

From *Reconquista* to Mission in the Early Modern World

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This chapter explores the transformation of Observant concepts of mission and missionary strategies between the last decades of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the Council of Trent. Although it is impossible to chart this transformation as a whole within the limits of this contribution, it is possible to approach the issue thematically, through an analysis of a series of intertwined phenomena and the way in which these have been (mis)interpreted in the past. Thus I hope to shed light on the transformation of missionary concepts and strategies, as well as on the ways this eventually fed back into the European pastoral scene from the 1530s onwards. I also hope to shed light on the way in which past representations of mendicant, and particularly Observant mendicant missionary endeavors have done much to obfuscate a proper historical understanding of events.¹

The emphasis in this article will be mainly on the Observant branches of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, as these were by far the most active in the early New World missions. The missionary activities of both orders have received a massive amount of scholarly attention. Initially, most scholars involved were themselves members of these orders, with strong convictions about the intrinsic missionary character of their own order. This influenced their selection and interpretation of the sources, however, and also shaped historical paradigms that still cast their shadows on current research.

Directly connected with this is the first phenomenon that I would like to address, namely, the missionary self-image of the Observant branches of the Dominican and the Franciscan orders by the end of the middle ages, its relationship with reality, and its initial consequences when Observant Franciscans and Dominicans tried to cope with the massive scope of the missionary frontier in newly discovered lands. As will be shown, this self-image was highly ideological. Thus, it should not be understood as a correct representation of

¹ This article refines and significantly expands an argument first made in my article “Early Mendicant Mission in the New World,” which has been published in *Franciscan Studies* 71 (2013): 197–217.

past missionary experiences and successes, unlike what many historians of mendicant mission until very recently have made us believe.

The second phenomenon explored here concerns the impact of comprehensive Observant visions of a truly Christian society. Many of these visions built on older mendicant notions of societal transformation, but reached fruition within the Observant branches of the mendicant orders during the fifteenth century, and exercised a substantial influence on the ideals and projections of Observant mendicant missionaries, including those who became active in the New World. These comprehensive visions provided, as it were, the ultimate markers of what it meant to transform a non-Christian society into a Christian one, what kind of Christian society the missionaries ought to establish, and whether or not they considered their results a success or a failure.

The third phenomenon I will discuss concerns pastoral practices in the context of mission, and in particular the development of effective and practical pastoral instruments. The production of pastoral instruments had reached a new height of professionalism during the so-called pastoral revolution of the fifteenth century. At issue here is when and how these or comparable instruments became part of the missionary effort outside Europe. Given the unprecedented cultural and linguistic gaps that needed to be bridged by early modern Observant missionaries, it might seem that different instruments were needed. At the same time, given their comparable goals of religious instruction, it also seems that missionaries needed to have recourse to instruments that had proven their validity in christianizing European society.

Finally, the last phenomenon addressed in this chapter concerns the metamorphosis of the very ideas of mission and Christianization due to new missionary experiences. Encounters in the New World soon changed the way in which Observant pastoral professionals began to regard the status of the already converted population within Catholic Europe, and how they understood the need to re-convert those who had lapsed into Protestant heresy. This transformation can be charted both on the level of 'missionary' pastoral practice and on a more ideological level – in celebrations of the heroic missionary-martyr who risked his life in Europe's 'pagan' countryside, or who championed Catholicism in Protestant territories.

The Missionary Self-Image of the Mendicant Orders

Missionary martyrdom and legendary feats of missionary prowess very quickly became part of the medieval mendicant self-image, as is made evident by the content of hagiographical texts and the carefully cultivated iconographical

traditions concerning mendicant missionary martyrs from the thirteenth century onwards. These elements of the mendicant self-image resonated strongly in the works of early modern and modern mendicant order historians, and they remained highly useful for the legitimation of the orders within the Church until at least the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the same concepts of missionary martyrdom and missionary prowess have until recently dominated even secular academic writing on the orders. Hence, many modern historians continue to emphasize the importance of the medieval mendicant missionary endeavors among the infidel beyond the boundaries of Christendom: in Central Asia and the Far East, in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa, and on Europe's pagan borders in North-Eastern Europe.

