Clare of Assisi and Women's Franciscanism

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Historians have already produced a considerable amount of material on Clare and women's Franciscanism, thanks in part to the recent celebrations of the eighth centenary of the saint's death. But the studies have not always taken sufficient account of interventions by church authority or to what was distinctive about the expressions of women's religious life that arose during the thirteenth century. Thus, they mistakenly attributed all the results of experiments carried out in this area to the influence of the two mendicant orders that arose at the beginning of the century, and especially to the initiative of the two founders, Dominic and Francis.

Starting with Herbert Grundmann, scholars have located the origins of the women's branches of the mendicant orders in the rather fluid and heterogeneous world of the "women's religious movement." Only after long effort did the latter manage to define itself in institutional terms, giving rise to various forms of religious life linked especially, though not exclusively, to the mendicant orders. This was basically a process of standardization, achieved with the essential help of church authority. Beginning in the thirteenth century, the Church began to pay very close attention to the phenomenon of women's religious life, trying to channel it in a direction we might call monastic in the traditional sense of the term. The process can be considered in some ways as complete with Boniface VIII's *Periculoso* (1298), which extended the obligation of strict enclosure to all nuns. But to get to that point a whole century of effort was needed. In the beginning, the action of Cardinal Hugolino of Ostia was decisive. It became even more so after his election as Pope Gregory IX and after he named

Cardinal Raynaldus, his successor to the title of Ostia, cardinal protector of the women religious. The same policy was continued by Innocent and Alexander up until Urban IV. The papal interventions effected a major change, immediately evident in the names used. What was at first known as the religion of the poor ladies of the Spoleto Valley or Tuscany (*religio pauperum dominarum de Valle Spoleti sive Tuscia*) or the poor cloistered nuns (*pauperes moniales reclusae*), was later referred to the Order of St. Damian and finally received its definitive organization as the Order of St. Clare. The Order of Friars Minor and its individual representatives also helped to implement the papal plan. But until the middle of the century, a complicating factor prevented these developments from taking place in a logical and straightforward manner: the presence, in Assisi and at San Damiano, of Clare and her community, whose power was not only one of example, but also stubbornly institutional.

Thus, when the highest authorities of the Roman Church intervened with regard to the women's branch, the repercussions were also felt by Clare's community. Her own personal story, so closely linked to that of San Damiano, cannot be understood unless we consider very carefully the course of these relationships. They will be examined here up until the rule approved by Urban IV, which finally brought unity to the various expressions of women's Franciscanism. The norms contained in the letter *Beata Clara* (October 18, 1263) marked the end of the story of the Order of St. Damian and the explicit beginning, ten years after Clare's death, of the Order of St. Clare.

1. The Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: Forms of Women's Religious life

To situate Clare and her community within the complex picture of women's religious life at the time, we should first take a quick overall look at the chief forms in which many women expressed the ideal of religious dedication in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

We must not forget that the term "women's religious movement," even though much favored by historians in the wake of some important suggestions in Grundmann's *Religiöse Bewegungen* (first published in 1935, an enlarged edition by the same author appeared in 1961), needs rethinking. The term was first used at the end of the last century with regard to the fortune of political and social "movements." In fact, this is a modern way of looking at the phenomenon, ascribing to it common traits it certainly did not have and thus giving a picture that is essentially distorted. Rather than one "women's religious movement," many *novae religiones* flourished within a spirituality that shared common traits. In any case, the question awaits new

studies of the various expressions that manifested a sincere desire for spiritual renewal in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Too often, unwarranted generalizations and confusing statements have been made. One important example of misunderstanding in this area is the story of the Order of St. Damian.

As Grundmann was the first to point out, a proper understanding of women's religious life as "unfettered spirituality" (Merlo 1987, p. 56), demands that we consider the internal links between the various experiments. But we must not stop at the history of the particular orders and their women's branches, nor must we ignore the constant action taken toward them by the Roman Curia.

Thanks to new studies on the origins of the mendicant orders, especially the Franciscans and Dominicans, we are in a better position to understand their attitude toward women's religious life. It is a policy that shows many similarities. In fact both founders gave birth, more or less directly, to at least one community of women religious. In 1208, Dominic and his bishop Diego di Osma established a monastery in Prouille, which would later be fully incorporated into the men's order. After Prouille, the Dominicans received into their order monasteries in Rome (St. Sixtus), Madrid, and Bologna. Francis, for his part, initiated Clare and her sister Agnes into the religious life; they would form the first nucleus of the monastery of San Damiano. But neither Francis nor his brothers restricted their activity to that monastery. We need only recall the community of St. Salvator in San Severino Marche, which the bishop of Camerino entrusted to the spiritual care of the Friars Minor in June 1223, or the individuals introduced to the penitential life by Francis, such as the Roman women Prassede and Jacoba dei Settesoli.

On the other hand, interest in women's religious life by Dominic, Francis, and their respective orders merely reflected a constant concern of the Roman Church at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Ever since 1207, Innocent III had been planning to create a *universale coenobium* that would include all the nuns in Rome. It was supposed to bring together not only religious already leading a monastic life, but also women who belonged to penitential communities and thus were not bound by explicit religious vows. All would be subject to strict enclosure. Innocent III's reform contained elements that were developed by his successors, elements that played a great part in giving a distinctive look to the women's communities that arose in connection with the mendicant orders or were later associated with them. Innocent was in fact unable to accomplish his plan. He met with predictable opposition, construction of the buildings proceeded slowly, and the hoped-for collaboration of the men of the Order of Sempringham (the

Gilbertines, a double order consisting of both men and women) was not forthcoming. But the plan was taken up again by Honorius III, who was able to initiate the reform since Dominic and his friars were available to assume the care of the Roman monastery of St. Sixtus, which was incorporated into the Order of Preachers in 1221.

Study of this important episode shows the Holy See trying to organize the various forms of women's religious life according to norms that were well-defined and strongly influenced by the Cistercian tradition, to subject the monasteries directly to itself, and to define the new monasticism by the practice of strict enclosure, previously observed only by religious dedicated to the eremetical life or reclusion. This strong push to standardize was an attempt to unite the many women's communities that had already arisen or were organizing outside traditional monasticism, for whom it was becoming harder and harder to find spiritual and material assistance from individual monasteries or orders of men.

The situation was not the same in all parts of Europe. In Flanders, for example, many groups of women had formed, dedicated to religious life outside the traditional orders. They were inspired by ideals of poverty and determined to live by the work of their hands or to beg if necessary. The best known representative of such semi-religious groups was Marie d'Oignies. Thanks to the interest of Jacques de Vitry, her religious and mystical experience was recognized after her death by Honorius III and the Roman Curia. In that way it became the spiritual reference point for the Beguines, that is, for those women who were choosing religious life outside the traditional forms.

