The Friars Minor and Local Societies

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1. Franciscan Universalism and Local Particularism

Centralized organization, international recruitment, and mobility of membership were distinctive marks of the Order of Friars Minor and the mendicant orders in general. Moreover, their spirituality and culture, characterized by gospel poverty and the universality of Francis's Christian proposal, also contained innovative elements. Together, these things served to define their novelty and favor their rapid success. But at first glance these characteristics contrast with the particularism of local societies, especially those of central and northern Italy, which in the thirteenth century were deeply engaged in a search for identity and were using communal institutions to emphasize their desire for autonomy. For this reason, a study of the relationship between the Friars Minor and those societies must begin with an equation, which, while it contains certain common terms (the brothers were part and parcel of the society in which they worked), also combines elements that are very different. For one thing, the brothers were religious and men of the Church; they also brought with them ideals and forms of organization that could not be reduced to the realm of the local.

This led to a sharp conflict between universalism and particularism, even on a juridic level. Take, for example, the reasons given by Honorius III in 1225, when he asked the Pisans to release a Friar Minor who had been seized and put in chains because he was a citizen of Lucca. The pope emphasized that, by entering the Franciscan Order, the brother had become another person. As a religious, he was no longer subject to the law of the territory but only to the universal law of God, and as such he was protected by the Apostolic See (*Bullarium* I, p. 23). But the action taken by the Pisan

civil authorities was not motivated by respect for a man who had left the world for love of Christ and become a new person. And so it was that Franciscan religious universalism and the extraterritoriality guaranteed the brothers as men of God and the Church could conflict with local particularism.

But having said this, we must also admit (anticipating our agreement with the generally accepted results of medieval historicalreligious research) that the deep link the Friars Minor were able to establish with people, leaders, and local governments guaranteed their permanent acceptance. Indeed, it made them a regular part of late-medieval society and revived the old link between city and ecclesiastical institutions, which in the early Middle Ages had been expressed in the bishop and in the bishop's Church. And in recalling the cities, we also recall a link deliberately and consciously forged by the Friars Minor who, after an early and uncertain phase of going back and forth between city and country, chose to settle in the city and adopt it as their preferred field of pastoral activity. In his letter of October 1216, Jacques de Vitry attests: "During the day they go into the cities and villages giving themselves over to the active life in order to gain others; at night, however, they return to their hermitage or solitary places to devote themselves to contemplation" (Fonti Francescane 1977, p. 1907). And in his Historia Anglorum, the English monk Matthew Paris writes: "In those same days, the brothers called lesser ones or the Order of Lesser Brothers, suddenly appearing with the support of Pope Innocent, filled the land, dwelling in the towns and cities" (MGH Scriptores, XXVII, p. 397).

2. Documents

The general sources are not the best way to gain a historical understanding of this linkage; what is needed are the specific documents. Historians, increasingly aware of the history of the mendicant orders, especially the Friars Minor, have taught us to study these, not only for their content but also in themselves and in their origin. They are "material evidence of the workings of an organized society and direct testimony to a particular way of structuring and regulating collective relationships" (Bartoli Langeli 1982, p. 7). In other words, it is not enough to turn to the documents for information; we must also pay attention to their nature and origin and how they are used. We will notice how quickly the Friars Minor adapted to current documentary practice, exploiting all the possibilities. On the general and provincial level, for matters pertaining to internal and supraterritorial jurisdiction, they used the documentary system of the chanceries. But on the local level, at least for the area considered here (thirteenth-century Italy), they used notarial documents (ibid., p. 13). These

are the first and most important (though not exclusive) tool for understanding the relationship between the Friars Minor and society. Indeed, notarial acts occupy a predominant place among thirteenth-century documents. They are not only written texts meant to confirm the performance or existence of a legal act; they also serve to reinforce the entire network of social relationships, especially the many activities connected with city life in which the Friars Minor were immersed. Within the Church, the role of documents produced by notaries was such that, paradoxically, one could speak of the thirteenth-century Italian Church as a "notarial Church" (Brentano 1988, p. 294).

Read and interpreted in this way, the documents can give us a very good idea of the social establishment of the Friars Minor (and other religious orders), their position as interface in a close-knit web of relationships, and their impact on the Church and collective life. But for the early period and for a long time thereafter, most of our information is gleaned from documents that do not come from friary archives, which are inadequate and appeared only later, but from other local archives, which are much more abundant. The reason for this was the Franciscan genetic code, which marked Francis's distrust of written documents, especially those granting privileges (Pratesi 1982). The saint's teaching and his followers' agonized wishes to remain faithful to him in this area acted as a brake on the establishment of friary archives. But the relative abundance of external data shows that the Friars Minor not only soon became an important segment of society, but that they inserted themselves naturally into the everyday life of the local population. From Città di Castello to Pinerolo-to mention just two smaller cities that have been carefully studied in this regard (Casagrande 1989; Piazza 1993)—documentary information about the brothers is routine, as are the documents themselves, which attest to the brothers' active presence in everyday life (presence as witnesses, interventions in legal acts, wills, and testaments).