Within this interpretive matrix, historians of the orders, professed religious and secular alike, tend to adhere to a maximalist portrayal of the medieval mendicant missionary endeavors. They stress the professional preparation for mission among the infidel by pointing to the language schools erected for mendicant missionaries in Spain, Majorca, and Southern Italy. Some even continue to emphasize the inherently peaceful nature of mendicant mission, especially with regard to the Franciscans (frequently with reference to chapter sixteen of the *Regula non Bullata* of 1221 and with allusions to Francis of Assisi's famous peaceful encounter with the Sultan of Egypt in the context of the Fifth Crusade). A more careful scholarly evaluation of the available evidence, however, demonstrates that throughout the medieval period the mendicant missionary effort to convert true infidels (meaning Muslims, Jews, and pagans) was modest. In contrast, much more energy was invested in missionary work among non-Catholic Christian denominations beyond the boundaries of Europe, and in pastoral care among isolated Christian communities within Muslim lands.² Almost none of the celebrated projected mendicant language

2 An excellent analysis of this tendency within Dominican scholarship is provided in Robin Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series (Cambridge: 2009), 8–15, 193ff. The combination of maximalist conceptions and ideas concerning the 'peaceful nature' of Franciscan mission to the infidels is found in the studies of M. de Civezza, E. Randolph Daniel, P. Lehmann, O. van der Vat, A. Camps, and Jan Hoerberichts, but also in Jill R. Webster, "Conversion and Co-Existence: The Franciscan Mission in the Crown of Aragon," in *Iberia and the Mediterranean World of the Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Robert I. Burns S.J.*, Volume II: *Proceedings from 'Spain and the Western Mediterranean'*, eds. P.E. Chevedden, D.J. Kagay & P.G. Padilla, The Medieval Mediterranean. Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453, 8 (Leiden-New York-Cologne: 1996), 163–77. For a deconstruction of such views see not only Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 198–256, but also Bert Roest, "Medieval Franciscan Mission: History and Concept," in *Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity: Judaism,*

schools erected for mission among the Muslims functioned for a significant time period, and many never materialized.³

Moreover, most stories of mendicant missionary successes among the infidel were highly dramatized, even fictional. The most significant exceptions occurred on the Hungarian border among the Cumans, in the Baltic world, and maybe in China during the episcopate of Giovanni of Montecorvino (although Montecorvino circumvented the problem of Christian recruitment in creative ways, for instance by buying young children on the slave market).⁴ In almost all purely missionary fields outside Europe, however – notwithstanding the miraculous conversion stories and the mass baptisms referred to in mendicant hagiographical collections, legends, and even missionary letters – the friars worked predominantly among Christians: Egyptian Copts, Armenians, Syrian Orthodox communities, and a range of other non-Catholic minorities and Christian captives within the vast realm of Islam. In addition, a significant number of friars worked as priests and confessors for Catholics in the Italian and Spanish merchant communities within the Muslim world.⁵

The emerging Observant branches of the mendicant orders were responsible for a significant professionalization of pastoral engagement within Europe during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. This can be inferred from the dramatic increase in sermon collections and works of catechetical instruction, mostly produced by Observant friars, as well as from the impressive and frequent preaching rallies organized by Observant mendicant teams of preachers.⁶ At the same time, Observants inherited and embraced the existing

Christianity and Islam, eds. Wout J. van Bekkum & Paul M. Cobb (Paris-Louvain-Dudley, MA: 2004), 137–61, and I. Vázquez Janeiro, “I Francescani e il dialogo con gli ebrei e saraceni nei secoli XIII–XV,” *Antonianum* 65 (1990): 533–49.

3 Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 31–34, 95–96, 104–32.

4 On Giovanni of Montecorvino's creative ways of recruiting youngsters for the faith, see A. van den Wyngaert et al. (eds.), *Epistolae Fr. Iohannis de Monte Corvino*, in *Sinica Franciscana*, 10 Vols. (Florence: 1929–1997), 3: 335–55. Cf. also J.D. Ryan, “Conversion vs. Baptism? European Missionaries in Asia in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” in *Varieties of Religious Conversion*, ed. James Muldoon (Gainesville: 1997), 146–67.

