on many and good grounds — regret the division of the sons of St. Francis into two separate bodies, we may recall an earlier judgment on the partial division of the Order decreed by the Council of Constance: in absolute terms it may not have been desirable; nevertheless in the circumstances it was both necessary and just.

What, then, of a further division of the Order, splitting it finally into three separate bodies? That came about because of the incompleteness of Leo X's settlement of 1517. This represented, it has been granted, the definitive — because right — answer to the tension between moderate and relaxed Franciscan
observance. Its weakness lay in its failure to recognise the existence—if one prefers, the problem—of the third characteristic Franciscan viewpoint, that of the literal observance—an extreme like the Conventual viewpoint, but to the other side of the middle or moderate position. Leo X's failure at this point is in a sense the more surprising because the underlying premises were exactly the same as in the previous case. That is to say, the existence of a Franciscan strict party was as ineradicable as that of a moderate one, and their respective members were unable in the long run to live together in harmony.

There will be no difficulty in accepting both these premises. In fact, the second (and in a sense decisive) one was, by a strange chance, confirmed at the very period with which we are concerned, in the history of the Houses of Recollection.6 These represented an experiment, which began in Portugal in 1486, lapsed, and was re-started for the whole of Spain in 1502, to find room for the strict viewpoint (which at the time, as we saw, was producing a number of new movements) within the moderate party, the Regular Observance, rather than outside it. The characteristics of the Houses of Recollection were strict poverty and asceticism, and the life of prayer—exactly those of the groups led by Amadeo de Sylva, John of Guadalupe and the rest; yet these were settlements of Observant friars, under the jurisdiction of the normal Observant Superiors, the Vicars. In short, it was the accommodation of observantia strictissima within Observantia Regularis. The arrangement survived the changes of 1517, and went on to prosper: the Spanish houses
received statutes of their own in 1523 from the "Minister General of the whole Order" himself; and in 1526 he extended them to the comparable houses which had appeared in Italy. For a moment it looked as though two levels of observance were going to exist side by side within a single Franciscan family; mutatis mutandis, the same situation as obtained in the early days of the French Observance, and in the history of the Italian reform from 1368 until the 1420s. And as in those cases, the situation did not last: a new Minister General reversed the policy of his predecessor, and drove the adherents of observantia strictissima into the new Franciscan family, founded in 1528, which embodied that level of observance, and which, unlike all previous embodiments of the strict Franciscan viewpoint, was destined to last: the Capuchins, the third Franciscan family which exists to this day.

The family has no doubt changed with the years; but, whatever the position now, it was when founded the legitimate heir of all its predecessors in the strictest style of Franciscan living. Its goal was the literal observance of the Rule - expressed with unrivalled clarity in a papal bull of 1534:

"... regulam Beati Patris vestri Francisci ad unguem, iuxta eius litteralem sensum et non declarationes super illam per Romanos Pontifices editas observare."7 This observance was complemented by adherence to the Testament and other writings of St. Francis.8 The congregation had at first a marked eremitical cast, and indeed went by the name Fratres Minores de vita eremitica; accordingly it was laid down that its settlements should be of extreme poverty, outwith centres of
population, and for a maximum of 12 brothers. Abstinence was emphasised: meat, eggs and cheese were not to be sought as alms, but accepted only if spontaneously offered; and food was to be gathered from one day to the next. Other needs might be catered for one week in advance at most. With all this, there went the primeval symbol of Franciscan zealotry: the distinctive habit. Such details establish the kinship of the Capuchins with all the adherents of Franciscan literal observance back to the 13th century; we may therefore feel it particularly appropriate that they were partly inspired by writings which, multiplied by the copyists of the 14th century, were quintessentially characteristic of the Order's strict viewpoint: Angelus Clarinus' *History of the seven Tribulations*, tracts of Ubertino of Casale and Petrus Iohannis Olivi, and the historical records of the "three companions", particularly the chosen companion Leo.

The Capuchin programme of literal observance can thus be said, with all precision, to reach back to the lifetime of St. Francis, and to have embodied the aspiration of generations of friars. The creation of the Capuchin Order, as the third independent family of Franciscans, meant that that austere aspiration had, after more than three centuries, at last achieved permanent recognition of its intrinsic worth, and the prize of existence in its own right. We may well feel that this development was no less justified than the division of 1517, and that it had come all too late.
From the viewpoint adopted in the present study, the history of the Regular Observance was important for a single reason: it brought the logical culmination of the issue which deeply marked, if not dominated, the whole of medieval Franciscan history - the joint issue of reform and division in the Order.

For as we have seen, the story of the Observance ended with a double division of the Franciscan family: the movement was separated from the Conventuals, and was unable to prevent the further separation from itself of the Capuchins.

It may therefore be said that the mainspring and context of Observant history was the existence among Franciscans of dissensions over observance. Accordingly it seems desirable, in concluding this study, to reflect on the phenomenon of those dissensions, which affected the Order continuously for over three hundred years; and first we may call to mind how in essence they arose.

In the simplest terms, the problem was that legitimate differences of view were possible on the question of the form which should be taken by the Order of St. Francis. Very early on - perhaps even during the last years of the founder himself - three different standpoints on the question began to be discernible, and, despite minor variations, these remained essentially unchanged for the rest of the Middle Ages; they are commonly named strict, moderate and relaxed.¹

This characterisation of the viewpoints at hand enables us
to define the role of the Regular Observance in the controversies over observance in which it was directly involved, and also to relate it to earlier controversies. We may say that the Observance gained its independence of the Conventuals with comparative readiness because it represented the moderate standpoint, and they the relaxed. Equally the Observance was unable to prevent the Capuchins gaining independence of itself because, whereas it took the moderate position, they represented the strict. Again, although Paoluccio dei Trinci has been called "the father of the Regular Observance", he did not share its characteristic standpoint, for he also represented the strict position. The same point invalidates the most commonly assumed parallel to the Observance, that of the Spirituals: despite the similarity of their situations in the matter of conflict and oppression, the Observance was the heir, as regards observance itself, not of the Spirituals, but of the moderate wing of the 13th century Community; a corollary of which, we may note, is that the Conventual opponents of the Observance were not the counterpart to the Community moderates, but to its lax wing.

All these points, which are often misunderstood, are fundamental for a true appreciation of the nature and achievement of the Regular Observance, and a sound judgment on its role in the controversial matter of the Order's division. In particular those who deplore the exemption of the Observance from the Conventuals should realise that in effect they are supporting the subjection of the moderate position - that of St. Bonaventure, Nicholas III, Clement V - to the relaxed; and
likewise, those who say that the foundation of the Capuchins was "unnecessary" should be aware that they are thereby refusing recognition and the right of independent existence to the strict standpoint, the policy of whose adherents was simply to live like their founder.

Having clarified these fundamental points about the historical role of the Observance, we may return to the fount and origin of the whole story: the continuous existence among Franciscans of three broadly identifiable standpoints on the question of observance. How should this be interpreted?