3. Poor among the Poor

But if we are to avoid unwarranted generalizations, we must precisely determine the first signs and clear evidence of their appearance on the local scene. The documents show that what the Friars Minor were and wanted to be, and what the people expected them to be, were not the same and were changing. The period before the early 1220s still belongs to the prehistory of their local establishment. The hagiographic sources preserve very faint signs of a transition, which later historical memory tended to portray as a mythical age of origins, often linked to the erudite "discovery" of houses founded by Francis himself. Only at the end of the 1230s do we

find the first clear evidence that the brothers are beginning to settle down. In notarial acts and statutes, in papal letters and civic annals, the Friars Minor appear as poor people among other poor people. Later they appear more often as trustworthy men to be called as witnesses and executors of last wills and testaments, as guarantors of agreements, as heeded advisers to individuals and communities. But rarely do they occupy a prominent position in the local network of religious presences. Even in cities near Assisi, such as Orvieto or Città di Castello (Riccetti 1987, pp. XIX-XXI, XXIII-XXIV; Casagrande 1989, pp. XXXV-XXXVIII), the first mention of their presence is followed by years of almost total silence. This scarcity of data is not just a documentary fact; most likely it also indicates that the brothers did not play a leading role. The local communities that welcomed them and watched them slowly become involved in a complex and dynamic urban reality (even in its ecclesiastical-religious elements) were probably not fully aware of the novelty they represented. Prestigious, yet also needing alms, it was hard for them to appear as privileged recipients of charity. Nor did they exercise a monopoly as far as lay piety was concerned, even in cities like Florence where Francis himself had been a major figure. There, penitents and devout laypeople, who formed the backbone of several movements, refused to let themselves be won over by the mendicant orders that were appearing on the Florentine scene, even though these Orders were "on the cutting edge and still full of the novelty of the Gospel." And if there is no question that "the spiritual commotion caused by the itinerant presence of Francis of Assisi in central Italy influenced them in a special way..., their direct link to the person of the Poverello, whose intentions went beyond the narrow confines of a religious order..., enabled them to identify with the various initiatives and foundations without allowing themselves to be won over for long by any of them" (Dal Pino 1972, pp. 745-6).

Yet it is certain that the brothers soon became a rallying point, especially for youth. The early testimony of the Bolognese master Boncompagno of Signa is eloquent: "The Lesser Brothers in part are mere youths or boys" (Fonti Francescane 1977, p. 1922). The bishop of Acre, Jacques de Vitry, noted: "This Order is multiplying rapidly throughout the world.... [I]t sends out two by two throughout the world, not only formed religious, but also immature young men" (ibid., p. 1909). There is also the action of a certain Bartholomew, son of the late Palermo Brauco, who lived near Eboli. In May 1226, wishing to don the Franciscan habit "or that of some other religious order," he renounced his father's inheritance in favor of his sister (Vitolo 1986, p. X). In other words, the true decisive factor, before his choice of a particular order, was his interior conversion; the Franciscan Order was just one possible choice.

Among the groups that were appealing to evangelical poverty and bringing new life to religion and society, there was a certain fluidity and variety. This also creates uncertainties and differences in terminology in local documents. We are not referring here to the name or kind of establishment (locus, ecclesia, claustrum, conventum). A phase of simple and precarious presence leads from true implantation outside the city to definitive establishment by moving inside the walls or at least to an area less peripheral. The studies of Pellegrini have shed much light on these processes. What we are referring to are the names used in the documents to identify the various groups. The notaries who drew up the earliest acts concerning the mendicant orders had no doubt about what to call the followers of St. Dominic: they are the Friars of the Order of Preachers. But they are unsure about what to call the Franciscans, who are described by the same choices of poverty that were proper to other movements. Thus, in the 1228 testament of the Doge of Venice, Pietro Ziani, the Franciscans are not called minores but minimi (Borsari 1978, p. 63). In the will of a Veronese woman we find a bequest to the pauperibus minoribus Sancti Gabrieli, who are certainly not members of the Order of St. Francis (Varanini 1983, pp. 106-07; Pellegrini 1985, p. 68). In 1233, in Varese, we witness the foundation of the house of the Humiliati, which was supposed to be called de virginibus, and a certain Pietro of Padua ordinis pauperum minorum, whose membership in the Franciscan Order is questionable (Pellegrini 1984, p. 88). In reality, the Franciscans seem to be part of a diverse and ill-defined pauperistpenitential movement that predates them and assumes minority as a distinctive trait. It is independent of the movement created by Francis of Assisi, which only after the founder's death acquired local visibility, a role, and an importance at first not reflected in the sources.

4. The Turning Point

The turning point came at the end of the 1220s when those who favored greater involvement in the life of the Church and society prevailed within the Order and when Gregory IX became pope. Fortified by the experience he had gained as legate in Lombardy (which is to say, in northern Italy), the new pope, immediately after his election, mapped out a plan for renewal based on the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council. At first he entrusted it mainly to the Dominicans and the Benedictines, but these were soon helped by the Franciscans. On April 29, 1227, he sent a letter to the podestàs and people of that region. In it he denounced their negligence and failure to observe the laws against heretics, he lamented the attacks against the freedom of the Church, he rebuked them for tolerating usury, and he reminded the rulers to respect the decrees of the Council. On July 14, he