5 José García Oro, “Los frailes menores en la Hispania Medieval: Reinos, culturas, religiones,” in *Alle frontiere della cristianità. I frati mendicanti e l'evangelizzazione tra '200 e '300. Atti del XXVIII Convegno internazionale, Assisi, 12–14 ottobre 2000* (Spoleto: 2001), 89–134 (esp. 105–07, 124–25); Roest, “Medieval Franciscan Mission,” 145–46.

6 Bert Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction Before the Council of Trent*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 117 (Leiden-Boston: 2004), 52–101, 250–69, 374ff.; Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli, *Pescatori di uomini. Predicatori e piazze alla fine del Medioevo* (Bologna: 2005).

narratives of mendicant missionary prowess among the infidel. As the 'true' heirs and guardians of the original way of life of their respective orders, Observant Franciscans and Dominicans appropriated the satisfying, triumphalistic representations of the early mendicant missionary heroes and martyrs. They adopted iconographical programs of early mendicant missionary martyrs to embellish pulpits and walls in their Observant churches.⁷ They also shaped the hagiographical portraits of their own Observant saints with recourse to a comparable militant missionary and martyrdom-like discourse. A case in point is the portrayal of friars such as Bernardino of Siena, Giovanni of Capistrano, and Bernardino of Feltre in the orders' chronicles and saints' lives.⁸

Like their non-Observant predecessors, however, mendicant Observant friars did not make mission among the infidel a central part of their pastoral activities. What they did engage in on a rather large scale – again, not unlike many of their immediate non-Observant predecessors – was crusade preaching (for instance, in support of the Spanish *reconquista* and the struggle against the rising Ottoman threat in the Balkans), and rather aggressive anti-Judaic diatribes and defamatory anti-Judaic preaching, both towards Christian audiences and in front of gatherings of Jews who were forced to attend. These initiatives did not originate out of a genuine interest in the conversion of Jews (although conversions did occur, frequently under duress). Rather, they were aimed at the creation of a scapegoat enemy and the enhancement of doctrinal purity within the Catholic population.⁹

As Robin Vose has shown for medieval Aragon, for a very long time mendicant friars did not even try to convert the Muslim population in newly conquered territories during the prolonged Iberian *reconquista*. Moreover, at least until the late fourteenth century, the same was true for the Jewish population. From the anti-Judaic pogroms of 1390 onwards, Spanish Jews did convert on a

7 Nirit Debby Ben-Aryeh, "Art and Sermons: Mendicants and Muslims in Florence," in *Tradition, Heterodoxy and Religious Culture*, eds. Chanita Goodblatt and Haim Kreisel (Beer Sheva: 2007), 331–52; Idem, "Visual Rhetoric: Images of Saracens in Florentine Churches," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42:1 (2012): 7–28.

8 See, for instance, Bernardino Guslino, *La vita del beato Bernardino da Feltre*, ed. Ippolita Checchi (Bologna: 2008).

9 Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 139–55, 161–63; Franco Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons. Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago-London: 1999), 164–218; G. Ligato, "Francescani e Domenicani animatori del movimento crociato," in *San Giacomo della Marca e "l'altra" Europa. Crociata, martirio e predicazione nel Mediterraneo Orientale (secc. XIII–XV)*. *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studi (Monteprandone, 24–25 novembre 2006)*, ed. Fulvia Serpico (Monteprandone (Ascoli Piceno)-Tavarnuzze (FI): 2007), 207–32.

relatively large scale to avoid being slaughtered, but this was not the result of a well-thought out missionary campaign by the mendicants.¹⁰ Instead, friars had begun to incite Christians to engage in anti-Judaic violence. In the late 1370s and after, the Dominican Fernando Martínez had stimulated aggression against Jews through a series of highly inflammatory sermons. The resulting violence culminated in the full-scale attack on the Jewish communities of Seville, Valencia, and elsewhere in the Spanish peninsula. By the early fifteenth century (note the parallels in Italy under the auspices of Bernardino of Siena and his Observant Franciscan colleagues), comparable anti-Jewish preaching campaigns and concomitant 'disputations' on the merits of Judaism were orchestrated by the Dominican Vincent Ferrer, causing renewed violence and a wave of forced conversions.¹¹