The situation must have been similar in central Italy, while in the north several orders approved by Innocent III were spreading rapidly. These offered a valid alternative to monasticism and, despite their differences, were part of the new spirituality. We need only recall the Humiliati, recognized as a triple order by Innocent III in 1201, who provided for a common life of brothers and sisters in double communities where the presence of women was important for the types of work done. The order became quite widespread at the beginning of the thirteenth century, especially in the territory of present-day Lombardy and the surrounding regions. The testimony of Jacques de Vitry is valuable in this regard. When he arrived in Milan in the spring of 1216, he noted that there were over 150 religious houses of men and women in that diocese alone (Huygens 1960, pp. 72-73). Around Venice, other forms of religious life were quite widespread. These also were alternatives to traditional monasticism. In Padua and the surrounding area, the Order of St. Benedict of Padua had been established, thanks to the efforts of Giordano Forzaté, prior of the monastery of St.

Benedict in the city. It consisted of men and women religious organized in double monasteries and devoted to manual labor, charitable assistance, and the settlement of civic quarrels. The Canons Regular of St. Mark of Mantua were especially widespread in Mantua, but also around Venice. They too were a group of men and women living in common, originally devoted to helping the poor and the sick. Their life, which already enjoyed the support of the bishop of the city, was solemnly approved by Innocent III in 1207. Besides these forms of religious life, approved either locally or by the pope, there were many other possible ways for women to dedicate themselves personally to religious life. We need only recall the presence of women in the communities of hospitalers, as well as the existence of many forms of *conversio*, among which the penitential life and reclusion occupied a place by itself. The latter especially was fairly widespread in central Italy.

Finally, we must not forget the presence of a women's branch in the alternative religious groups, especially among the followers of the Waldensian preachers. The latter, although moved by a desire to combat the Cathar heresy, had not received the hoped-for approval of the Church. Persevering in their original proposal, they were finally excommunicated (*Ad abolendam*, November 4, 1184) and all their activity prohibited. But in 1208, and later in 1210, they were partly received back by Innocent III, who organized them into two new orders: the Poor Catholics and the Poor Reconciled.

2. Clare and San Damiano before 1226

Thus, in central Italy there were no good institutional solutions, except traditional monasticism, for women wishing to embrace religious life. We must keep this in mind in considering the directives that resulted from the standardizing action taken by the papacy, which began precisely in the area of Umbria-Tuscany. Since it was there that Clare of Assisi spent her entire earthly life, it is appropriate to place her within the framework of the problems mentioned. A review of some of the phases of Clare's life, together with that of San Damiano, also provides an important example of the direction that would affect all religious life, not only women's, and favor a general process of monasticization. In particular, a study of Clare's relationship with Rome will help us to appreciate the full force of her personality. She was the first woman to see the rule she wrote for her community recognized by the pope, even though not until the day before she died.

The biography of Clare can be reconstructed based on the *Acts* of her canonization process, which have been preserved, although in a later vernacular version. The task of preparing the process was entrusted by

Innocent IV to Bishop Bartholomew of Spoleto in the autumn of 1253, right after Clare's death (August 11, 1253). Although they are in the form of answers to specific questions, the *Acts* help us to understand many episodes from Clare's life, as well as the more touching aspects of her spirituality. The *Legend of St. Clare*, attributed to Thomas of Celano (although with some uncertainty), depends closely on the process. The work was not written until after Clare's canonization, proclaimed by Alexander IV between the summer and autumn of 1255 in the bull *Clara claris praeclara*.

Thanks to the depositions taken during the process, we know that Clare was born in Assisi, most likely in 1194, being twelve years younger than Francis. She belonged to a family of *maiores* in the city, the descendants of Offreduccio, whose head was Clare's uncle Monaldo. Thus she spent some time, not very clear from the sources, in exile in Perugia with her relatives who had been banished from their birthplace with other members of the party of the *milites*. The latter were in armed conflict with the *populares* or *minores*, whose supporters included Francis. They had managed to rule Assisi between 1189 and 1203, when they were defeated by the Perugians together with the exiled *milites* from Assisi. At about the age of eighteen, probably with the consent of Bishop Guido of Assisi, Clare decided to devote herself to a kind of penitential life closely linked to Francis and his brothers, whose *forma vitae* Innocent III had approved orally a few years before. On the night of Palm Sunday 1212, Clare ran away from home and was received into Francis's fraternity.

For her, as had been the case with Francis, in the beginning there was no clearly outlined path to follow. After receiving the tonsure, she dressed for all practical purposes as a penitent and was placed by Francis himself in the powerful Assisi monastery of San Paolo delle Abbadesse. There she was received as a kind of servant, since she had given her belongings to the poor and had no dowry that would enable her to enter as a full-fledged member of the monastic community. Had Clare become a regular nun, as her social status permitted, it probably would not have aroused her family's opposition, since this would actually have been a chance for them to enhance their own social and economic prestige. But there was opposition, as might have been predicted. Clare's family did not willingly accept the idea that she had made such a radical choice, and they tried to get her to abandon the idea, even using force, but without success.

But San Paolo delle Abbadesse did not constitute a permanent arrangement for Clare. Perhaps in order to remain in a more strictly penitential atmosphere, she moved to S. Angelo in Panzo, long thought to be another women's monastic community, but actually a house of penitents. To make matters worse, Clare's sister Catherine (who would later be known

in religion as Agnes) joined her sister shortly thereafter. Miraculously, she too could not be dissuaded from her proposal, despite efforts and threats by her relatives, led by her uncle Monaldo. Only with their later move to San Damiano did Clare and Agnes—who had also received the tonsure from Francis—find a permanent arrangement.

We get the impression that Clare showed her determination to follow closely the example of Francis, already in these first stages of religious life. Neither her stay in a rich Benedictine monastery nor her entrance into a community of penitents would let her live in close relationship with the experience of Francis and his brothers. The logical solution was to create a kind of double community. Thus Clare and Agnes established themselves at San Damiano, one of the places where the brothers were accustomed to stay when they were in the vicinity of Assisi. In fact, the new community always felt that it was part of the fraternity headed by Francis, which was made clear by their close relationship with the brothers living at San Damiano.

Meanwhile the number of sisters was growing, even though these were mostly women from Clare's family (including, later, her sister Beatrice and her mother Ortulana) or others she had known during her stay in Perugia. Francis and his brothers also proselytized on behalf of San Damiano, as an episode related in the canonization process testifies (VI, 15; ed. Lazzeri 1920, p. 467). But their activity was not limited to building up the Assisi community, as shown in Francis's affection for the sisters of San Severino Marche or for individual penitents such as the Roman lady Prassede (1C 78; 3C 181). Clare too, at least for some time, was eager to establish close ties with other religious communities, if we can believe that her sister Agnes was sent to "inform" or propagate the lifestyle of San Damiano, according to tradition at Monticelli near Florence, but more likely at Monteluce in Perugia.