wrote to the archbishops and bishops, urging them to undertake a top-tobottom reform of the regular and secular clergy, starting with themselves. He gave directives on how they should proceed, and he promised to send some Dominicans to help them (Rigon 1992, pp. 182-3). Based on these measures, a widespread program of religious and political intervention began in northern Italy, entrusted to the Dominicans and Benedictines, the Franciscans at first remaining more hidden. But they soon became involved. Between 1227 and 1228 they were involved in antiheritical activities in Bassano and Milan. During the next two years they were part of a campaign of preaching and pacification among the people of the Venetian mainland, the leading figure being Brother Anthony of Lisbon (who would later be better known as Anthony of Padua). In 1230, at the urging of an official commission of friars, Gregory IX issued the bull Quo elongati, which caused the Order to move decisively in the direction of an internal transformation and the acceptance of pastoral ministries and ecclesiastical offices. Thus, in 1233 they and the Dominicans led a new campaign, becoming part of a devotional movement known as the Alleluia (ibid., pp. 183-94).

The movement was started in Parma, in the spring of that year, by a certain Benedict, a strange character and a friend of the mendicants but not a member of any order. It spread rapidly in northern Italy. In many cities, supported by enthusiastic crowds, the brothers concluded peace agreements. They also asked for and obtained changes in the statutes, having laws passed against heretics and usurers, and measures defending the privileges of the Church. While the Dominican John of Vicenza was proclaimed dux et rector in Vicenza and Verona, in Parma the people gave full dominium to the Franciscan Gerard of Modena. In Piacenza, the Franciscan Leo of Perego was charged with settling conflicts between representatives of the old communal regime and the rising people's regime. In Monza, the same Leo, with the help of the archpriest, drew up statutes against the heretics. In Alba and Vercelli, Brother Henry of Padua and Brother Henry of Milan, both Franciscans, worked to reform the statutes (Vauchez 1990, pp. 119-61).

We cannot say with certainty that the mendicants were attempting a permanent seizure of power. Ends and means were essentially religious. Politically speaking, the lack of a single line and the questionable behavior of contending factions and groups in the northern communes created a general hostility that in the end translated into failure. Nevertheless, the apostolic campaigns in northern Italy in the 1230s and 1240s represented the first global impact of the brothers on local societies. It was their first attempt to exercise openly a broad influence on urban public life and on the relationships between ecclesiastical power and communes (Dal Pino 1989, pp. 105-8). And although the immediate political results may seem

disappointing, conditions were created for the mendicants to become more deeply established in the cities of Lombardy. We see this even in the construction of their churches and friaries, where the people helped in the work and the communes offered financial help. Thus were laid the foundations of a more effective long-term influence, which was not exclusively religious. The brothers offered their help in establishing confraternities, congregations, associations, peace and faith groups in which the laity, under the spiritual guidance of the brothers, were formed and prepared to defend Christian doctrine and morality, and to assume political leadership in the cities. The politically victorious Guelphs also took advantage of this prolonged action and attempts to control the local power centers by means of devout laypeople under the protection of the mendicant orders (Vauchez 1990, pp 151-4).

In the "Alleluia Year" and those following, a strategy for expansion into parts of southern Italy also seems to emerge, for example in the Franciscan province of Terra di Lavoro, which more or less included present-day Campania, part of southern Lazio and Basilicata (Vitolo 1986, pp. X-XII). But in the Kingdom of Sicily the Franciscans and Dominicans faced serious obstacles. Already in 1229, the Franciscans had been expelled because of their fervent opposition to the excommunicated Frederick II (Fonseca 1987, pp. 3-4). After the brief but significant conflict of 1229 had been settled, the situation came to a head with the emperor's excommunication once again ten years later. The conflict between empire and papacy had become dramatic and irreversible. Frederick strongly opposed the activity of the mendicants because of their ties with Rome and the pope's policies, and in 1239 he expelled all those who were not his subjects (ibid., pp. 4-5; Barone 1978, pp. 614-5). In the long run, the climate of hostility with the Swabian dynasty limited the mendicants' chances of success, albeit to various degrees. Yet the Friars Minor were able (not without difficulty) to make connections even in the cities of the south, and create conditions for their establishment there. Thus it was in Palermo, where the painful first establishment, around 1235, was made possible by the generosity of some bourgeois, among whom an outsider from Pisa stands out. Thus also in Messina, where the brothers took advantage of the support of a noblewoman who came from a family with strong anti-imperial sentiments (D'Alatri 1987, pp. 29-30, 33-4).

In some cities the brothers were subject to threats and harassment. They were the butt of anti-imperial hatred and, in the case of Palermo, dislike on the part of the local clergy, who could not stand any kind of competition in the care of souls. In other areas, despite occasional friction and clashes, which halted the expansion of Franciscanism in the Kingdom

for decades, relations were more relaxed. The problems were caused by local tensions. In planning the building of a friary in 1247, the Friars Minor of San Germano (present-day Cassino) met resistance from the local Church, but not from the royal power (Barone 1978, p. 616). In Eboli, there is nothing to suggest hostility on the part of the Swabian officials; in fact, members of the ruling dynasty proved to be generous benefactors of the brothers (Vitolo 1986, p. XV).