From the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, and especially during the reign of the Catholic Kings (Ferdinand and Isabella) and of the Observant Franciscan Archbishop of Toledo Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, the normative centering of Catholicism along Observant lines went hand in hand with a policy of aggressive conversion directed towards the subjugated remaining Muslim and Jewish communities (to an extent forcing the latter to choose between conversion or deportation), and a parallel campaign of forced conversions in connection with military campaigns against the Muslims in Northern Africa. These conversion campaigns, presented as part of the *reconquista* and as a prelude to a future *recuperatio Terrae Sanctae*, were hardly peaceful, and hardly the result of a genuine missionary engagement. More properly 'missionary' undertakings that did not resort to threats of annihilation or deportation probably only took place within some of the new Atlantic and African footholds of Portugal.¹²

When, in 1493, Columbus came back with news concerning unknown lands and unknown people in the West, the Observant Franciscans and Dominicans

10 Vose, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews*, 134ff. See also García Oro, "Los frailes menores en la Hispania Medieval," 89–134.

11 Amy I. Aronson-Friedman & Gregory B. Kaplan, "Editors' Introduction," in *Marginal Voices*, eds. Amy I. Aronson-Friedman & Gregory B. Kaplan, The medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, 46 (Leiden-Boston: 2012), 1–17; Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on the Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: 1999).

12 George C.A. Boehrer, "The Franciscans and Portuguese Colonization in Africa and the Atlantic Islands, 1415–1499," *The Americas* 11:3 (1955): 389–403. On the forced conversion and expulsion of Jews from Portugal itself, see for instance Giuseppe Marcocci, "«...per capelli adductos ad pillama». Il dibattito cinquecentesco sulla validità del battesimo forzato degli ebrei in Portogallo (1496–1497)," in *Salvezza delle anime, disciplina dei corpi. Un seminario sulla storia del battesimo*, ed. Adriano Prosperi (Pisa: 2006), 339–423.

were the most professional pastoral taskforces within Europe. They also cherished a number of highly charged hagiographical master narratives of mendicant missionary prowess among the infidel. Nevertheless, up to that point they had only limited professional experience with large-scale missionary efforts among non-Christian populations.

Much of the experience they had recently acquired had been of a rather peculiar kind. After the conquest of Granada, hence exactly around the time that news of missionary options in the New World began to filter through, Observant Franciscans and Dominicans had become involved with the program of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, which aimed to convert the remaining Spanish Muslim and Jewish communities by force, or have them deported. This policy, which linked military conquest with forced conversion, had received papal approval in a series of papal privileges issued on behalf of the *reconquista* effort by the kings of Spain and Portugal in the later fifteenth century, culminating in the 1486 bull *Orthodoxie fidei propagationem*. This bull, issued by Innocent VIII on behalf of Ferdinand and Isabella in the build up to the conquest of Granada, was based on well-established precedents: it assumed that the pope had the right to ask for military intervention if non-Christian rulers stood in the way of conversion, and it clearly linked crusading warfare with the propagation of faith, the salvation of barbarian nations, the suppression of infidels, and their conversion to Christianity.¹³ The bull itself in turn established a precedent for the *patronato real* over the newly discovered territories in the New World in the subsequent decade (as will be discussed below).

Whereas Observant Franciscans and Dominicans had recent experience with forced conversion with military support, it cannot be maintained – as modern scholars so frequently do – that Observant friars could rely on their long missionary experience among heathens and infidels when the opportunity for large-scale missionary endeavors in the New World presented itself.¹⁴ Furthermore, counter to what one might think, the Observant Franciscans and Dominicans did not immediately rise to the task. Instead, it took a considerable period before a significant missionary taskforce was deployed on American soil.

13 Edwin Edward Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory in Sixteenth Century New Spain Province of the Holy Gospel* (Washington D.C.: 1975), 11f.

14 See the echo of the maximalist interpretation of mission in Antonio Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza. El franciscanismo: de la Edad Media a la evangelización novohispana*. Apéndice: *Vida de fray Martín de Valencia escrita por fray Francisco Jiménez*. (Mexico: 1996), 22: “Al abrirse a partir del siglo xv el gran campo evangelizador de América, los hermanos menores ya tenían una tradición misionera muy rica que partía desde su fundador y se extendía a través de la Baja Edad Media.”