During the last part of his life, Francis was again close to Clare's community, especially during the most acute stages of his illness. In fact, it was to San Damiano that Francis retired for a long period, two years before his death, and it was there, while staying in a little cell made of mats, that he wrote the *Canticle of Brother Sun* (AC 83-85). Francis's writings and exhortations to Clare's community probably date from this time. We can see in them, it seems, his awareness of the problems Clare's community was facing, whether in its relations with Hugolino of Ostia, cardinal protector of the Order of which Clare also considered herself part, or with the Friars Minor in which the brothers who belonged to the international circles were becoming increasingly prominent.

Before Francis's death, Clare and her community did not need to have permanent relations with Rome, since the Order of Friars Minor

served in some ways as intermediary. Moreover, San Damiano must have fallen once again under the jurisdiction of the bishop, as attested by the fact that Guido II, together with Francis, intervened to tell Clare to curb her practice of fasting (LegCl 18; Pennacchi 1910, p. 27). There were certainly contacts with Cardinal Hugolino, as attested by his letter to Clare in the spring of 1220 after he had spent Easter at San Damiano. The text reveals the cardinal's great esteem for the Assisi community. But, significantly, these contacts took place during the absence of Francis, who at the time was with the crusaders in Egypt. What is more, they took place after Hugolino, in July 1219, had imposed his *forma vitae* on at least four women's communities in central Italy, as we shall see shortly. Not only that, but judging from the sources, meetings between Clare and Hugolino were decidedly infrequent, despite the cardinal's well-documented concern for the various expressions of women's religious life.

3. "Hugolinian" Monasticism

To understand San Damiano's particular place within these expressions, we must turn to the plan, which the pope had just outlined and to which Hugolino would give a first institutional form. The starting point is the letter of August 27, 1218, from Honorius III to the Cardinal of Ostia (*Bullarium* I, pp. 1-2), just as the latter was preparing for his second legation in central and northern Italy. In this letter, the pope granted him the faculty to subject directly to the Holy See those women's communities that already existed or would spring up, and which were characterized by a desire to live in total poverty. Indeed, on his way back to Rome in late July 1219, the cardinal granted solemn certificates of protection and exemption to four monasteries that were to form the first nucleus of a new women's monastic order. These were St. Mary di Monticelli near Florence, Monteluce in Perugia, St. Mary outside the Camollian Gate in Siena, and St. Mary di Gattaiola in the diocese of Lucca. Note that not all these monasteries had yet been established; some were about to be. And only in one case, Florence to be exact, did the cardinal's certificate mention the regular observances followed at San Damiano in Assisi.

The first stone of the new building had been laid. To be sure, the cardinal was not clear about every detail of the plan, but it was gradually taking shape. This can be seen from the fact that in the register of his third legation in Lombardy and Tuscany (1221) he inserted a formulary that bishops could use to grant exemption to new foundations (Levi 1890, pp. 153-54). For these, the model was the monasteries in Perugia, Siena and Lucca, with the significant exception of Monticelli, the only one for which Hugolino had declared an original link with San Damiano. From then on,

the communities favored by Rome gradually increased in number. They were described in Hugolino's formulary as "the religion of the poor ladies of the Spoleto Valley or Tuscany" and adopted the *forma vitae* composed by Hugolino. From the very beginning they were exempt from episcopal authority and directly subject to the pope.

Hugolino's idea was probably to carry out a kind of reform of women's monasticism, drawing especially from Benedictine and Cistercian spirituality, to which he was very close by reason of his formation. One indication of this is the fact that all the new foundations were named after the Blessed Virgin, which was the custom in the Cistercian Order. On the other hand, it was precisely at the beginning of the thirteenth century that the Cistercians had tried to limit the annexation of new women's communities to the order. This caused problems for the papacy, which found itself forced to take heed of the many groups that were necessarily located on the fringes of traditional monasticism. Another sign that Hugolino was thinking in terms of Cistercian monasticism, perhaps hoping to incorporate his monasteries into it, was his decision to give them the Cistercian Ambrose as visitator.

Thus, the period of Cardinal Hugolino's legations in Lombardy was essential for the birth of this new order exclusively for women. He himself would state this in the draft of the *forma vitae* that he prepared in 1218. From then until he became Pope Gregory IX (March 19, 1227), the plan to monasticize the various penitential groups must have become gradually clearer, even as the number of foundations continued to increase.

4. San Damiano and the Order of St. Damian

Until the beginning of Gregory IX's pontificate, the Hugolinian monasteries, although they had a strong pauperist thrust as the name itself indicated ("religion of the poor ladies"), had no institutional contacts with Clare's community. But a desire to follow the San Damiano model appears in some acts of foundation: the above-mentioned Monticelli in 1219, but also elsewhere, for example Milan in 1223. But this seems to become secondary when Cardinal Hugolino or his trusted ecclesiastics (including Friars Minor) intervene to normalize these monasteries.

The case of St. Apollinaris in Milan is worth noting in order to clarify certain phases of this process. In February 1223, in the presence of Archbishop Enrico da Settala, the clergy of the church of St. Apollinaris sold the land on which the monastery of St. Mary would be built to Siro Morone, a devout layman who also later became a friend of the sisters. The monastery was to observe the "order and rule of Blessed Damian of the

Spoleto Valley near the city of Assisi" (Sevesi 1924, pp. 343-44). This seems to be a clear reference to the community of Clare, even though it probably came from the Friars Minor rather than Clare's companions. But perhaps the sisters' desire could not be fully realized and was directed toward Hugolinian monasticism. About two years later, in November 1224, the same archbishop, at the explicit request of Hugolino, also gave the church of St. Apollinaris to the "poor sisters living in Milan" who observed the "rule of the order of Spoleto granted by the lord Pope" (Alberzoni 1991*b*, p. 208). A similar expression ("order of Spoleto") was used a few days later in the document by which the nuns acquired legal ownership of the goods given by the archbishop thanks to a member of the secular clergy, who was head priest of St. Nazarus in Brolio, and the Franciscan Brother Leo, who can be identified as Leo of Perego. A few months later, in February 1225, Enrico da Settala, this time with the consent of the cathedral chapter, reconfirmed the donation of the church and its belongings for the construction of the monastery of St. Mary and St. Apollinaris, which would follow the "*forma vitae* of the poor cloistered ladies living in the Spoleto Valley" given to them by Hugolino (Sevesi 1924, pp. 345-46).