5. Among Nobles and Bourgeois

The magna devotio shown by the mendicants in 1233 also brought in new recruits. Won over by the able and concerted efforts of the brothers. according to the Franciscan chronicler Salimbene de Adam, "many men renounced the world and entered the Order of Friars Minor or the Friars Preacher" (Chronicle, p. 108). The Order had been developing for some time in directions unforeseen by Francis. The Earlier Rule (VII) allowed the brothers to have the tools needed for their trade, which leads us to to believe that Francis's first companions included not only nobles such as Bernard of Quintavalle and Peter Cattani, or clerics such as Sylvester, but also poor laborers and petty artisans (Miccoli 1974, pp. 760-1). But very soon recruitment was extended to include growing numbers of secular and regular clergy, merchants, and guildsmen, members of the aristocracy. learned theologians, and lawyers. Their conversion to voluntary poverty became a model to propose to the faithful for their edification. Thus in the course of the thirteenth century "the Order of St. Francis provided the Roman Church with an essential tool for the recruitment of new social classes, especially urban...and for the organization of a new pastoral presence" (ibid., p. 763).

Having become part of the local scene, Franciscanism seems to have been a real attraction for the upper and more dynamic urban social classes, at times in those things that most distinguished them even on a political level. While in the south the new recruits sometimes came from anti-imperial families (D'Alatri 1987, p.30), in Campagna (central Italy) the establishment of the Order was supported by the popes and their relatives, and it is not uncommon to find members of papal families among the Friars Minor (D'Alatri 1977, pp. 579-81, 583-4). In Pisa, a sermon by the archbishop Federico Visconti mentions merchants as the special friends of St. Francis and his friars. And indeed it was the merchant and artisan class that gave the Order its first members, together with persons from among the nobility (Ronzani 1985, pp. 33-8). In Treviso the Franciscans seem to have drawn their membership from a homogeneous class of professionals, namely the judges (Rando 1996, pp. 122-3), while in Padua moneylenders,

landowners, accountants—in other words, the backbone of the community's leaders—made a notable contribution of men to the new *religio* (Rigon 1983, pp. 20-1, 25-6, 31-6).

The fact that the Franciscans were linked by early and close ties to the noble and wealthier classes, thanks to the conversion of members of the old and new aristocracy (some of them famous) and the kindness and protection they extended to individual friars and groups, cannot be disputed. Yet these relationships were not automatic or necessary. While in Perugia, for example, the primary relations of the mendicant orders—the Friars Minor in particular—were with the nobility, elsewhere stronger ties were established with the merchants (Bartoli Langeli 1979, p. 109). There is also evidence for ties to the lower classes. On the other hand, we must also remember that the friars show up in documents that concern church bodies or upper-crust families that were able to produce such documents (Rigon 1983, p. 25). In other words, caution is required.

Nor can we disregard the fact that, especially in the beginning, individuals might often and quite naturally maintain ties with their families. even after entering the Order or deciding to lead a life of penance under the protection of the friars. It is true, moreover, that "the choice of minoritas did not isolate a person from society, nor, as may have happened in the early days of the Franciscan movement, sever the bonds of kinship, dependence and solidarity with one's family or group" (ibid., p. 33). Take the case of Bonconte Coppoli, the noble Perugian who gave lodging and protection to Brother Giles, one of Francis's dearest companions who retired to Monteripido near Perugia after the saint's death. Ties of blood were apparently of little concern to Coppoli, and his human relationships seem to have centered on other things. These included Franciscan groups as different as zealots and conventuals, and especially persons who, sharing his choices, had created a small informal religious community of men and women around Giles and around Coppoli himself after Giles's death (Bartoli Langeli 1979, p. 53). But the fact that Coppoli remained leader of a diverse group (a clientele, really) that had converted like himself shows how devotional ties to Franciscan groups ended, namely, in the mutual interaction of many human and social relationships centered on the dominus. The picture of the latter as a person of authority and prestige, capable of farreaching influence, remained intact despite his religious choices, which in fact left room for distinctions and hierarchies to reappear on another level (ibid., pp. 111-2).

Other similar examples could be cited. For example, the experience of Coppoli might be compared to that of the Paduan Buffone di Bertoloto. Not a vir religiosus, he "headed and hosted a penitential-type community."

But he was definitely devoted to the Friars Minor, and his religious orientation, reflected in his testament (1238), probably involved "the whole social structure that was directly linked to him," especially those who had served him and lived with him (Bartoli Langeli 1986, p. 121).

With the parable of the noble Perugian and the rich Paduan, and perhaps others like them, there is no need to point out the almost inevitable conclusion that "everything changes because nothing changes." More simply, we can draw from it a lesson of how resistant are attitudes, mindsets, and points of reference, and "how organically linked are religious experiences and motives to social behaviors in the broad sense" (ibid.). These reflections on the permanence of systems of values and behavior, even within cultures and social organisms that are changing, can also be extended to other situations particularly connected with the Franciscan experience.