For a number of years, ongoing Europe-wide factional strife within the mendicant orders over Observant reforms and the division of power apparently consumed much of the available energy. Within the Franciscan order, this strife was only resolved to some extent due to the papal interventions of 1517. Considering the huge output of polemical works by Franciscans directed towards rival groups within the order, especially in comparison with the very modest production of works by Franciscans devoted to mission among the infidels until this date, there seems to have been only limited interest in a substantial missionary engagement with the non-Christian peoples in the New World.¹⁵

Existing narratives of missionary prowess should therefore not be taken as factual statements about concrete and efficacious missionary undertakings. The same caution should be exercised with reference to the alleged Observant Franciscan support for Columbus's exploratory endeavors in the early 1490s. Much has been made of the Franciscan Observant friars of La Rábida's support for Columbus in the early 1490s (including backing by the cosmographer Antonio of Marchena and by Juan Pérez, the guardian and prior confessor of Isabella of Castile). This support might have been connected with (in part Joachimist) ideas to rekindle the Franciscan mission in China and the Indies of old, which had faded almost completely by the later fourteenth century. This Franciscan support for Columbus was not particularly well thought-out, but it tied in with the self-image of triumphant worldwide missionary engagement.¹⁶ In the end, however, no Observant Franciscan friar was present on Columbus's first expedition. The small missionary party present on Columbus's second expedition in 1493–94 was led by the Benedictine Bernal Bil, and probably only included the Belgian or Burgundian lay Franciscans Jean of Deule/Deleudelle and Jean of Tisin/Cosin.¹⁷ As lay friars were not allowed to preach doctrinally

15 A perusal of the Franciscan Authors Website makes this very clear. See <<http://users.bart.nl/~roestb/franciscan/>>. Until 1517, many well-known pastoral authors and order leaders devoted much of their authorial energy towards intra-order struggles concerning Observant reforms and obedience structures. The missionary possibilities in the New World hardly ever entered their discourse. The first designated missionary treatises of Franciscan order leaders focusing on the American mission date from the 1520s and the 1530s (the works of Francisco Los Angeles (Quiñones) and Nikolaus Ferber mentioned further down).

16 J. Gil Fernández, "Los Franciscanos y Colón," *Archivo Ibero-Americano* 46 (1986): 77–110; Raoul Manselli, *Da Gioacchino da Fiore a Cristoforo Colombo. Studi sul francescanesimo spirituale, sull'ecclesiologia e sull'escatologismo bassomedievali* (Rome: 1997).

17 Some scholars postulate the presence of the Observant Franciscan friar Juan or Rodrigo Pérez from the La Rábida friary. Yet this is doubtful. Cf. Hugolinus Lippens, "De Fr. Joanne de la Deule Missionario Americae, 1493–1510," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 27

and under normal circumstances were not allowed to administer any sacraments (other than emergency baptism), their value as missionaries was very limited indeed.

If we are to believe the Franciscan Observant chronicler Nikolaus Glassberger, who wrote in the early 1500s, once the Observant Franciscans were notified of Columbus's discovery in 1493, they were keen to be sent out as missionaries, and petitioned the Franciscan minister general Olivier Maillard to obtain permission to depart in large numbers.¹⁸ But a careful reading of Glassberger's account reveals that only two lay friars departed for America (namely, the Belgian or Burgundian friars mentioned above), and that they did so almost by accident. Initially, these friars had wished to seek out Muslims beyond the realm of Granada and face martyrdom just like the Franciscans of old. It was only because they saw these efforts thwarted by the hardened nature of the 'Saracens', and their own lack of language skills, that these two lay friars changed their course and set out for the New World.¹⁹

For a significant time period the number of mendicant missionaries active in the New World remained very small. The first properly organized missionary ventures on behalf of the Franciscans took place in 1500. This included a group of three Observant friars led by Jean Baudin of Brittany, another small group

(1934): 62–75 (66ff); Antonine S. Tibesar, "The Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross of Española, 1505–1559," *The Americas* 13:4 (April 1957): 377–89, esp. 377–78.

18 "Que res cum Fratribus Ordinis Minorum et Observantie de familia ex Provincia Francie innotuisset, more elephantis ad sanguinis aspectum animati, post capitulum Florentiaci celebratum reverendum patrem fratrem Oliverium Maillardi, Generalem Vicarium, pro impetranda licentia accesserunt, viti utique vita maturi, zelo fidei ferventissimi, patientia probati martirioque apprime flagrantes Fratres." Edited in Livarius Oliger, "The Earliest Record on the Franciscan Missions in America," *The Catholic Historical Review* 6:1 (April 1920): 59–65, there 63.