Thus, despite understandable shifts in terminology, it is possible to see the process by which Hugolino's project became gradually clearer, at least until the cardinal of Ostia became pope. From an initial and definite emphasis on poverty, well expressed in the formulary of 1221 ("religion of the poor ladies"), along with a specific geographic note indicating the places where the first Hugolinian monasteries had sprung up ("the Spoleto Valley or Tuscany"), there is a movement toward an ever greater emphasis on strict enclosure ("cloistered poor ladies"). This seems to come out already in the certificate of 1225, but it certainly comes to the fore beginning with the years of Gregory's pontificate. In fact, the document of 1225 is quoted in a papal letter of 1231, and thus the terminology in it could be influenced *a posteriori*. On the other hand, in this case the gradual elimination of all reference to San Damiano is evident, following a pattern that is similar in many ways to that followed by another community: the "lesser sisters" housed within the leprosarium of St. Agatha in Verona.

These religious obviously wished to return to the ideal of "Franciscan" life (not necessarily inspired by San Damiano) and share the lot of the poor and sick by seeking a clear institutional bond with the Friars Minor. Around 1224, they were induced by *frater Lionus*—most likely the same Leo of Perego mentioned above—to leave the leprosarium, if they wished to maintain a bond with the Franciscans, and move to a monastery inside the city. There they apparently observed Hugolino's *forma vitae*. Leo of Perego should thus be considered a close collaborator of Hugolino in the

work of standardizing the women's communities and a strong supporter of Hugolinian monasticism as well, even to the detriment of what might be called Umbrian-inspired religious life. This, then, would not be a case of "indigenous Franciscanism" with a Paduan matrix being later absorbed into "Umbrian Franciscan"—as Giorgio Cracco has suggested (1983, pp. 3-4)—but of "Umbrian Franciscanism," evidently already widespread in various parts of Italy, being essentially brought back to the institutional forms promoted by the papacy. Also collaborating in this work were important members of the Franciscan Order, who at the same time would guarantee the link between Hugolinian monasticism and the Friars Minor.

By 1228, there were already twenty Hugolinian monasteries, all of them located in central and northern Italy. That year Gregory IX also began to disseminate his *forma vitae* outside the Italian Peninsula. More importantly, he tried to attract San Damiano to the monastic institute he had created, and with the Assisi community perhaps others that had been inspired by it (such as Spello and Foligno). In August 1228, Raynaldus of Ienne, the new cardinal protector of the Hugolinian monasteries, addressed a letter to the "abbesses and communities of the poor monasteries" (Oliger 1912, pp. 445-46). This letter marks both a closing point and a starting point of considerable importance. In this letter, the monastery of San Damiano in Assisi was first among those listed. How did that happen, since it seems to contradict the developments illustrated thus far?

Gregory IX, with the consent of certain groups in the Franciscan Order, was evidently going ahead with a plan that he had been unable to carry out while Francis was alive. Starting in 1227, significant interventions by the new pontiff in this direction can be seen. Since early 1226, he had entrusted the spiritual care of his monasteries to a Friar Minor, Pacificus, but after he became pope, in December 1227, he went even further. In *Quoties cordis*, by virtue of obedience, he entrusted the spiritual care of the "poor cloistered nuns" to the general minister of the Order of Friars Minor (*Bullarium* I, p. 36). A little later, in April 1228, Gregory IX drew up a new version of his *forma vitae* and sent it to the monastery of Pamplona in Spain (Omaechevarría 1993, pp. 217-32). In the pope's mind, it was becoming important that Clare's community and those more closely linked to it also be recognized as belonging in some way to the group of monasteries created by papal initiative. If this was necessary in order to give them a distinct spiritual profile, it was also meant to induce Clare to accept a form of life that, to Gregory IX's legal mind, truly seemed more likely to guarantee regular life, unlike the poorly-defined (from a legal point of view) observances followed at San Damiano. In order to achieve his goal, the pope (along with Cardinal

Raynaldus) decided to meet with Clare personally in July 1228, while he was in Assisi for the solemn canonization of Francis.

On that occasion Clare was urged to accept the *forma vitae* already granted by Hugolino to the monasteries he had founded, to place her community under the jurisdiction of Rome, and to abandon certain things proper to San Damiano, the first among these being absolute poverty. Had Clare accepted without resistance, San Damiano's "constitutive" bond with the Franciscan Order would have been weakened and its place taken by the kind of institutional relationship established by the pope between the monasteries of *his* order and the Friars Minor in *Quoties cordis*, December 14, 1227. But Clare was explicit. If she was not strong enough to oppose Gregory IX's request to accept the Hugolinian *forma vitae*, she still managed to safeguard a special place for San Damiano by holding fast to the observance of absolute poverty. Depositions at the canonization process (I, 13; II, 22; III, 14: ed. Lazzeri 1920, pp. 445, 452, 454) testify that Clare firmly rejected the invitation of the pope and Cardinal Raynaldus to accept goods for her community—necessary if a monastery was to observe strict enclosure—goods that the pope himself had probably offered her. The episode was reported in the letter of canonization (*ibid.*, p. 505) and then amplified in the *Legend of St. Clare* (14: ed. Pennacchi 1910, p. 22). Thus the conversation had two results. On the one hand, the community of San Damiano was incorporated into the circle of Hugolinian monasteries, as Cardinal Raynaldus's letter of August 1228 testifies; on the other hand, the pope had to confirm its "Franciscan" and "Clarian" distinctiveness. This was the so-called Privilege of Poverty of September 1228.

The letter of Cardinal Raynaldus ended what we might call San Damiano's autonomy. It marked the beginning of another phase in which Clare had to deal personally with ecclesiastical authority in order to safeguard the two things closest to her heart: absolute poverty and a close bond with the Order of Friars Minor. The Privilege of Poverty was granted only to San Damiano in 1228. The following year it was granted to Monteluce, where Clare's sister Agnes was probably abbess. It guaranteed that one of the original elements of San Damiano would be maintained. As far as relations with the Order of Friars Minor were concerned, these were assured thanks to Brother Elias, who stood by Clare, and to a few other communities that may be described as "Clarian." Elias's commitment in this regard is attested in the letter written by Agnes of Assisi around 1230 to Clare and the sisters at San Damiano. She tells them that she has obtained the Privilege of Poverty, also for those monasteries she had gone to "inform." We should note that Hugolino had a special regard for Agnes, indicated by the fact that she is explicitly mentioned in the cardinal's letter

of 1220. Agnes, in her letter of 1230, explicitly asked her sister to send Elias to her community more often, in order to comfort the sisters (Lazzeri 1920, p. 496). Later, Clare herself would urge her most famous disciple, Agnes of Bohemia, to follow the counsel of Elias (ed. Becker, Godet, and Matura 1986, pp. 108-09). It was with Clare and Elias, at least until 1239, that Agnes would bravely contend against Gregory IX to be allowed to follow the lifestyle practiced at San Damiano.

Thus, thanks to the Privilege of Poverty and close relationships with some important members of the Franciscan Order (Elias was general minister from 1232 to 1239), Clare managed to gain for herself a certain autonomy with respect to the plan now pursued with greater determination than ever by Gregory IX and Cardinal Raynaldus.