6. Useful Poverty

Even around the 1230s, when the heroic phase-that of the adventurous and itinerant Franciscanism of the early days-was tending to fade and be replaced by stable establishment, the deep footprint of poverty still remained in the cement of the strong and radical message of the Gospel. In allotting large sums for the construction of a church and house (1230), statutes such as those of the commune of Treviso are terse in listing the duties and responsibilities of the Dominicans: strengthening the Catholic faith, preaching, and celebration of divine services (ed. Liberali 1951, II, p. 268). But in similar provisions for the Friars Minor enacted in a solemn assembly (1231) that opens with an invocation of God, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Francis, they seem inspired by a desire to praise, among all the virtues, the excellence of almsgiving. They are anxious to present their deliberations in support of those brothers "who are truly poor" as advantageous "for the well-being and common good of the city of Treviso." Even in the eyes of the Treviso civil authorities, the specific nature and function of the Friars Minor was to be poor. Their usefulness to the city was linked to poverty, since this would guarantee prosperity and good government:

In honor of almighty God, the glorious ever-virgin Mary, the confessor St. Francis, and all the saints. Since those who fear the Lord will lack for nothing, and since the most excellent of all virtues and graces is to give alms to the poor, and since all things are done well if the principle is fitting and pleasing to God..., we, for the well-being and common good of the city of Treviso, looking kindly upon the Order of Friars Minor who are truly poor, decree by this most humane constitution that within two months from the beginning of his rule the podestà and commune of Treviso are

bound and must give and pay one thousand pounds in cash...to the same Order of Friars Minor (ibid., pp. 269-70).

A source of relationships with civic institutions, the poverty of the brothers was also a source of private relationships. At first the need for food, clothing, and temporary lodging attracted a silent and hidden response, not generally documented, but included in documents addressed to others. After the Franciscan communities became firmly established and more noticeably clerical, almsgiving tended to be expressed in more formal ways. The testament was the new way by which the faithful made bequests to houses and individual friars, aided groups of penitents associated with them, regulated the transfer of goods with the advice of the religious, confirmed their trustworthiness by naming them executors of their wills, secured their help in drawing up their wills, and assured themselves a decent funeral and suffrages after their death. It provided an opportunity to make up for wrongs committed by giving back ill-gotten goods. Limited at first to a few devout souls, the use of the testament spread so widely in the second half of the thirteenth century that it became a veritable social custom. The testament was a principal means for establishing ties between the laity and the mendicant orders, who promoted it as a concrete way to practice charity and gain eternal salvation (Bartoli Langeli 1985b, pp. IX-XVII).

As far as the communes were concerned, acts of generosity for the construction of churches and houses, the repair of buildings and the realization of projects on behalf of the friars were considered a source of blessing for the entire civitas. Similarly, on a private level, a testament that showed generosity to Christ's poor, whether religious or lav, was transformed into an instrument of redemption. The solution to the problem of salvation for the rich and powerful of this world, as proposed by the Friars Minor, was the traditional one: they should convert their money, obtained and spent on the joys and pleasures of this world, into works of mercy. The theoretical and practical justification of riches, properly used, was religiously liberating to thirteenth-century society, which was caught up in the moral and material problems created by economic expansion, by the growth of the city, and by the success of the new social classes. Thus was laid the foundation for a profound osmosis, spiritual and cultural, between the brothers' proposal and the people's hopes, and thus were created the conditions for the widespread involvement of the Friars Minor in the public and private affairs of urban society.

7. Franciscan Saints and Civic Self-awareness

The exchange took place on both an institutional and personal level. It touched many areas, not the least of which was the very sensitive area of civic self-awareness, which profited from new contributions of lay and ecclesiastical culture by the elites of the commune, and which also took advantage of the cult of new local saints.

The emergence and acceptance of sanctity that was both civic and Franciscan is evident in figures such as Ambrose of Massa (91240) and Simon of Collazzone (R1250), venerated in Orvieto and Spoleto respectively. The former was a priest, the latter of noble birth. Both had given up the comforts of the world, entering the Order of Friars Minor so as to live in poverty and humility, dedicating themselves to the apostolate, to works of mercy and to service of the word for the primary purpose of winning souls for God (Vauchez 1989, pp. 319-22). After their deaths, it was the communal authorities themselves who asked that their cults be officially recognized. The governments hoped to strengthen civic identity by exploiting an element of cohesion and prestige such as devotion to local saints. Their desire coincided with that of the brothers to see their house consecrated and honored by devotion to the bodies of the saints buried there (Paciocco 1990, pp. 72-3). But the results were almost always negative, a sign of the ongoing and thoroughly problematic conflict between the universal demands of the papacy (which was in the process of determining procedures for canonization) and local pressures. In the context of a general tendency to limit canonizations, the political inopportuneness of recognizing cults "that might become the focal points of a civic identity dangerous for papal control," disputes about the meaning of sainthood, and differences regarding procedures to be followed were insurmountable hurdles. These things favored halfway solutions, such as recognition of a cult being limited to a strictly local level (ibid., pp. 73-9). A limitation, yet also strengthening factor: "Control over civic sanctity was assigned precisely to the local level where the Franciscans were becoming increasingly important. The popes, by refusing to grant official recognition to local saints, were implicitly assigning that task to the Order itself, allowing the Order to control it just as it did the other things related to the care of souls" (ibid., p. 79).

On the other hand, not every request was refused. The most famous case (and an example in its own way) in which the universalism of the Church, the supraterritoriality of the Friars Minors and municipalism came together, though not without tension, was the cult of St. Anthony of Padua. Proclaimed a saint by Gregory IX in 1232 and proposed for universal veneration by the Church as a champion of orthodoxy, he had died in a city

where the pope's political and religious plans for Lombarday, enunciated in 1227, seem to have been carried out in an exemplary manner. For a long time Anthony, together with Francis, was the only canonized saint among the Friars Minor, yet at the same time he was the saint of Padua and indissolubly linked to it.