19 "Inter quos erant duo fratres laici, viri copore robusti, animo devoti et mente ad quemcumque obprobria pro Christi nomine perferenda promptissimi, videlicet Johannes de la Deule, et frater Johannes Cosin. Hy, obtenta licentia dicto reverendo patre Vicario Generali, ad partes dictas infidelium ultra regnum Granate perrexerunt in nomine Domini; in quibus tamen partibus propter gentium barbariem infidelium et ignorantiam ydeomatis facere fructum nequibant, quamquam plurima paterentur a Saracenis incommoda in tantum aliquando, ut coacti fame et inedia, serpentes manducarent. Cum autem sine fructu ibidem starent, ad alia loca divertere statuerunt; et ecce, Deo duce, ad novas insulas aspirantes, et ad oras Hispanie applicantes naves illo tendentes reperiunt, in quas naucleri benignitate recepti sunt, eo quod et corpore robusti, religione devoti atque moribus graves videbantur, in quos nec parum aliorum vota aspirabant, utpote qui et corporis validitudine et mentis devotione apud Deum in periculis suffragari possent." Ed. Oliger, "The Earliest Record," 63.

that left Cádiz in August 1500, and a group of five Observant friars that traveled with the Caribbean expedition of Governor Bobadilla in July of the same year. The missionary taskforce on this expedition consisted of the two Belgian or Burgundian lay friars mentioned above, who now set out for their second voyage, and the ordained friars Juan of Trasierra, Juan of Robles, and Francisco Ruiz, who was a friend of Cisneros. Francisco Ruiz could not stand the American climate and soon returned to Spain, but the other four remained.²⁰

In 1502 another group of missionaries arrived on Española with the fleet of Nicolás of Ovando and a large number of colonists. This group of missionaries was led by fray Alonso of Espinar, another friend of Cisneros. It consisted of seventeen Observant friars, and their arrival in the Caribbean facilitated the foundation of the Santa Cruz province, centered on Española. Although this was a substantial group of friars, it did not increase significantly in subsequent years. As a result, the number of friars joining the new province remained small, certainly compared with the size of the native population.²¹

Furthermore, it remains an open question whether these newly arrived missionaries engaged in systematic mission work among the non-Christian indigenous populations, or mostly limited themselves to pastoral work among the colonists. Existing scholarship nearly automatically assumes the former. However, a proper historical analysis (insofar as it is possible) has not yet been done. Even missionaries keen to emphasize their missionary successes among the infidel might have worked predominantly among Christian colonists.

Insofar as they worked among the infidel, the relatively small group of Observant missionaries in the Americas until the second decade of the sixteenth century was not informed by a realistic conception of missionary pedagogy, but was primarily fueled by the existing hagiographical master narratives of missionary heroics and martyrdom. The chronicle of Glassberger mentioned earlier is a case in point, as are the comparable topoi that litter surviving contemporary letters and reports to superiors, including the emphasis of these friars' deprivations, their willingness to sacrifice themselves, and their feats of mass baptism.²² In particular, these tales of mass baptism neatly tied in with the (partly fictive) late medieval representations of missionary heroes in non-Christian lands.²³

20 Tibesar, "The Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross," 379.

21 Tibesar, "The Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross," 381–83.

22 Oliger, "The Earliest Record," 60ff.

23 J.D. Ryan, "Conversion vs. Baptism? European Missionaries in Asia in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Varieties of Religious Conversion*, ed. James Muldoon (Gainesville: 1997), 146–67.