There is no doubt that in part it was but the reflection of a near universal feature of the life of the medieval Orders (perhaps of the Christian life of all ages): the alternation of phases of decline and renewal. This pattern has been identified by the foremost modern English authority on the regulars in the "ever-recurring rhythm by which new life appears where decay seemed final, as inevitably, though not (to our sight) as regularly, as the new bud is on the tree when the leaf falls in November"; whence, "since not only individuals, but corporations, classes and even nations and civilizations can and do (within certain limits) wax and wane in moral and spiritual force, the great religious bodies, in general and in particular, pass through accesses and declines of fervour."^{3} In the particular case before us, the pattern is seen most clearly in the growth of 14th century Conventualism, representative of the Order's relaxed standpoint, succeeded by the efflorescence of reform movements in Italy, France and Spain, following some the moderate, others the strict line on observance.
This is not, however, the whole story. It will not be doubted that the existence of the three characteristic views among Franciscans was partly due to the nature of their founder's ideal. The point can be expressed in two rather different ways; either we can say that the inspiration of St. Francis was so rich, so fertile, that there were several different and legitimate ways in which it could find institutional embodiment (which also means that no one group of men could realise its full potential); or else we may say that his ideal was so elevated that very few could live it just as it was given, with the result that it had to be modified to be rendered acceptable to the average mass of men. The two interpretations are different ways of recognising the same thing: the unique originality and depth of what St. Francis had to teach.

There was one further vital factor connected with the message of Francis: what in this study has been called its unsatisfactory transmission. The essential problem was what weight to give to other and better guides to the mind of Francis than the sole accredited one, the *Regula Bullata* - especially the whole corpus of the saint's writings, and the yet greater body of first or second-hand biographical narrative. The problem was tragically intensified by the fact that Francis' Testament, which could be taken in a spiritual sense as the most authoritative of all his works, and the distorted part of the biographical material, expressed an inflexible opposition to precisely that modification of the pristine ideal which was the basis of the Order's moderate and relaxed positions; and it was this, perhaps more than anything else, that produced the Spirituals' intransigent
adherence to the strict standpoint, and so brought about the calamity which befell them. Apart from this, we have observed that throughout the medieval period the advocates of the strict viewpoint were foremost in making use of what may be called the alternative sources to the mind of St. Francis; indeed, every single movement which, from the 13th to the 16th century, took the strict position, did so in direct response to the witness of Francis' own writings and of his closest companions, whether the latter was conveyed by personal contacts or by the written word. It is this union between knowledge of the alternative sources and the espousing of the strict standpoint which makes the manuscript history of those sources a fundamental element in the history of Franciscan reform and division, and their diffusion by the 14th century Conventuals one of the most critical events in the entire story. It can fairly be said that without the toil of the copyists there would have been no proponents of the strict view from the 15th century onwards, other than followers of Paoluccio dei Trinci (whose ultimate link with Francis and the companions was through Angelus Clarinus). Nor would there have been a question franciscaine. It may also be noted that the problem of the relation of the "unofficial" Franciscan sources to the canonical basis of Franciscan life is with us to this day. The official Rule of the Anglican Franciscan family is not the Regula Bullata, but the long and diffuse earlier version of that document, the Regula Prima, greatly superior as a guide to the mind of the saint. And when the Franciscan General Chapter of 1967, in the wake of the Vatican Council, drew up new General Constitutions for the Order, it stressed that the juridical text
should be placed in the context of spiritual ones; first in line are the writings of St. Francis, of which a new critical edition is accordingly in course of preparation.\(^5\)

If the foregoing points help to account for the existence among medieval Franciscans of three characteristic views on observance, can any comments be made on the positions themselves?

The strict standpoint was defined by the slogan of literal observance. The more complex aspiration this expressed was the desire to relive as closely as might be the ideal and life of the founder and his companions; and, as we have just seen, it was united with — indeed based on — knowledge of the "alternative sources" about St. Francis. The validity of the underlying aspiration cannot be doubted; and its canonical expression, the literal observance of the Rule, had the further merit of simplicity: it gave a clear line to follow. Nor, although arduous, was the line actually impossible, despite what has sometimes been said: the proof is that at different times and places during the Middle Ages the literal observance was put into practice — by groups of Spirituals, certain Fraticelli, the community of Paoluccio dei Trinci, the Recollectio Villacreciana, the small strict congregations of the late 15th century. On the other hand it must be granted that the literal observance was not achieved by most Franciscans for most of the Middle Ages, and it could not have supported many of the Order's outstanding contributions to the life of the medieval Church, especially its theology and philosophy, and its parish apostolate. For these reasons it could never be taken to represent the central branch
of the Order.

For certain periods — and they were those of the greatest Franciscan contribution, roughly the middle quarters of the 13th century, and from about 1450 onwards — this central position was held by the moderate standpoint, of which the canonical expression were the papal declarations and the resulting constitutions. Its achievements need no elaboration. On the question of observance as such, we have noted that, provided it was implemented in the spirit and to the letter, this standpoint did preserve the essentials of St. Francis' attitude to poverty. On the other hand it did so at a cost: it involved long and complex regulations, which might well prove hard to follow, and it was based on at least one highly suspect premiss, that rights of ownership might be completely severed from the use of material goods. Further, if it did not break the Rule, it certainly "bent" it, and so could easily lead Franciscans into the deceit of claiming an absolute poverty which by all common sense standards they had abandoned. Finally, it can be argued (as was done by A. G. Little) that the material resources it permitted the Franciscans were inadequate for the activities which they undertook, to the overall detriment of the latter.

The correctness of Little's judgment is in a sense demonstrated by the existence of the party of the relaxed standpoint, characterised by inability to fulfil the Rule as interpreted by the papal declarations. For the middle section of the medieval Franciscan period — from say 1315 till 1450 — its view, embodied in Conventualism, was the dominant one in the Order. Since it has generally had a very bad press, it should
be recalled that, as formulated by Geraldus Odonis, it had the virtues of both honesty and simplicity: since the Order in practice was not able to observe the declarations, it should admit as much, and recognise the fact by taking the Rule as its only guide, along with Superiors' power to dispense from its prescriptions on poverty as they judged fit. This approach—which would have brought the Franciscan stand on poverty into line with that of other Orders—promised that secure material foundation for a properly developed apostolate which the papal declarations did not provide; and with the publication of Ad statum in 1430 it received the seal of official approval. On the other hand, its implementation in practice up till that date had been illegal—contrary to the officially recognised declarations—and at all times it involved breaking the Order's Rule (which the declarations, we suggested, merely "bent"); the second point raised the question of what remained in it that was distinctively Franciscan.

Here, then, were the three characteristic Franciscan standpoints over observance. In the writer's view they could all be regarded as legitimate expressions of the initial message of St. Francis, possessing both advantages and disadvantages. And irrespective of that value judgment, the Order's medieval history shows that all were ineradicable. It was in fact their existence which gave rise to the second issue with which this study is concerned, the division of the Order. Can we reach any final comments on this topic?

The writer would propose an at first sight perhaps surprising judgment: that as soon as the desirability—and even,
disregarding the value judgment, ineradicability - of the three standpoints is accepted, two divisions of the Order become desirable and necessary. To put the matter the other way, a united Order could only be achieved by the suppression of the (legitimate) differences over observance among the brothers.