8. At the Service of the City

Devotion to local saints contributed to the formation of civic self-awareness. But it was only one manifestation of the mutual relationships between friars and communes that expressed themselves in so many ways. It was not unusual for the Franciscans to offer their church for city council meetings (for just a few examples, see the cases of Alatri and Ferentino: D'Alatri 1977, pp. 581, 583), or for the friary to keep important books that belonged to the commune, as in Padua (*Statuti*, ed. Gloria 1873, nos. 1142, 1180), or for the brothers to be made ambassadors or responsible *super partes* for the appointment of public officials, even at the top level, or to check the work of authorities and administrators.

Somewhat paradoxically, the guarantee of honest administration provided by the vow of poverty caused the communal governments to employ the friars in financial matters. In Perugia, in 1266, a brother of the Order of Friars Minor was consulted by the civil authorities as an expert in money and the market. Two of his confreres, in their capacity as bookkeepers and scribes, were asked to make a copy of the records of the city and surrounding area, to be preserved afterward in the sacristy of St. Francis (Galletti 1979, pp. 20-1). Such administrative services show the high degree of trust enjoyed by the Franciscans among the rulers and citizens, and it lets us catch a glimpse of the professional qualifications and social background of some of them. It is easy to find in the documents examples of friars who were notaries, engineers, jurists, experts in finance and the art of war employed by the citizenry. Once again Perugia offers an instructive example of how the brothers were employed as technicians. In 1266 the commune, which was planning to build a fountain in each of the five districts, sought the help either of "Friars Minor who were experts in plumbing" or of other magistri in the city. A certain Brother Deodatus was referred to as the magister fontium and, later, the statutes of 1279 assign the Franciscans as advisers in projects related to the waterworks and masonry, facts that prove they were a sought-after and special source of manpower (ibid., pp. 22-3).

In other cities too, the authorities often entrusted the completion of public projects and the supervision of food distribution to experts from among the ranks of the Franciscans and the mendicant orders in general. Because of their prestige, the brothers were assigned the task of guaranteeing order in political life and acting as advisers in the most diverse areas of administration and government. And these things were not the exception; they were part of the normal mutual relationships deriving from the very notion of religious life. For the mendicants, economic support of the city in which they lived was essential. The large construction sites and the building of churches and friaries—important elements in the relationship between city and mendicant orders—required manpower, the hiring of experts and workers even from other cities, many transactions, and the activation of various sectors of the market. These were benefits but also heavy burdens for the civic communities, which subsidized the building and maintenance of churches and friaries (Pellegrini 1988, pp. 83-4).

Ordinarily, or even by way of exception, the local authorities saw to it that the brothers did not lack financial help. In order to regulate relationships in areas involving material and administrative activities, the brothers had recourse to lay procurators. These were appointed by the ministers of the Order, as permitted by Innocent IV (1247), but later, at the request of the brothers themselves, they were appointed by the pope (Bartoli Langeli 1982, pp. 54-5; Ronzani 1985, pp. 18-20). A phenomenon observed in Umbria, Florence, Pisa, Bologna, and even some cities in Switzerland and Germany may have been due to papal interventions, but we do not know to what extent. In these places, syndics and procurators for the friaries were appointed by the communes themselves at the request of the Friars Minor. The latter preferred a decentralized system, entrusted to the local lay authorities, to one run and controlled by the ministers, who would have enjoyed too much freedom in temporal affairs. The Perugia statutes of 1279, appealing to the common good, provided for the appointment of fourteen syndics and procurators for the brothers; they could be recalled only by the general council. This leaves no doubt about the ability of Franciscanism to be part of the city, even to the point where the representation and defense of the friars' interests became identified with the public good. Along the same line, the Commune of Todi was bound by a statute of 1275 to appoint the procurators of all the mendicant houses in the city. A century later, in 1381, a kind of register of procurators was drawn up for the Franciscan friary of S. Fortunato. In addition to six legal experts, it included the entire body of notaries of the city, in other words ninety-three notaries, all of them obliged to look after the interests of the religious communities on the assumption that these coincided with the common good (Bartoli Langeli 1982, p. 55).

9. Agreements and Disagreements

Relations between the brothers and local societies and their political and ecclesiastical institutions were not always smooth. For example, friction with the clergy caused problems, even serious ones. By the mid-thirteenth century the conflict between mendicants and secular clergy—who saw their rights in the care of souls and the accompanying revenues as endangered was not just theoretical, nor was it resolved solely in the classrooms of the University of Paris. Whenever anything involved preaching, hearing confessions, administering the sacraments, hearing the last wishes of the dying, or burying the dead—in short, whenever anything had to do with the care of souls on a daily basis—conditions were ripe for conflict, and not just in a general sense or automatically attributable to theoretical debates. In the south, in Catania and Palermo, the secular clergy opposed the establishment of the friars, even violently and with the support of lay members of the imperial party (D'Alatri 1987, pp. 32-3). But elsewhere, also in the south (Eboli), a healthy parochial structure seems not to have been threatened by the establishment of the mendicants (Vitolo 1986, pp. XII-XV). Similarly, in central and northern Italy, it was the particular local situation that favored either conflict or the peaceful insertion of the new religious communities into the fabric of older pastoral structures. In Padua, the bishop Giovanni Forzaté (1250-83) obstructed the work of the Friars Minor, forcing the pope himself to intervene in their defense (Rigon 1981, p. 294). But at the same time the bishop of neighboring Treviso was the Franciscan Alberto, elected by the canons of that city (Rando 1996, pp. 152-75). And Vicenza and Verona were ruled by Dominican bishops (Gaffuri 1993, pp. IX-XXXVI; Rigon 1988, pp. 38-40).