With the monastery of San Damiano assuming a place of honor among what we have called Hugolinian monasteries, the name "Order of St. Damian" gradually came into use. It referred to a complex and certainly non-uniform group of monasteries that had been created by ecclesiastical authority, within which Clare's community was now also situated. But her community continued to distinguish itself through observance of the *institutiones* indicated by Francis and especially through the Privilege of Poverty, for which Clare understandably had a kind of veneration. Actually, the document was not of primary importance for the observance of poverty, which it guaranteed, but as an authoritative recognition of its unique origin. Paradoxically, San Damiano retained a unique position with regard to the Order of St. Damian.

5. The Clash with Gregory IX and the Order of Friars Minor

From the very first years of Gregory IX's pontificate, prominent groups within the Franciscan Order, aided by the Roman Curia, seem determined to limit Clare's experience to the monastery of San Damiano and a few others linked to it. We have already mentioned the outcome of Leo of Perego's visitation in Verona and his action with regard to St. Apollinaris in Milan. In 1230, besides Leo, other religious appear who seem to share the same bent.

In May of that year the general chapter of the Order had been held in Assisi, but the brothers had been unable to agree on several basic questions regarding observance of the Rule and had thus decided to present them to Gregory IX. Among the disputed points were questions about the binding force of Francis's *Testament*, about whether the gospel precepts obliged in the same way as the *Rule*, and about whether the brothers might accept money. The last question presented to the pope had to do with the

need for papal permission for the brothers to accept the spiritual care of women's monasteries, even monasteries not belonging to the Order of St. Damian. Actually, it was only in the case of the latter that the *Rule* required such permission (LR XI). The delegation sent to the Roman Curia consisted of clerics, among whom I would mention only Leo of Perego and Anthony of Padua. These men were much closer to the juridical concerns being shown by the pope at that time than to what we might call an "Umbrian" sensibility, formed by direct contact with Francis.

In the bull *Quo elongati* of September 28, 1230, Gregory IX replied to the questions presented by the Order, perhaps following the suggestions of the learned brothers who had appealed to him. In particular, with regard to women's monasteries the pope decided that only those brothers with the necessary permission from the Apostolic See might enter (Grundmann 1961*a*, pp. 24-25). Even though Gregory IX said that he was following the true intention of Francis, whom he had known so well while the saint was alive, his response was inspired by principles that were essentially legal. His motives cannot be separated from his legal formation and especially his mentality, which tended to use law to solve every question.

We know of no major reactions within the Franciscan Order following *Quo elongati*. Clare, on the other hand, was visibly annoyed by the papal decisions. Feeling that one of the things closest to her heart had been attacked—the vital bond between San Damiano and the Friars Minor—she reacted strongly by evicting from the monastery the brothers who went begging to obtain food for the sisters. At first glance, Clare's reaction to the pope's decisions seems exaggerated. But she realized very well that if the brothers who normally lived at San Damiano, in order to perform their duties of taking spiritual care of the sisters and begging for them, also needed papal permission, then her monastery was for all practical purposes being absorbed into the Order of St. Damian. Gregory IX was informed of Clare's strong reaction and, as he had done for the Privilege of Poverty, he declared that the norms of *Quo elongati* did not apply to San Damiano (ed. Pennachhi 1910, pp. 51-52).

Besides differences with the pope, Clare also had to deal with misunderstandings within the Order of Friars Minor. But there continued to be one exception: Brother Elias, and certainly with him other "Umbrian" brothers who had known first-hand the San Damiano experience and the affection Francis had shown that community, especially at the end of his life. As we have already emphasized, Elias's collaboration with Clare and her sister Agnes in spreading the lifestyle of San Damiano become extremely important after he was elected general minister of the Order in 1232.

Some interesting signs of this collaboration can be deduced from the four letters we have from Clare to Agnes, the daughter of the king of Bohemia. In them we can sense the strong spiritual solidarity between the two women. At the same time, we can see a plan to export the way of life practiced at San Damiano to a foundation that was authoritative, given Agnes of Prague's social origin.

In the first letter of the collection, which dates from around Pentecost 1234, Clare speaks to Agnes and praises her decision to dedicate herself to God, for which she had even renounced marriage to the emperor. Then, taking advantage of the occasion, Clare breaks forth in a hymn of praise to poverty, which is presented as the characteristic feature of the life of Mary and Christ. Once again, between 1234 and 1238, Clare urges Agnes to persevere in the proposal she has begun. To do this, she should remain faithful to the precious counsel of the general minister Elias, even if some other person—not better identified, but described as worthy of respect—should wish to suggest a different path to perfection ("Even though you must respect him, do not follow his counsel, but as a poor virgin embrace the poor Christ:" ed. Becker, Godet, and Matura 1986, p. 108). Once again at the beginning of 1238, Clare urges Agnes to continue in the way she has begun. She also answers a particular question her disciple had asked her about Francis's advice to the Assisi community with regard to the manner of fasting, a clear indication that Agnes meant to follow that example. At this point, the correspondence suddenly breaks off until just before Clare's death, in other words, until spring or summer of 1253. The reason for the interruption was the difficulties Clare and Elias were facing.

The Prague monastery had been "informed" by sisters from Trent and so it followed the rule of Hugolino or, as Agnes seems to say, this rule had been imposed on it at a later time. Although the "Franciscan" influence must have been real, the sisters had later been forced to adopt some features typical of the Order of St. Damian, whose strict enclosure made it necessary to acquire property in order to ensure an adequate revenue. On the other hand, Agnes must have gotten to know the "Clarian" model better, perhaps from Elias and the brothers close to him. Thus she had expressed a desire to conform to it, adopting for her community the lifestyle proposed by Francis. To this end, she had asked for and obtained the help of her brother Wenceslaus I of Bohemia. But Gregory IX, in the letter *Angelis gaudium* of May 1238, had restated his position very clearly, commanding Agnes under obedience to follow the *forma vitae* he himself had written. She should give up the idea of returning to the limited directives of Francis, which the pope explicitly refers to as liquid nourishment, fit for newborn infants, as opposed to the solid food for adults offered by *his* rule (*Bullarium* I, pp. 242-44). In

the same letter, Gregory also enjoined Agnes not to follow the advice of some unnamed person who, though very zealous, certainly lacked the necessary knowledge to deal with a legal question such as this. Evidently Gregory was expressing his irritation for the initiative taken by Elias, with Clare's agreement, to spread to other monasteries the customs of San Damiano that harked back to Francis. By 1238 Elias had been completely discredited, both within the Order (or in its "international" circles) and in the eyes of the pope. He was forced to resign in 1239.