This is not the accepted view, but it can be established even by a priori reasoning. Different views on observance mean different and mutually incompatible religious practices. It is inconceivable that a single friary could support incompatible observances; therefore there must be at least that element of division which in this study has been called "separation of dwelling". And granted the existence of separate categories of friary, following different observances, would it be logical for all to be subject to Provincial Superiors of one type - for how could a Provincial holding one view deal fairly and competently with subjects of two other views? The sensible arrangement would be for each category of friar to be ruled, at least up to a certain point, by Superiors of its own persuasion. The only debatable matter would seem to be the point at which the arrangement should cease.

The conclusion of logic can be confirmed empirically - by reference to events described in the preceding pages. First, there were two important occasions when a serious attempt was made to unite all three Franciscan factions, by holding them to a single, compromise level of observance (that, naturally, of the moderate or middle standpoint): in 1312, when Clement V commanded the whole Order to observe Exivi de paradiso; and in 1430, when (so it seemed) the whole Order undertook to observe
the Martinian Constitutions. The weakness of both attempted settlements was, precisely, that they proposed a single standard of observance for all the friars, thereby eliminating both extreme positions, the strict and the relaxed. Naturally, therefore, they failed in the same way: through rejection by both extreme factions.

There is a second and more striking empirical proof that the unity of the Order was not compatible with the simultaneous existence within it of different observances. This is that on those occasions when such a situation is said to have existed, it actually did not exist; in other words, the unity predicated of those occasions was fiction, not reality.

What were the occasions? They were those when a nascent reform movement is supposed to have been "a normal part of the Order, and wholly under the jurisdiction of the normal Superiors". In this category we may place the Italian "Observance" under Paoluccio dei Trinci and John of Stroncone; Mirebeau during the Provincialate of John Philippi; the Recollectio Villacreciana; and the Coletans, Martiniani, and Houses of Recollection. All these constituted, at the very least, distinct groups of reformed friars, with their own strict observance and settlements, and set apart from the unreformed Conventual majority: in other words the minimal condition of their existence was indeed "separation of dwelling" (and thus we see the junction of the a priori and empirical approaches). And further, this was only the beginning; the tendency was always towards a progressively larger area of autonomy. Thus Paoluccio dei Trinci and John of Stroncone, as
Commissars of the General and Provincials, exercised an extensive independent authority over their reformed family; and Henry de Baume was likewise made Commissar of the General over the Coletan family, with "plenitude of power". Here was independent government of reform movements no less, or scarcely less, than that exercised by the Vicars over the Observance, and it is accordingly quite misleading to say that in the former cases the Order remained united, whereas in the latter it was divided. The truth would seem to be that no reformed group has existed "within the Order" without some measure of division of brother from brother; and dissension has arisen, not over the fact of division itself, but over the way in which it has been achieved: by willing grant of the Order's own Superiors; or by imposition from outside, against their will.

With this observation we reach in a sense the controversial heart of the story of Franciscan reform and divisions. The writer has suggested that a double division of the Order was both necessary and desirable, and that a factual division has been present wherever an identifiable reformed group can be said to have existed. This being so, two aspects of the events we have studied cannot fail to strike us: the strength of the animosities generated by the demand for formal, external separation of the parties; and the extraordinary length of time it took for the demand to be met. It is already clear that, in the writer's view, the strict Franciscan standpoint was meritorious, and so entitled to exist; in one sense the chief theme of the present study has been how its right to exist came eventually to be recognised; as we have discovered, the process
took something like 300 years.

It is true that some of the responsibility for this unconscionably long delay lies with the Spirituals and their lay followers, whose ultimate rebellion and heresy most gravely compromised the strict ideal for which they stood. But the origin of the Spirituals' error, it was suggested, lay with those Superiors who refused to recognise the validity of their position, and instead persecuted them; and it is the writer's view that in general the Order's Superiors bear a very grave responsibility both for the length of time it took for the Order to be finally divided, and for the strife which surrounded the process. Throughout the Superiors' characteristic error remained the same as it had been in the 13th century: refusal to recognise the validity of a standpoint stricter than their own, and oppression of those who advanced it. Here was the source of the bitterness surrounding the infant French Observance and the growing European movement of c. 1420 - 1450, and of the exemptions accordingly granted by Benedict XIII, the Council of Constance and Eugenius IV; and in their turn the Observant Superiors behaved in precisely similar fashion towards exponents of the strict standpoint, thereby postponing - and making necessary - the definitive recognition of that position, with the foundation of the Capuchin Order. The relevant Superiors' error is underlined by a comparison with the sadly fewer instances in which, without the spur of a competing reform, Superiors showed themselves what they should have been, the defenders of an ideal stricter than their own - the foundation of the congregation of Paoluccio dei Trinci, and the
reform of Mirebeau: two cases in which reform began almost without strife, so that contemporaries (followed by historians) were not even aware that a practical division of the Order was actually taking place. And in 300 years it seems that only a single friar in authority ever had the vision of a family of Minors in which, appropriately separated, three levels of observance might co-exist in peace: the usually derided Geraldus Odonis. 6

It was then not for nothing that, in his discussion, in the 10th chapter of the Rule and elsewhere, of the individual friar's right to reject an observance he held inimical to his soul or the Rule, St. Francis had stressed the heavy responsibility falling on Superiors; and it is hard to avoid the judgment that in the sequel all too few were equal to what he required of them. We must allow that their shortcoming is mitigated by the metaphysical and, to modern eyes, grossly exaggerated importance medieval thinkers generally attached to the principle of structural unity: it may be said that, for them, it was a principle on which the universe and the continuance of life in any form depended. 7 Thus there was perhaps some significance in the fact that the first definitive division of the Order came in the year in which 95 theses on the door of Wittenberg church heralded the break-up of medieval Christendom.

The unsuccessful attempt to preserve the formal unity of the Franciscan family was, in the writer's view, none the less misconceived. There is, in fact, only one judgment which may be thought seriously to challenge this assessment: that of St.
Francis himself. For, as we saw, the saint declared unequivocally that the persecution of one friar by another was not to lead to secession: death itself was preferable to division.  

This seems to call for two comments. First, leaving St. Francis' view on one side, it must be said that unity, which in Franciscan and other matters is often taken as the ultimate criterion, is in itself quite meaningless: for the only sense of unity is as the outward expression of an inner unanimity. Hence where unanimity is absent, to create a forced appearance of unity is at least dishonest, and almost of necessity tyrannical. Such would be the situation where friars who conscientiously disagreed about observance were nevertheless compelled to join in a single organisation.