By mid-century, mendicants were becoming bishops more or less everywhere. The assumption by friars of offices and functions in the government of the local Church definitely served to lessen tensions with the ecclesiastical institution. The Friars Minor had felt these especially, since with Francis and his companions they were proposing forms of Christian presence in the Church and society different from the traditional ones. The fact that influential brothers continued to refuse the office of bishop reflects a persistent personal difficulty in accepting positions of power and the responsibility of governing a diocese.

The inquisition, entrusted to the Dominicans and Franciscans after the middle of the century, also upset relationships with local societies. By 1254, the friars had charge of eight inquisitorial provinces, six of which were reserved to the Franciscans: the March of Treviso, Romagna, Tuscany, the Marches, Umbria, and Lazio (D'Alatri 1986, p. 129). This was disturbing, especially after the theological and doctrinal content of heresy became

secondary and those targeted for oppression were those who were disobedient to the Church, in reality its political foes; or, on the other hand, when it began to affect the big financial interests of moneylenders closely linked to the ruling political class. For this reason the inquisition was often seen as the expression of a power unrelated to local realities and thus in conflict with civic powers, not only lay, but also ecclesiastical. It is no accident that in Padua, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the bishop and commune lined up against the work of the inquisitors, causing the pope to intervene and the Friars Minor to be recalled from the *officium fidei* (ibid., pp. 139-217; 223-42). And, in the same region, if in cities like Verona the friars were identified with the inquisition (Varanini 1983, pp. 115-23), elsewhere, as in Treviso, the Franciscan bishop Alberto opposed the inquisitor, also a Franciscan, and was supported by the commune (Rando 1996, pp. 161-5).

Because they openly participated in the collective life of the society in which they worked, Franciscan communities—and sometimes individual brothers—were so conditioned that they became, perhaps unwittingly, rallying points in conflicts within the cities and between cities. Although it may have been more common to meet the friar who, following in the footsteps of Francis, strove to "abolish hostilities and renew agreements of peace" (Thomas of Spalato: Fonti Francescane 1977, p. 1932), one could also find religious who were involved in civic divisions. Take for example Orvieto where in 1313, the day after the battle between the rival Filippeschi and Monaldeschi factions, each group carried its dead to its respective church: "And their dead [those of the Filippeschi] were buried in the church of St. Dominic, but Captain Bindo and Buccio Beccari were buried with the nobles of the city in St. Francis" (Riccetti 1987, p. XXIV). This division reflected the division of the city into areas of influence (not merely pastoral) of the two mendicant churches located on opposite sides of the city.

More generally, as we have said several times, it was the two souls of local Franciscanism that constituted the potential, either for tension and division or for the establishment of positive relationships. On the one hand, [Franciscanism] "was linked directly and immediately to the Apostolic See and thus the representative and bearer of strong and precisely directed political aspirations, often opposed by communal governments." On the other hand, "it consisted, at least in large part, of brothers from that place" who by no means forgot from where they came (Bartoli Langeli 1985a, p. 99). This, we believe, is a useful key to understanding the relationship established by the Friars Minor with local societies.

The turbulent political life of the thirteenth-century communes would also lead us to identify periods of agreement and periods of tension

and conflict related to the success of new classes and changes in political regime. The view today is that in the internal struggles the mendicant orders were linked "to the new classes of merchants and artisans rather than to the old communal aristocracy" (Violante 1986, p. 57). Even in a limited area such as southern Umbria, a variety of strategies have been identified (they are objectively compatible, even prescinding from explicit intentions). There was the urban policy of the "popular" communes who were adding territory to the city and organizing the outlying areas where the mendicants lived, and there were the autonomous choices of the friars to settle in the city (Bartoli Langeli 1985a, pp. 94-6). But these links were not strong everywhere, as can be seen based on what we have said so far. As for local developments, our picture of the links between friars and social groups and city governments is much more detailed and does not exclude strong relationships with civic aristocracies or noble dynasties. Nor does this network of relationships exclude interest in land or the search for a kind of landed inheritance by means of simulated forms and with the help of penitents and spiritual friends (Rigon 1983, pp. 30-5). Similar links only serve to confirm the active participation of the brothers in all aspects of local societies.

10. An Open Question

But was there total integration? Recently, there has been discussion about the extent to which Franciscanism was assimilated into society, and scholars have pointed out the stages in an evolution. The phase of spontaneous and pre-institutional Franciscanism coincided "with the time of early and uncertain gathering in urban settings." In the next phase, the movement was transformed into an "assimilated organism" that shared the views and values of the city when, in the late thirteenth century, "the dominant elites were able to exercise complete control over city and urban Church" (Cracco 1983, p. 7). This process, it has been noted, was not a unilateral and progressive assimilation of civic structures and culture to the original Franciscan religious intuition or to Franciscanism as a religious order. In a network of relationships marked by conflict, "change and independent behavior existed because the Friars Minor, and the mendicant orders in general, were reflecting on reality and sharing with society the fruits of their reflection, trying to translate them into norms of behavior, into proposals with a regulative purpose" (Merlo 1991, p. 217). The relationship could also work the other way. In some cases—often even—it would be the society and individuals that were assimilated to the Friars Minor, who were involved primarily as pastors and spiritual guides through confession and spiritual direction.