It was these things that probably caused the sudden break in correspondence between Clare and Agnes. The desired plan to make the Prague monastery of St. Francis a "Clarian" monastery—and probably other monasteries along with it, given the prestige of the Prague abbess—could no longer be carried out with the help of the Order of Friars Minor. The intercession of Brother Elias had obtained for Agnes the Privilege of Poverty, although Gregory had granted it very reluctantly. Still, Agnes had not completely given up the idea of following the San Damiano model, which may explain why the exchange of letters resumed in 1253. By then Clare was near death, but her *Rule* had finally been approved by Cardinal Raynaldus of Ostia, and she was soon to receive the long-awaited approval by the pope. And so she wrote to the abbess of Prague again, as if to tell her that the day was near when the rule approved for San Damiano could also be followed in Prague. This rule contained the directives of Francis most jealously guarded by Clare: the promise that San Damiano would always have the assistance of the Friars Minor, as though it were a house of the same Order, and the admonition to live in the strictest poverty.

The correspondence between the two women apparently testifies to Clare's great effort to spread the model offered by her community, opposing it to the Damianite model. Thus she hoped to escape the isolation to which she was being condemned by both the pope and the emerging groups within the Order.

6. Lesser Sisters

Elias's resignation, demanded at the general chapter of the Order held in Rome in 1239 in the presence of the pope, did not end the collaboration between the former general minister and Clare. According to Thomas of Eccleston (ChrTE 13), Elias continued to visit the monasteries of the Poor Ladies, even though he had not received papal authorization as required in *Quo elongati*. This was among the reasons why Gregory IX finally excommunicated him. Elias had probably continued to carry out his duties as before, visiting the "Clarian" monasteries. Like Clare, he considered these a vital part of the Order of Friars Minor and thus, as in the

case of San Damiano, papal permission was not required to visit them. After his excommunication Elias must also have given up this activity, and once he sought refuge with Frederick II, he could no longer maintain contact with San Damiano. Clare had lost the support of the top persons in the Order; her only comfort was in her sisters and in Francis's most faithful companions, who certainly did not hold major positions in the Order of Friars Minor.

Gregory IX, with the powerful help of Raynaldus of Ostia, protector of both the Friars Minor and the "poor cloistered nuns," pursued his plan, which by now seems to have become clear. One indication of this is the new draft of the Hugolinian *forma vitae* sent to the Damianites of Ascoli Piceno, May 24, 1239 (*Bullarium* I, pp. 263-67). Another is the noticeable increase in number of foundations of the Order of St. Damian in Italy and the rest of Europe. These monasteries differed considerably from one another in observances, precisely because they had arisen at different times and with different points of reference, while Hugolino's plan was still in the process of being clarified. Clare's community and those associated with it formed a separate group, which the Apostolic See, desirous of creating a single new order that would be easier to control, tended to gradually eliminate, or at least limit.

With Elias no longer part of the leadership of the Order, Clare was not the only one who lost a vital point of reference. After 1239, many groups of women living in community and seeking inspiration in the model of life offered, not so much by the monastery of San Damiano, but by the Order of Friars Minor, saw their relationship with the latter gradually weaken. Until the 1240's, the brothers had essentially agreed to offer legal cover for these women's communities, who were inspired by the same ideals and who were trying to imitate the forms of apostolate of the men's branch. But after Brother Elias was deposed and a "legal mentality" began to prevail within the Order, they were no longer able or willing to do this.

The gravity of the situation was revealed in February 1241 (*Bullarium* I, p. 290) when Gregory IX, now near the end of his life, intervened after receiving complaints about the "lesser sisters." The latter were also known as *Minoretae*, *Cordulariae*, or *Discalceatae*, terms that certainly refer to the characteristic garb of the Friars Minor. Evidently these were religious who followed the "Franciscan" ideal, but did not observe the strict enclosure of the Order of St. Damian. Since the early 1250's, these women had lived in a kind of symbiotic relationship with the brothers. But now both the pope and the Order were trying to curb the phenomenon, since it was considered something of a nuisance by Damianite monasticism and the Order of Friars Minor. For the latter, the spiritual care of these

communities, which were widespread in northern Italy, France, and England, was apparently a very heavy burden.

The new pontiff, Innocent IV (1243-54), also intervened decisively with respect to the "lesser sisters," following requests by the Order and by monasteries of Damianites. The case of the monastery in Salamanca is a good example. There the nuns had asked the pope to intervene and force the local bishop to take action against "certain women" in that diocese who kept saying they were members of the Order of St. Damian. They should stop wearing the habit and cincture of the Damianites; they could not consider themselves members of that Order since they did not observe perpetual enclosure (*Bullarium* I, p. 556). The presence of these "religious women" was creating confusion, evidently to the harm of the official establishment of Damianite nuns. On the other hand, the situation provides us with a precious clue as to how the "lesser sisters" must have been regarded by the faithful, as well as by the Friars Minor.

Based on some important evidence, we may suggest that the communities of "lesser sisters" were rather numerous and that in many cases they enjoyed the full support of ecclesiastical authority. During the generalate of John of Parma (1247-57), the Franciscan Order maintained a decidedly negative attitude toward the phenomenon of the "lesser sisters." This is attested by the many petitions addressed by the general minister to Innocent IV asking for papal letters to check the phenomenon of the "religious women."

Interesting clues can be had from the case of Novara, which has been the subject of an excellent reconstruction (Andenna 1974). The documents reveal the aid given by Bishop Sigebaldo Cavallazzi, who in 1254 sponsored the transfer from Piacenza to Novara of the "lesser sisters," who were headed by one of Innocent IV's relatives, Cecilia di Rocca Sarzana. To aid in their establishment, the bishop, with the full support of Innocent IV and later Alexander IV, had ordered the closure of the women's Cluniac monastery in Cavaglietto, not far from Novara. The reason, he said, was that it was impossible to carry out a radical reform there. But the implantation of the sisters from Cavaglietto was not easy. After living outside the city for some years (1255-63), they had obtained a house inside the city—no doubt much safer at a time when the countryside especially was involved in wars. But the abbess and eleven other sisters left the house in the city and returned to the old monastery in Cavaglietto. Perhaps she wanted to have more direct control over the goods that belonged to the old monastic foundation; at any rate, she was acting in open defiance of the directives of the visitator of the monastery, the Franciscan John of Quargneto. The authorities of the Order and the cardinal protector were

not pleased with this and tried every means to force the dissidents to rejoin the other sisters. Although the sources are ambiguous, the basic problem seems to have been the abbess's refusal to accept the new norms for the Damianites promulgated by Urban IV in October 1263 (we will discuss these later). This explains why the twelve dissidents left the Order of St. Damian. In an ostentatious gesture, they removed their cinctures—one of the distinctive signs of the Damianites—and, through a procurator, sent them to the visitators, thus openly manifesting their intention to leave the Order of St. Damian and return to the customs of Cluny. For three more years they were effectively subject to the jurisdiction of the abbot of Cluny. The conflict with the leaders of the Order of Friars Minor and the cardinal protector did not end until around 1270, when the group of dissidents agreed to rejoin the other nuns who had remained within the city.