And secondly, it may be that this view is not after all incompatible with the seemingly contradictory one of St. Francis. The solution is to remember that, as always - and has not the essentially spiritual nature of his message been stressed throughout this study? - the saint was speaking primarily on the spiritual, not the organisational plane. Thus the unity between brother and brother which he wished to preserve at all costs was not so much unity of formal structure, but rather the union of respect, tolerance, in short of Christian love. Although Francis did not see, or at least did not say it, this is by no means the same as unity of organisation; it is in fact quite compatible with division at the level of organisation; it may even be better served by division at this level than by a factitious and enforced
appearance of unity. Concretely, there may be a greater chance of true Christian charity between, say, Capuchin and Conventual when each has his separate observances and organisation than when they are compelled to share identical ones. If this interpretation be right, we have yet one more instance of the profound spirituality of St. Francis' message, and the difficulty this itself created for those who, so to speak, had to make an institution out of it: by taking it at the institutional instead of the spiritual level they made it say the opposite of what it originally meant. The conclusion of the whole matter— that union of hearts may best be won by separation of structures—is of wider application than to the affairs of one religious Order.
AF  | Analecta Franciscana, 10 vols., Quaracchi, 1885-1926.
AFH | Archivum Franciscanum Historicum.
AIA | Archivo Ibero-Americano.
AM  | L. Wadding, Annales Minorum. Page references are to the second edition, Rome, 1731ff, since its pagination is also given in the margin of the third edition, Quaracchi, 1931ff. References normally give first the year, then volume and page number in brackets.
1 Celano | Thomas of Celano, Vita Prima S. Francisci, AF X 3-115; etc.
2 Celano | Thomas of Celano, Vita Secunda S. Francisci, AF X 129-260.
CF  | Collectanea Franciscana.
DHGS | Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie Éclesiastiques.
DTC | Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique.
EF  | Etudes Franciscaines.
<table>
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<th>Flowers</th>
<th>The main body of stories in Brooke, <em>Scripta</em>, i.e. the reconstruction of the material put together by the &quot;three companions&quot; in 1244-6. References are to the chapter numbers given by Brooke.</th>
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<td>FS</td>
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1. Above 348, cf. 395; further details in ALKG IV 160-1.
3. Benedictinae c. 10.
4. Above 150-3; cf. 256, 266ff.
5. Above 456.
10. BF I 67-70.
12. Above 54-5.
16. AFH 32 (1939), 409 (Decalogus IV, 65).
18. Benedictinae c. 5.
21. Benedictinae c. 5.
23. Ib. VII, 40 and refs.
27. Above 295ff.
32. ALKG III 29; above 263.
33. Above 280-95.
34. AM 1328, 31 (VII, 90-1).
36. Cf. above 135-6, for its significance for the Spirituals.
37. Above 29-32.
38. Above 54-6.
40. Above 14-6.
42. C. 7: Ib. 26.
43. Above 14-5.
44. Flowers 14-17: Brooke, Scripta, 112-7.
45. Above 156.
46. Ib. and 142-3, 154.
NOTES: PART II CHAPTER III.


51. Ib. 31; above 387.

52. Above 379-84.


54. P. Tocco, Studi Francescani (Naples 1909), 308.

55. BP V 486.

56. Ib. 490-1.

57. Above 387-8.

58. Our source for this repetition is Benedict XII's reply to it: BF VI 76-7.

59. Ib. 76: "...venerabilis frater noster Paulus episcopus Pulginatensis nobis regias presentavit litteras...per quas...eodem episcopo super exponendis nobis...fidei peritii credulam...adhiberi. Quos...recepimus, et quae...fidei episcopus explicare voluit, pleno collegium intellectu."

60. Cf. Brengio, Osservanza, 32-3.

61. Above 388.


63. The most important are:

i). The life of Paoluccio in La Franceschina of Giacomo Oddi of Perugia (late 15th century). This was published in MF VI (1896), 100-3; the whole of La Franceschina was published subsequently: N. Cavanna, La Franceschina, 2 vols., (Florence 1931). We shall use the earlier publication. (Oddi, P. T., MF).


iv). Mariano of Florence, Compendium Chronicarum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum (early 16th century): APH 1 - 4 (1908-11); and separately, Quaracchi, 1911. (Mariano, Comp. Chron.).


vii). Wadding, Annales Minorum (1st. ed. 1625-54), VII-IX.

64. Viz. Oddi, P. T., MF VI 100; B. Aquilani Chronic, 9 etc.

65. For this and what follows: Brengio, Osservanza, 62-7.

66. Above 545.

67. AM 1323, 22 (VII, 9).

68. Brengio, Osservanza, 38-40; Jacobilli, Vita, 371; AM 1334, 24 (VII, 163), 1351, 40(VIII, 87).


70. Jacobilli, Vita, 22-4; Oddi, P. T., MF VI 101; Mariano, P. T., MF VI 104-5; AM 1323, 22 (VII, 9).
74. Above 195-6.
76. *AF* III 547 (Arnaldus of Sarnano’s *Chronicle of the 24 Generals*).
77. *AM* 1334, 24 (VII, 168).
79. *AM* 1334, 24 (VII, 168); "Consiliarios et amicos habit...iannes de Vallibus/ fratrem Angelum Clarinum in ultima senecta..."
81. Above 355-6.
82. Above 356.
84. B. Aquilani *Chronica*, 6.
85. Above 367-70.
86. Above 367-71.
88. Above 545.
89. Above 351.
91. Id. 50, 45 n. 1; Jacobilli, *Vita*, 272.
92. *AM* 1358, 12 (VIII, 210); Mariano, P. T., *MF* VI 106.
95. Above 13-29.
96. Above 142-3, 156, 161-2.
97. Above 156.
98. Above 542.
99. Above 546.
100. Above 155-7.
102. Above 47-8.
104. Above 297-8.
105. O. Hüttebräunker, *Der Minoritenorden zur Zeit des groszen Schismas* (Berlin 1893), 58.
107. Id. 45.
108. Above 298-300.
110. Above 513.
113. Above 189-91.
114. Above 536.
117. Above 351.
118. Above 367-70.
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119. AF III 530.
120. AM 1331, 21 (VII, 126): Wadding's dating seems at fault here; cf. Schmitt, Benoit, 173.
121. AM 1345, 10 (VII, 293).
122. BM VI 139.
123. AM 1343, 10 (VII, 293); cf. Brengio, Osservanza, 48.
124. AM loc. cit.
125. AM 1550, 15 (VIII, 45).
126. Mariano, Comp. Chron., AFH 3 (1910), 302.
128. AP III 547.
129. AM 1350, 15 (VIII, 45).
130. Mariano, Comp. Chron., AFH 3 (1910), 302.
132. Brengio, Osservanza, 52.
133. AP III 547.
134. AM 1350, 15 (VIII, 45).
135. Brengio, Osservanza, 52, 53.
136. AM 1368, 10 (VIII, 209): "A Joanne de Vallibus...in tuguriolo sancti Bartholomaei in solitudine Bruliani edoctus..."
137. AM 1355, 7 (VIII, 106).
138. AM 1355, 1 (VIII, 103).
139. AM 1355, 2 (VIII, 103); AP III 549.
140. AM loc. cit.
141. AM 1368, 10 (VIII, 209); cf. Jacobilli, Vita, 31.
142. AM 1355, 1 (VIII, 103); Mariano, Comp. Chron., AFH 3 (1910), 303.
143. AM 1355, 2 (VIII, 103-4).
144. AM loc. cit.
145. AM 1355, 1 (VIII, 103); Mariano, Comp. Chron., AFH 3 (1910), 303.
146. AM 1362, 4 (VIII, 154); Jacobilli, Vita, 374.
148. Memoriale Ordinis Minorum, in Monumenta Ordinis Minorum, III, f.216r, Salamanca 1506.
149. Mariano, P. T., MF VI 104; AM 1368, 10 (VIII, 209); cf. Jacobilli, Vita, 31.
150. Cf. Brengio, Osservanza, 63.
151. Mariano, AM loc. cit.
152. Mariano, P. T., MF VI 105.
154. For what follows: AM 1368, 14 (VIII, 211); Brengio, Osservanza, 71-5; A. Callebaut, Thomas de Frignano, Ministre Général, ses défenseurs...vers 1369-70, AFH 10 (1917), 239-49.
155. AM loc. cit.
156. Above 367-8; 396-8, esp. 392-3.
157. Brengio, Osservanza, 64 n. 7.
158. Brengio, Osservanza, 64 n. 7.
159. For what follows: AM 1368, 14 (VIII, 211); Brengio, Osservanza, 71-5; A. Callebaut, Thomas de Frignano, Ministre Général, ses défenseurs...vers 1369-70, AFH 10 (1917), 239-49.
160. BM VI 417.
162. Above 354-8.
NOTES: PART II CHAPTER III, IV