These are obviously simplifications, yet they suggest hypotheses and raise questions that should be included among the more important Franciscan questions, linked as they are to the broader topic of the relationship between religion and society in the late Middle Ages. Giovanni Miccoli has seen in the history of the Order of Friars Minor a process of "progressive integration...in the traditional context of the institutional Church." For him, the mendicant orders, rather than "bearers of a new concept of religious life for the masses," were supporters of a proposal that in practice involved "the substantial acceptance of models and modes of behavior typical of society and its dominant groups." Yet even he has appropriately warned against summary conclusions, inviting us to "distinguish carefully between classes, groups, tendencies, situations, and local relationships that are very different, both with regard to the orders and with regard to the laity." He is convinced that it would be a serious mistake to imagine "substantial harmony and rapid (albeit partial) integration between Italian civic society and the mendicant orders right from the beginning, or at any rate during the thirteenth century" (Miccoli 1974, pp. 765, 798, 841, and 806, respectively). To this we can also add the persistent anti-urban tensions within the Franciscan movement, the resistance to cultural developments in the Order, and the rejection of the logic of power. Although these were the positions of marginal groups, they kept alive in the Franciscan experience alternatives to the choices and directions being taken by the Order. And it was these alternatives that kept alive in society the hope of renewal, a dissatisfaction, and an expectation that was often frustrated, yet continued to reappear.

Born in the Italy of cities and communes from a Christian proposal addressed to all the faithful, the Franciscan movement as a whole participated deeply in that kind of society and changed along with it. The contribution of the Friars Minor to that new world included a new pastoral plan, a new holiness, a new way of interpreting the Gospel without breaking with tradition. To borrow the title of a recent book (Brentano 1994), it was a new world that over the course of a century had invaded even the small places occupied by local societies.

Critical Note

Many references, interpretive suggestions, and points for reflection concerning the relationships between the Friars Minor and local societies in the period considered here can be found in the general outline of Italian religious history from the Middle Ages to early modern times in Miccoli 1974, in the collections of essays by Vauchez 1990 and Merlo 1991, and in

the volume by Pellegrini 1984 devoted to the subject of Franciscan settlements.

For the documents, the catalogue of the Perugia exhibition Documenti e Archivi 1982 is essential. Also very useful are the archival and documentary contributions, the fruit of collective research on Chiese e conventi degli Ordini mendicanti in Umbria nei secoli XIII e XIV, which have appeared since 1984 in the series "Archivi dell'Umbria. Inventari e richerche." This same series contains the important volume Nolens intestatus decedere 1985, devoted to the testament as a source of religious and social history; it includes pieces on methodology and texts dealing with specific situations.

The presence of the Friars Minor, and the mendicant orders in general, in particular places is the subject of numerous articles. The acts of the Round Table held in Rome in April 1977 on *Les ordres mentiants* have been the starting point of many investigations. Also studied and discussed there were proposals offered by Jacques Le Goff based on his research project (launched by him in the review *Annales* with two articles from 1968 and 1970) on the urbanization of medieval France. In them he showed the close relationship between the presence of mendicant houses and the urban character of a population center.

Of more than merely local interest are the studies of Umbria, especially Perugia (Francescanesimo e società cittadina 1979), and the region of Venice, for which see Minoritismo e centri veneti 1983 and Esperienze minoritiche 1985. For the rich data that have been collected see also the volumes II Francescanesimo in Lombardia 1983 and Francescanesimo e cultura in Sicilia 1987.

In contrast with the learned yet praiseworthy tradition, which focused especially on the history of individual houses, innovative contributions have been made on the general impact of the Friars Minor and the mendicant orderson cities and urban society by studies such as that of Galletti 1979 (on Perugia), Ronzani 1985 (on Pisa), Benvenuti Papi 1990 (on Florence), Alberzoni 1991 (on Milan) and Rando 1996 (on Treviso). These are just a few examples of a kind of research that has involved and continues to involve many scholars. A model piece of research, which reconstructs the profile of an individual and his entourage and thus focuses on more general questions of the relationships between the mendicant movement and communal society in the thirteenth century, is the study devoted to Giacomo di Bonconte Coppoli by Bartoli Langeli 1979.

For particular questions touched on in this contribution see Vauchez 1990, pp. 119-61 (Alleluia movement); Vauchez 1989 and Paciocco 1990 (Franciscan saints and local societies); Pellegrini 1981 (relations between the diocesan secular clergy and the mendicant orders); Thomson 1975 (friars who were bishops); D'Alatri 1986 and Vauchez 1990, pp. 162-70 (heretics and inquisitors). The lay Order of Penance has not been mentioned here, since it is the subject of Giovanna Casagrande's article, "An Order for Laypeople: Penance and Penitents in the Thirteenth Century."

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