The story of the Novara monastery is an interesting example of the cases (sometimes pointed out in history books, but not yet sufficiently studied) where women's communities, formerly oriented toward a type of spirituality that went back to Francis, adopted other rules (Benedictine and Augustinian) mentioned in the constitution *Ne mimia religionum* of the Fourth Lateran Council. In fact, the communities of "lesser sisters" were faced with the irrevocable choice: either transfer to the Order of St. Damian in order to continue to enjoy the spiritual assistance of the brothers, or else abandon the habit of the Damianites and embrace one of the approved rules. Faced with such a predicament, more than one community of "lesser sisters" tried to regularize its position by entering the monasteries of the Order of St. Damian. But this certainly caused problems. For one thing, it was impossible to accept all those who wished to transfer. In fact—and this is also significant—with increasing frequency Innocent IV was imposing a limit on the number of Damianite monasteries. For another thing, the earlier rivalries and mutual distrust had probably not been completely laid to rest.

7. The *Rule*

Further complicating the already troubled institutional picture was the promulgation of a new rule for the Order of St. Damian by Innocent IV in August 1247 (*Bullarium* I, pp. 476-82). It was a literal borrowing from Gregory's *forma vitae* whose first formulation, as we said, dates from 1228. There was only once change: the reference to observance of the "rule of Blessed Benedict" was replaced by a reference to the rule of Francis, but the latter was mentioned only in connection with the three vows of personal poverty, chastity, and obedience. The change was made necessary by the fact that the Friars Minor had now been caring for the Damianites for some

twenty years. The position of the monasteries themselves also needed clarification. But the rest of Innocent IV's rule was inspired by traditional monasticism. It provided for a sufficient endowment of goods for the individual monasteries and a relationship with the Franciscan Order rigidly defined by canon law.

Clare realized that she would not be able to accept these norms. She decided to begin to write her own rule, perhaps with the help of Leo or other brothers who had been close to Francis. It would allow San Damiano and the monasteries that had followed it (for this reason, the rule needed to be approved by the Apostolic See) to remain faithful to Francis's intention. Obviously this was not an easy task, and it was bound to meet with some resistance on the part of ecclesiastical authority. But Clare was able to overcome this resistance by remaining steadfast in the face of Raynaldus of Ostia and Innocent IV, who visited her a year apart from each other, and after meeting with Clare granted the solemn confirmation she requested. The bull *Solet annuere* with its papal confirmation of the *Rule* was dated Assisi, August 9, 1253. It arrived at San Damiano the next day, and the day after that, Clare died. The sisters, obviously aware of the importance Clare attached to the approval of the text, placed the pope's letter in the tomb alongside the body of their mother.

The approval of the Cardinal of Ostia, cited in full in Innocent IV's *Solet annuere*, was limited to the monastery of San Damiano, even though in her *Rule* Clare spoke of an "Order of Poor Sisters." Evidently she was referring to the few other monasteries that followed the model of life of the Assisi community or would in the future decide to follow it. In any case, it was a victory for a woman who, in direct opposition to the highest authorities in the Church, had continued to support a difficult position, especially when we consider how her steadfastness clashed with the repeated legal interventions of Gregory IX and Innocent IV.

If her rule was to be accepted, Clare realized that only a direct and explicit reference to Francis could ensure her some chance of overcoming the obstacles. Only the express wishes of a saint would make it possible for her to get her proposal accepted. This explains the many references to Francis at the beginning of the *Rule* (Chapter I: "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters *that Blessed Francis established* is this:" (ed. Becker, Godet, and Matura 1986, p. 134) and especially in Chapter VI, which is entirely concerned with poverty. It contains two brief writings addressed to the community of San Damiano, containing Francis's promise that he and his brothers would always have care and solicitude for the sisters, and his exhortation that they persevere in the strictest poverty (ibid., pp. 150-55). These passages contain Francis's actual words about the two points on

which Clare had not reached an agreement, not even with the pope. Considering the reasons for disagreement between her and the pope, it is natural to suggest that the insertion of these passages is by no means accidental. If the abbess of San Damiano had defended absolute poverty in her conversation with the pope in July 1228 (after which she had obtained the Privilege of Poverty), and if she had defended close ties with the Friars Minor in opposition to *Quo elongati* (from whose provisions regarding the care of nuns she had been exempted), it is significant to note that the two texts attributed to Francis deal precisely with these things. Historical context thus helps us to understand why some writings of Francis have come down to us and not others. Those addressed to San Damiano were preserved, not so much because they were considered the most important for their spiritual message, but because they were essential for safeguarding certain questions of principle at a particular moment in history.

That is why it would be dangerous to compare the spirituality of Francis and Clare on the basis of these writings considered in isolation. This would also be misleading if we are looking for a correct explanation of the relationship between Clare and Francis. Thus the discussion, in many ways still open, about how Francis is supposed to have gradually distanced himself from Clare and San Damiano. The two passages reported in Chapter VI of the *Rule* of Clare (Francis's promise that he and his brothers will care for San Damiano and his exhortation to maintain absolute poverty) are generally attributed to the beginning and end of Francis's life. But if we place these two passages toward the end of Francis's life, as has been convincingly suggested (Rusconi, c.d.s.), we must suppose that Francis gradually drew closer again to San Damiano in the most critical moments of his illness, as death drew near. This would also help us to understand better Clare's fierce attachment to the one whom she always pointed to as the founder of San Damiano.

8. The Death of Clare

On August 11, 1253, Clare died in the Assisi monastery where she had spent over forty years, surrounded by her sisters and two of Francis's very first companions, Angelo and Leo (LegCl 45: ed. Pennacchi 1910, pp. 63-64). Her death marked the end of an era, since it meant the loss of a moral authority—recognized by even the highest prelates—that single handedly had defended the memory of Francis and the lifestyle shown by him. Clare's attachment to the legacy of Francis was the salient feature of their relationship, a dependence emphatically stated by the abbess of San Damiano. It explains the presence of the companions at her passing. Leo continued to maintain a relationship with Clare's successor Benedicta. He

gave her for safekeeping the breviary Francis had used when he was alive and, according to the testimony of Ubertino of Casale, some scrolls containing memories of the early Franciscan fraternity (as well as, according to recent suggestions, the hand-written blessing Francis had left him, annotated by him for the occasion: Frugoni 1993, p. 76; Bartoli Langeli 1994, pp. 108-09).