164. BF VI 428.
166. Oddi, P. T., MF VI 101; Mariano, P. T., MF VI 106; AM 1368, 13 (VIII, 210).
167. Loco. cit.
168. Mariano, P. T., MF VI, 107; cf. AM 1368, 12 (VIII, 210).
169. Loco. cit.
171. AM 1368, 13 (VIII, 210); Jacobilli, Vita, 41.
172. Ib.
174. MF VI 112-3; cf. Brengio, Observanza, 61 n. 83; Mariano, P. T., MF VI, 107; Jacobilli, Vita, 67. (The bull is not in BF).
175. Above 355.
176. Mariano, P. T., MF VI 106.
177. Above 593.
178. Sources: B. Aquilani, Chronica, 10-2; Oddi, P. T., MF VI 102-3; Mariano, P. T., MF VI 107-9; Jacobilli, Vita, 43; AM 1374, 22-25 (VIII, 299-300). Discussion of the sources: Brengio, Observanza, 104-9.
180. Mariano, loc. cit., 108 no. 12; Oddi, loc. cit., 102-3 no. 6.
182. For the circumstances, cf. Brengio, Observanza, 87-9; above 337.
183. AM 1374, 20-21 (VIII, 298-9).
184. BF VI 533-4.
185. Above 335-7.
186. AM 1375, 43-4 (VIII, 326-7).
187. Ib.
188. Ib. 1376, 17 (VIII, 336).
189. Ib. 1380, 29 (IX, 41-2).

CHAPTER IV

1. E.g. Ehrle in ALKG IV, 185; Moorman, History, 374.
2. Part II c. 2 pass.
3. Above 24-5.
5. Above 536.
6. Above 14-29.
7. Regula prima c. 5; Boehmer, Analekten, 4.
9. E.g. AM 1415, 34 (IX, 382); Bernardini Aquilani Chronica Fratrum Minorum de Observantia, ed. L. Lemmens (Rome 1902), 24.
10. Above 46.
12. AM 1415, 34 (IX, 382).
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18. Above 98.
19. Above 97.
23. Above 626.
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7. Quaerimoniae propositae in Concilio Constantiense, in Speculum Minorum (Rouen 1509, f.175r-184r), f.177v. (Quaerimoniae).
8. This is the conclusion to be drawn from the various chronological discussions in AIA Reformas, cc. 2-7.
11. BF VII 29.
14. AIA Reformas 308, 310, cf. 267, 260-70.
15. AM 1400, 41 (IX, 242); BF VII 646.
17. Cf. ib. 89-103; AM 1368, 6 (IX, 81).
18. BF VII, 321; cf. AIA Reformas, 103-6.
19. BF VII 142.
20. Ib. 199.
25. P. Gratien, Le Grand Schisme et la réforme des Cordeliers à St. Omer (1408-1409), Franciscana 5 (1922) 5-15, 142-60. (Gratien, St. Omer).
26. Quaerimoniae f.175r.
27. AFH 5 (1912) 88.
28. BF VII 332.
29. Ib. 378-9; AIA Reformas, 134.
32. C. Eubel, Die Avignonese Obedienz im Franziskanerorden zur Zeit des grossen abendländischen Schismas, FS 1 (1914), 131; this bull was left out of the same author's BF by oversight.
33. BP VII 347-8; cf. above 661.
34. BP VII 349-50.
35. Ib. 508.
36. Ib. 359-60.
38. Ib. 360.
39. Gratien, St. Omer, 144-9, 156-7.
40. Ib. 415.
41. Ib. 417-8.
42. Ib. 350.
43. Ib. 361.
45. AASS Colette, 600b.
46. Ib. 535a, 541b, 602 n. f.
48. BP VII 342-3.
47. AASS Colette, 535, 544a, 602b.
51. Ib. 547-8, 603-4.
52. BP VII 345-6.
53. Ib. 352-3.
54. Ib. 357-8.
55. Ib. 346.
56. Ib. As is shown by the first lines of the following bull, the date given, October 15, is a misprint for October 24.
57. Ib. 347-8.
58. AASS Colette, 602b.
59. Ib. 543b.
60. Ib. 535a.
61. Ib. 543b.
63. For what follows consult: H. Lippens, Henry de Baume coopérateur de S. Colette, Sacraria Prudiri 1 (1948) 232-76. (Lippens, H de B).
64. AASS Colette, 535a.
65. Lippens, H de B, 236.
66. AASS Colette, 546b.
68. A. de Sérent, Une nouvelle Vie de S. Colette (EF 17 (1907) 426-42), 435. (De Sérent, Vie Colette).
70. AASS Colette, 548a.
71. Ib. 545b, 603b.
72. Ib. 542b, 558a.
73. Ib. 545-6; cf. 549b, 603b.
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74. AASS Colette, 540, 553a, 556b.
75. Ib. 542a.
76. Ib. 612b.
77. Ib. 613b.
78. BF VII 355-6; cf. above 659.
79. Ib. 685-6.
81. AIA Reformas 335-44.
82. Cf. below 804-7.
83. BF VII 378-9; cf. above 661.
84. BF VII 499.
85. Cf. above 660.
86. BF VII 379-80.
87. Ib. 382-3.
89. Ib. 380-1.
90. Ib. 352; cf. above 661.
91. BF VII 384.
92. AIA Reformas, 324-5.
93. BF VII 388-90.
94. Ib. 390.
95. These are, in addition to those mentioned in the following notes:
confirmation of S. Francisco del Monte — cf. AIA Reformas, 128-9;
foundation of Soria — BF VII 392; official foundation of Villaverde — ib. 404.
96. Ib. 387.
97. Ib. 391.
98. Ib. 393.
99. Ib. 403.
100. Ib. 404-5.
101. Ib. 401-2.
103. AM 1390, 2 (IX, 91).
104. L. Brengio, L'Osservanza francescana in Italia nel secolo XIV (Rome 1963), 116-121. (Brengio, Osservanza).
106. L. A. Muratori, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores vol. 18 (Milan 1731), 1044.
107. Brengio, Osservanza, 126 n. 82. This bull is not in BF VII.
108. Brengio, Osservanza, 128.
109. AM 1415, 29 (IX, 381).
110. Ib. and ib. 1415, 34 (IX, 382).
111. For an outline of these developments: Moorman, History, 374-7.
114. AASS Colette, 555, cf. 605b.
117. Ib. 557-8, 606-7.
118. Cf. above 595.
119. Above 14, 20-5.
120. AASS Colette, 610a.
121. L. Sherley-Price (ed), The Little Flowers of St. Francis (Harmondsworth 1959), 161-3: Third Consideration on the Stigmata.
122. AASS Colette, 560-1.
123. Ib. 560a.
124. Ib. 560b.
125. Ib.
126. Ib.
127. Ib.
128. Ib. 561a, cf. 608a.
129. Ib. 575b.
130. Ib. 577b.
131. Above 22.
133. AASS Colette, 562-3, 608b, 612.
135. AASS Colette, 575-6.
136. Ib. 543a, 605-6.
137. Ib. 541b, 601b.
138. Cf. 2 Celano 61; Flowers 33: Brooke, Scripta, 147.
139. AASS Colette, 543a, cf. 602.
140. Ib. 601b, 541b.
141. Ib. 604b, 542a.
142. Above 18.
143. Above 674.
144. AASS Colette, 542a, 546a.
145. Ib. 542a, 548b, 602a, 604b.
146. Above 624-5.
147. AASS Colette, 543a, 605a.
148. Ib. 551a, 573b, cf. 605.
150. Cf. above 15.
151. Ib.
152. AASS Colette, 551, cf. 605a, 610b.
153. Ib. 563b, 573b, 610.
154. Ib. 555b, 555b, 605b.
156. Above 523-4.
158. Edited in Lippens, H de B, 261-76. (Cf. above n. 63).
159. C. 73.
160. Cf. Part II c. 1 pass.
161. Above 36-40.
162. Lippens, H de B, cc. 11, 12.
163. C. 17.
164. C. 33.
167. C. 5.
168. C. 40.
169. Lippens, H de B, 249.
171. Cc. 17, 18. For similarly spiritual passages cf. cc. 13, 24, 34, 35.
172. Cc. 20, 21.
174. 2 Celano 208.
175. Above 39-40.
177. Locc. c. 10 (Boehmer, Analekten, 23); c. 45.
178. Locc. c. 3 (Boehmer, Analekten, 21); c. 6.
179. Above 23.
180. C. 43.
181. Above 22.
183. Lippens, H de B, c. 50; cf. above 699, 15.
185. C. 6: Boehner, Analekten, 22.
186. C. 46.
187. C. 47.
188. C. 58; Seraphicae Legislationis Textus Originales (Quaracchi 1897), 272, 285.
190. C. 29; AF X 375.
191. Db. 577 (Bon. Leg. Maj. V, 1); Lippens, H de B, c. 57.
192. C. 38; cf. AF X 24, 121, 343; Luke IV, 1.
193. Above 32.
194. Above 32-5.
196. Above e.g. 213-5, 217-8.
197. C. 32.
198. Above 53-4, 166.
199. Above 34.
200. Cf. AF X Index s.v. "Evangelium".
203. Lippens, H de B, c. 65.
204. Text in Speculum Minorum (Rouen 1509), Tractatus III, f. 175r-184r. (Quaerimoniae).
206. Gratien, St. Omer, 159.
207. Cf. Verba fr Conradi, Omnesule de Criticis Historiae I fasc. 6 (1903), 375-6, 385-6; Sab. Spec. 140-1; Sab. Actus 189-91.
208. E.g. Gratien, Débuts, 416; Hoorman, History, 380 n. 5.
211. Oliger, De relatione, 41.
212. ALKG III 87.
213. Quaerimoniae f. 182v-183r.
216. Db. 359-60.
217. Oliger, De relatione, 38.
218. Above 529.
219. Part II c. 1 pass.
220. D. a S. de Gubernatis, Orbis Seraphicus (4 vols., Rome and Lyons, 1682-1685), III 79a, 80b. (03).
221. Ib. 80a.
223. BF VII 330, 343-4, 355.
224. Gratien, Débuts, 432.
227. OS III 79-80.
229. Cf. e.g. Regula Bullata c. 2; Boehmer, Analekten, 21; Stat. Far., II, pass.
230. Cf. locc. cit. c. 3 (Boehmer, Analekten, 21); VIII, 15.
231. Cf. locc. cit. c. 2 (Boehmer, Analekten, 21); II, 17.
232. Gratien, St. Omer, 167.
233. OS III 80a.
234. Part II c. 1 pass., esp. 308-10, 313-6.
235. OS III 79; cf. above 326-8.
236. Gratien, Débuts, 432; OS III 80b; cf. above 327.
238. Oliger, De relatione, 40-1.
239. Querimoniae, f. 175v-177v.
241. On which cf. above 303.
243. Above 124.
244. The relation between the two texts is best shown by the the printing of extracts side by side: Oliger, De relatione, 27-34.
245. Above 137-8, 140-3.
246. Querimoniae f.182v.
248. Querimoniae f.181v.
249. Ib. f.180r.
250. Ib. f.183r.
251. Ib. f.183v.
253. Querimoniae f.183v.
254. Ib. f.181r-v.
256. Above 138-40.
258. Querimoniae f.181r; cf. ALKG III 73-4.
259. Locc. cit. f.182r; 80.
260. OS III 80b.
261. Gratien, Débuts, 432.
262. Gratien, St. Omer, 170.
263. Above 718, 721.
265. Above 704-5.
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266. For the following passages, the Regula prima is in Boehmer, Analekten, 1-18, and the Regula Bullata ib. 20-4.
268. Above 705.
270. Above 635-9.
271. In the decree Supplicationibus personarum, which was the Council's reply to the French Observants' Querimoniae: cf. AM 1415, 6 (IX, 371, 373); cf. below 813-6.
272. Above 678.
273. BF VII 378.
274. Ib. 393.
275. For details cf. above 678-80; the exceptions were Constantina, Castañar, Capraría, Segorbe.
276. BF VII 401.
277. Viz. Cuéllar, Sahagún, 1413; Medina del Campo, Arricaña, 1414; S. Francisco del Monte, 1415; Santander, Arévalo, 1417: BF VII nos. 1115, 1119, 1126, 1131; AIA Reformas, 129-9; BF VII nos. 1162a, 1165.
278. Above 679.
279. BF VII 384.
280. Ib. 388-90.
281. Above 728.
283. Above 656-7; BF VII 29.
286. Ib. 404; above 660.
287. Above 661; BF VII 332.
288. Ib. 393.
289. AIA Reformas, 160-1.
290. BF VII 378.
291. Ib. 391.
292. Ib. 401-2.
293. Above 42-50.
296. In the Primers and Segundas Satisfacciones: AIA Reformas, 775-896.
297. Ib. 687-713.
298. Ib. 855.
299. Ib. 856.
300. Ib. 868.
301. Ib. 869.
302. Ib. 871.
303. Ib. 663, 822-3, etc.
304. Ib. 858 1. 190-2.
306. AIA Reformas, 713 1. 13.
308. Above 687, 700, 731-4.
309. Part II c. 2, Parts B and C, pass.
310. Above 103.
314. Above 516.
317. AIA Reformas, 707 l. 15-20.
318. Ib. 697-8; Sab. Spec. c. 42.
320. AIA Reformas, 682-3.
321. C. 3; Boehmer, Analekten, 25.
322. AIA Reformas, 691.
324. AIA Reformas, 659.
326. AIA Reformas, 693 l. 48-50.
327. Ib. l. 44-7.
328. Ib. 696 l. 64-73.
330. Lope de Salazar's two Satisfacciones, as the name indicates, were his defence against attacks; cf. the comments of Holzapfel, Handbuch, 300, 334, 326, 339, 350.
331. AIA Reformas, 713 l. 4-5.
332. Ib. 692 l. 12-4, cf. 613.
333. Ib. 692 l. 1-16, 693 l. 39-41.
334. Ib. 687 l. 3-8.
335. Ib. 688 l. 30-1.
341. AIA Reformas, 784 l. 193.
342. Above 742.
344. AIA Reformas, 706.
345. Ib. 782-3.
346. Ib. 704-5.
348. Ib. 54-6.
349. C. 9; Boehmer, Analekten, 8.
350. A full account is given in AIA Reformas, cc. 13 and 14.
351. Above 685.
353. Above 96; 635, 639.
355. Above 754, 759.
356. Above 636.
357. Above 123.
358. Above 20.
359. Above 129-30, 164, 188, 189, 229, 410-4, etc.
360. AIA Reformas, 804 l. 20-1, cf. 603-5.
364. Above 739-40.
366. Above 685.
367. Above 334-42.
368. Above 175-6.
369. J. Haller, Papstthun und Kirchenreform (Berlin 1903), 8, 17 etc.
373. Ib. 1070-82.
376. Above 41.
377. Quaerimoniae f.177v.
378. Above 146-8.
380. Above 599-600.
381. Boehmer, Analekten, 23.
382. Quaerimoniae f.177v.
383. Above 656, 661.
387. Above 662.
388. The basic account for what precedes and follows is that of the Quaerimoniae f.177v-179v. There are important additions in C. Schmitz, Der Anteil der suddeutschen Observantenvikarien der Durchführung der Reform, FS 2 (1915) 359-76, esp. 360-4. This account is confirmed briefly in Gratien, St. Omer, 167-8. (Schmitz, Reform).
389. D'Alencon, Documents Colette, AFH 3 (1910), 84-5.
391. BF VII 350-1.
391. BF VII 350-1.
393. Above 577, 580.
394. BF VII 361.
395. The Spirituals had been divided on the question of obedience, as is shown by Olivi's letter to Conrad of Offida (cf. above 158), but in their case the argument was conducted on different, and primarily Joachimite grounds.
396. D'Alencon, Documents Colette, AFH 3 (1910), 85.
397. Gratien, St. Omer, 168.
398. Quaerimoniae f.178r-v.
399. Gratien, St. Omer, 168.
400. The story is told in Gratien, St. Omer, on the basis of archival material there published.
401. Ib. 154-5.
402. Ib. 144-6.
403. Ib., and ib. 159-61.
404. Ib. 144-6, 153-4, 159-61.
405. Ib. 147-9.
407. Gratien, St. Omer, 154-5.
408. Ib. 164.
409. Ib. 149-50.
NOTES: PART III CHAPTER I