Clare's isolation in defending the memory of Francis can also be seen in the events surrounding her death. At her side, along with her sisters, were Francis's remaining companions—not the general minister's representatives or brothers who held high offices in the Order. Even her canonization was sponsored, not by the Franciscan Order, but by Innocent IV, and after him Alexander IV, who solemnly proclaimed Clare a saint in the summer of 1255. The Friars Minor kept their distance from this troublesome woman even after her canonization. It was only in 1260 that the general chapter, with Bonaventure presiding, decreed that her feast should be added to those of the Order and celebrated with solemnity. On the other hand, the iconography of Clare's death (in which the saint's body is surrounded by pope, cardinals, and bishops) and her *Legend* (in which the pope and Cardinal Raynaldus play a large part) testify to the papacy's direct interest in her canonization. Clare's death and canonization gave Rome an important opportunity to give a unified structure finally to women's religious life inspired by the Franciscan ideal.

The consequences of Clare's death were also of considerable importance for her community. To honor the saint's memory, it was decided to build a church and new monastery inside Assisi next to her place of burial. The sisters accepted donations of goods and money for this, thus violating the express wishes of their foundress. Moreover, they abandoned San Damiano, the place where Clare had spent her entire religious life, and moved to the new monastery in the city. Even more astonishing, in the end they also ceased to observe the rule written by Clare and became completely assimilated into the Order of St. Clare, established in 1263 by Urban IV.

The reasons that prompted the pontiff to write a new rule were many. First of all, the Order of Friars Minor wished to see some kind of guaranteed hedge against the ever-present requests for spiritual care by countless women's communities. Secondly, there was the need, explicitly stated, to end the deplorable phenomenon of the "lesser sisters" and other expressions of religious life that had arisen independent of the pope. From now on, those nuns who wanted the assistance of the Friars Minor would have to give up their previous names and varied practices and accept strict enclosure, the thing that church authority had insisted upon from the beginning. And to guarantee observance of the enclosure, it was decreed

that the religious must have possessions and common revenue. This served to silence Clare's sad appeal for community poverty, laid down by her in her *Rule* in the very words of Francis. Evidently this was considered inopportune, not only by the cardinals and the pope, but also by the Friars Minor, who were otherwise supposed to see to the material support of the monasteries entrusted to them, as was the case at San Damiano and the few others that followed the *Rule* of Clare.

In May 1288, the Assisi monastery, now located where the protomonastery of St. Clare stands today, also received the rule of Pope Urban and with it the right to own property. Thus, if Clare's death and canonization gave the pope a chance to effect a basic institutional clarification among the nuns of "Franciscan" inspiration, the rule desired by the saint was not so lucky, an evident sign of the difficulties that had postponed its approval until days before her death.

9. The Order of St. Damian until 1263

Even a quick overview of the foundations of the Order of St. Damian prior to Urban IV's *Beata Clara* is quite difficult, given the substantial lack of studies devoted to individual houses. Much confusion is also caused by the widespread tendency to consider as "Franciscan" from the very beginning things that in many cases were only "Franciscanized" later.

In Italy, the spread of the Order of St. Damian was perceptible during the pontificates of Gregory IX, Innocent IV, and Alexander IV. In the 1260's there were over one hundred monasteries, most of them located in the central and northern parts of the peninsula.

Unlike in Italy, which can be considered the cradle of the new monastic institute created through papal initiative and implemented by Hugolino, the spread of the Order of St. Damian beyond the Alps took place later. In every case, it began only with the pontificate of Gregory IX.

The first information about a house in the Iberian Peninsula has already been cited. It concerns Pamplona, where in April 1228 Gregory sent a new draft of his *forma vitae* to a local monastery, which thus entered the Damianite circle. But, significantly, it is not listed among the recipients of the letter addressed to the Hugolinian monasteries by the cardinal protector Raynaldus in August 1228. The foundation of the monasteries in Saragoza and Salamanca goes back to the 1230's.

In France, too, we must wait until the fourth decade of the century for information about Rheims (1237) and Bordeaux (1239), where direct intervention by the pope is reported. The monasteries in Narbonne (1246), Toulouse (1247), and Montpellier (1250) go back to the years of Innocent

IV's pontificate. The conspicuous presence of penitent groups in southern France slowed the spread of the new monastic institute. Only in the second half of the century did some of these communities (Bézier, Beyers) become part of the Order of St. Damian.

The situation seems to be similar in Flanders and England where, until the 1250's, the most widespread form of women's religious life was that of the Beguines. Damianite monasticism did not really spread until after the directives of Pope Urban, in other words, with *Ordo sanctae Clarae*.

In Germany, many monasteries resembled the Dominican Order, on which all the communities that sprang up at the beginning of the thirteenth century depended. One exception was Ulm (1237-39), where the religious who had given birth to a monastery of Damianites came from Prague. This was the only presence of the Order of St. Damian in Germany during the pontificate of Gregory IX. After 1250, the following monasteries were founded or transferred to the Order of St. Damain: Pfullingen, Konstanz, Strassburg, and Würzburg. Here, too, the real spread began in the 1260's with the Urban rule. In Eastern Europe, until the middle of the thirteenth century, besides the monastery in Prague there was only one monastery of Damianites in Trnava in Hungary (1239), formerly a community of Penitents. After 1254, foundations increased in number, although modestly.

The information reported here, even in its bare essentials, lets us point out certain important lines of intervention by ecclesiastical authority. We can also see the close relationship between the spread of the Order of St. Damian and the direction taken by the papacy, which in the thirteenth century sought to give an increasingly well-defined juridical form to the various expressions of women's religious life, especially in Italy. These monasteries were directly subject to Rome. To initiate radical reform, Rome had to be able to exercise direct control, and such action would be effective only if the houses could be reached in a short time. The new monastic institute began to be "exported" during the pontificate of Gregory IX, in other words, when the man who had given the first set of norms was head of the Church and able to pursue with greater energy the work he had begun. This he did with the collaboration of members of the Roman Curia—in the first place Cardinal Raynaldus—as well as the Order of Friars Minor, for which Gregory continued to be an important point of reference. But, as we have seen, a certain institutional ambiguity characterized the origins of the Order of St. Damian, an ambiguity due to the different ways in which reference to the common "Franciscan" ideal was understood. Perhaps such ambiguity did not favor an extensive spread outside of Italy. That was pursued only when a single model was established with Urban IV's *Beata*

Clara. This model was also accepted in essence by the Order of Friars Minor, since relationships between the two institutes had been clarified juridically and were now regulated.

Beata Clara gave birth to the Order of Poor Clares (including the terminology used), and the groups of religious linked to the Friars Minor by various titles had to become part of it. Urban's rule was not accepted immediately, and not all communities conformed to it. Yet the year 1263 and the years immediately after mark the beginning of another story, whose institutional outlines are better defined, and the close, at least as far as "Franciscan" inspiration is concerned, of a transitional phase, or as some have described it, a "period of activity."

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