412. Ibid. 164.
415. Ibid. 171.
416. Ibid. 172-3.
417. Ibid. 165-7.
418. Oliger, De relatione, AFH 9 (1916), 36.
420. Gratien, St. Omer, 171.
422. Ib. 178.
423. Ibid. 176-7.
424. Schmitz, Reform, FS 2 (1915), 362; Oliger, De relatione, AFH 9 (1916), 41.
425. BF VII 415.
426. AM 1415, 6 (IX, 371).
428. Above 721.
430. Quaerimoniae f.179v.
431. E.g. the Farineriana - above 308.
433. For this and what follows cf. esp. Schmitz, Reform, FS 2 (1915), 366-3; however the date there given - 1409 instead of 1410 - must be an error.
434. BF VII 420-3; for the University reaction, cf. Delamunelle et al., Schisme, 160.
435. Ibid. 727-8.
437. Schmitz, Reform, FS 2 (1915), 363.
438. Ibid.; and Quaerimoniae f.179v.
440. BF VII 493.
441. Cf. above 180-1.
442. Sources for this paragraph: Quaerimoniae f.179v-v; Schmitz, Reform, FS 2 (1915), 366-4; AM 1415, 6 (IX, 371).
443. Quaerimoniae f.179v-v.
444. Cf. above 661.
446. Quaerimoniae f.176v-177r.
447. Ibid. f.160v.
448. Ibid. f.181v.
449. Ibid. f.182r.
450. Cf. above 793.
451. Essential sources: AASS Colette, 614a; D'Alencon, Documents Colette, AFH 3 (1910), 83.
452. Cf. De Serent, Vie Colette, EF 17 (1907), 429-36; Lippens, H de B, Sacris Erudiri 1 (1949), 243-4; D'Alencon, Lettres Colette, EF 19 (1908), 474.
453. AASS Colette, 609a.
454. AM 1415, 6 (IX, 371).
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455. BF VII 660.
456. D'Alençon, Documents Colette, APH 3 (1910), 83.
457. BF VII 350, 361; Oliger, De relatione, APH 9 (1916), 38.
458. Above 580.
459. Quaerimoniae f. 183v-184r.
460. The custodies are enumerated in AM 1400, 12 (IX, 214-6).
461. Cf. the judgment of Oliger, De relatione, APH 9 (1916), 23.
462. Cf. above 768.
463. AF II 256.
464. The story is told ib., and ib. 258-60, and in the decree which decided the question: AM 1415, 6 (IX, 371-4); BF VII 495-5.
465. Cf. above 203.
466. Cf. the judgment of Holzapfel, Handbuch, 105.
467. By De Sérent, Vie Colette, BF 17 (1907), 435-6.
468. BF VII 29; cf. above 657.
469. Above 657-8.
470. BF VII 321.
471. Above 778.
473. Above 624.
474. Above 777-8, 780.
475. Above 780, 803-4.
476. BF VII 332.
477. For the foundations concerned, and source references, cf. above 678-81.
478. AIA Reformas, 129.
479. BF VII 401-2.
480. AIA Reformas, 785-6.
481. Ib. 805.
482. Above 148.
483. AIA Reformas, 809-10.
484. Ib. 764.
485. Ib. 787.
486. Ib. 840.
487. Ib. 810.
488. Ib. 879.
489. Above 753.
490. Cf. above 756.
491. BF VII 384; cf. above 679-80.
492. Cf. above 738, 829.
493. AIA Reformas, 782.
494. Cf. above 677.
495. BF VII 402-3.
496. Ib. 402 n. 1.
497. Cf. above 680.
498. AIA Reformas, 784.
499. Ib. 840.
501. AIA Reformas, 128-9.
502. Ib. 328.
503. Ib.; and Delaruelle et al., Schisme, 200, 211-4.
504. Printed in AIA Reformas, 656-660.
505. Cf. above 510-12.
506. Cf. above 783.

2. In addition to the above: K. Eubel, Geschichte der oberdeutschen (Strassburger) Minoritenprovinz (Wurzburg 1886), 61.

3. BF VII 605, 626-7.


5. Ib. 537-8; ib. n.s. 1, 21; AM 1434, 8 (X, 225-6).


7. For what follows: C. Piana, San Bernardino Teologo, Bernardino Saggi 139-201.

8. Ib. 133.


10. Ib. 118.


13. S. Bernardini Senensis Opera Omnia (Quaracchi 1950ff.).


16. Pacetti, Scritti, Bernardino Saggi 39; Pacetti, Quaestiones 4, 31*.

17. Pacetti, Scritti, Bernardino Saggi 96, 109; S. Bernardini Senensis Opera Omnia vol. I (Quaracchi 1950), xvi.

18. Pacetti, Scritti, Bernardino Saggi 95-6; Pacetti, Quaestiones 4, 35*-9*.


20. Pacetti, Quaestiones 4, 25*-9*


25. AM 1439, 1-9 (X, 231-4), 1436, 1-14 (X, 268-75), 1437, 1-23 (X, 1-13), 1439, 21-3 (XI, 77-9), 1440, 8 (XI, 100).


27. Hofer, Kapistran, 96.


30. Above 349.
31. Above 346.
32. BF VII 511-2.
34. BF VII 653-4, 663-4.
35. Ib. 701-2; Hofer, Kapistran, 132-3.
36. ALKG IV, 109, 135 n. 3.
37. BF n.s. I 39.
38. Ib. 251.
39. Printed in S. Baluze and J. D. Mansi, Miscellanea vol. II (Lucca 1762), 595-610.
42. AM 1440, 12 (XI, 102-3).
43. Cf. above 53.
44. Above 125-6, 166.
45. Above 125.
46. Above 709-10.
47. Cf. above 130-4.
48. Cf. above 189.
52. AF II 271-2.
54. BF VII 534.
56. The statutes in AF II 274-7.
57. AM 1424, 8 (X, 81).
58. AF II 280, 286-7.
59. Cf. above 798.
60. Cf. above 804-8, 817-9.
(Gratien, Débuts).
63. Printed as Appendix II in Gratien, Débuts, 434-9; cf. ib. 425-7.
65. BF VII 581.
67. Las Reformas en los siglos XIV y XV: AIA n.s. 17 (1957), 386. (AIA Reformas).
NOTES: PART III CHAPTER II

68. BF VII 702.
69. AIA Reformas, 77.
70. BF VII 651, 658.
71. Ib. 615-6.
72. Ib. 632-3.
74. Hofer, Kapistran, 103-4, 156.
75. Cf. above 630-5.
76. BF VII 723-4.
78. Ib. 157-60; AM 1429, 8 (X, 141-2).
79. Ib., and Hofer, Kapistran, 162-3.
80. AM 1430, 7-23 (X, 150-61).
81. Cf. above 186, 287.
82. For this and what follows: AM 1430, 5-29 (X, 149-66); Hofer, Kapistran, 162-7.
83. BF VII 737-9.
84. E.g. Holzapfel, Handbuch, 114-5.
85. BF VII 739. There is an important interpretation of Ad statum in L. Lemmens, Ziel und Anfang der Observanz, FS 14 (1927) 285-96; this is essentially followed here.
86. Cf. above 297-302.
88. Sources: L. Oliger, Documenta inedita ad historiam Praticellorum spectantia, APH 6 (1913) 710-20; J. M. Pou y Marti, Visionarios, Beguinos y Praticelos catalanes (Vichy 1930), 267-83; AM 1433, 11 (X, 213); Hofer, Kapistran, 174-5; Oliger, Berbegal; Pou y Marti, Visionarios.
89. BF VII 651, 658; above 885.
90. BF n.s. I 21-2.
91. Pou y Marti, Visionarios, 279.
89a. Important extracts from Capistrano's treatise in Oliger and Pou y Marti, locc. cit.
92. Locc. cit. 271; 718.
93. Locc. cit. 282; 719.
95. BF n.s. I 41-2.
96. Ib. 269.
97. Ib.; cf. AIA Reformas, 396-401.
98. Ib. 412-4.
100. AIA Reformas 494ff.
102. Ib. 435-8; cf. AIA Reformas, 143-5.
103. Ib. 77; BF n.s. I 732-3, 793.
104. AIA Reformas 78-85.
105. A. de Serent, Une nouvelle Vie de S. Colette (BF 17 (1907) 426-42), 439; S. Roisin, S. Colette, DHC 13 (Paris 1956), 243.
NOTES: PART III CHAPTER II, III


109. BF n.s. I 2-12.

110. Ib. 34-5.

111. AM X, 511.


113. BF n.s. I 21.


115. AF II 294-8.


118. AF II 298.

119. BF n.s. I 55-6; for Martin V, cf. above 887.


121. Ib. 214; AM 1438, 5-7 (XI, 29-33).

122. Cf. above 199-200.


124. Cf. e.g. the encyclical of 1440: AM 1440, 12 (XI, 101-3), and above 865-70. For Paoluccio: above 638.

125. AM 1440, 29 (XI, 111); Bernardino Sagri 394-5.

126. AM 1441, 9 (XI, 137).


129. AM 1442, 1-5 (XI, 156-9).

130. Ib. and BF n.s. I 284-6.

131. AM 1443, 3 (XI, 175-6); Hofer, *Kapistran*, 272-4; Bernardino Sagri 395-7.

131a. AF II 308.

131b. AM 1443, 4-7 (XI, 176-9).


135. BF n.s. I 519-20.


137. Ib. 550-1. Permission to certain French friaries to return to the Ministers: ib 560-1.

CHAPTER III

1. The story is outlined in Holzapfel, *Handbuch*, 126-52, from which the points which follow are also derived.
NOTES: PART III CHAPTER III, CONCLUSION

2. Holzapfel, Handbuch, 138-41, 334; Moorman, History, 496-500; Optat de Veghel, Le Fons Franciscain de la Réforme Capucine, Miscellanea Melchor de Pobladura vol II (Rome 1964) 11-59, p. 31-5. (De Veghel, Réforme Capucine).


5. AM XVI 42-8, 51-4.


7. Quoted Holzapfel, Handbuch, 611.

8. De Veghel, Réforme Capucine, 41.


CONCLUSION


3. Id. 219.


8. Cf. above 203.