Gradually, larger groups of Observant Franciscan and also Dominican missionaries were sent out towards the Caribbean in 1508, 1509, 1512, and after. But there seems to have been a certain reluctance among European provincial superiors to provide a sufficient number of friars for genuine missionary work (other than pastoral work among Spanish soldiers and settlers) in distant lands. From 1508 onwards, the Spanish crown and Cardinal Cisneros devised several different solutions to overcome prolonged permission processes involving several layers of officials, and to put the organization and the decisions concerning missions in the hands of Spanish provincials, who could act more or less autonomously. But it was not until around 1520 that the Franciscans and other orders put the responsibility of seeking out and delivering suitable missionaries for the New World in the hands of a general commissioner for the western provinces.²⁴

It was also in the early 1520s that the mendicant orders sought and obtained more general papal privileges in support of a broad mendicant mission. This becomes clear from the wordings of the papal brief *Alias felicis recordationis* of 25 April 1521 on behalf of Francisco of Los Angeles (Quiñones) and Jean Glapion (neither of whom departed for the New World in the end),²⁵ but directed more generally to the Franciscans as such, and the subsequent bull *Exponi nobis fecisti* or *Omnimoda*, issued by the new Pope Hadrian VI (9 May 1522) on behalf of missionaries of all mendicant orders, and particularly their Observant branches. This bull finally provided these prospective missionaries with a plenitude of apostolic, sacramental, and inquisitorial powers in the absence of a proper episcopal infrastructure.²⁶

A few missionaries (including the Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas) had embarked on interesting missionary experiments on the Venezuelan coast around 1513–1514. But large-scale and more professional missionary deployment on the continent began in earnest only in the 1520s, following the conquest of mainland Mexico (New Spain). Even then there was considerable

24 Pedro Torres, *La bula Omnímoda e Adriano VI* (Madrid: 1948), 54ff.; Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 59. For the further streamlining of the administrative and supervisory process through which new missionaries were selected and brought to the New World, see Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 92–94.

25 Jean Glapion, confessor of Charles V, died soon after the papal brief was issued. Quiñones (Francisco of Los Angeles) was soon elected to the position of general minister, which prevented his departure. Instead, he supported the mission of the famous 'doce' and issued a set of instructions for their missionary task.

26 Hervé Pujol, "La christianisation e la Nouvelle-Espagne ou le rêve d'une église indienne: les agents de l'évangélisation," *Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires* 10 (2012): 6–7. <<http://ceri.revues.org/957>> [consulted on September 25, 2013].

delay, as it took time to create an efficacious missionary infrastructure. When Cortés conquered Mexico in 1519, he was accompanied by just two clerics: a secular priest and the Mercedarian Bartolomeos of Olmedo. Until 1523, only six friars had joined the mainland mission in Mexico: another Mercedarian and five Observant Franciscans, including three Flemish missionaries, namely, Johan Van den Auwera (Juan of Aora), Johan Dekkers (Juan of Tecto), and Peter of Ghent (Pedro de Gante). The famous Observant Franciscan 'doce', led by Martín of Valencia, arrived in 1524. The Dominicans also entered Mexico with twelve missionaries in June 1526. Many of these first Dominicans died quickly, and reinforcements only arrived in 1528. Likewise, a few Augustinians arrived from 1533 onwards.²⁷ The initial mendicant penetration of Peru, with the expedition of Pizarro in 1531, was cut short very quickly. There, missionary activities began in earnest only in 1548.²⁸

It was also not before the later 1510s and early 1520s – hence twenty to thirty years after the first return of Columbus – that the methods of large-scale missionary engagement underwent a significant professionalization, whereas the portrayal of the missionary person in mendicant hagiographical and historical works continued to reach back to traditional images. One of these was the ongoing image of the martyr. This is evident in the early hagiographical depictions of New World missionaries, but also in the aforementioned instructions issued by Quiñones in the 1520s, and in popular religious books for the European book market from the 1530s.²⁹ A related image was that of the heroic *miles christi*, notably in missionary instructions, which often framed mission in military terms. The missionary was a soldier in the *militia Christi*, and through

27 Pujol, "La christianisation," 5–7; Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 36, 38.

28 Diego Córdova de Salinas OFM, *Crónica de la religosissima provincia de los Doce Apostoles del Perú*, ed. Lino G. Canedo (Washington D.C.: 1957); Edouard Béri, "Fray Marcos de Niza, Frère Marc de Nice, Mineur de l'Observance de St-François d'Assise, Apôtre, Historien, Explorateur," *Nice Historique* 5–6 (1938): 129–45.

29 A case in point is the booklet *Passio gloriosi martyris beati patris fratris Andree de Spoleto ordinis Minorum regularis obseruantie pro Catholice fidei veritate passi in Affrica ciuitate Fez. Anno d[omi]ni. M.D.XXXIJ* (Bologna: 1532). This work opens with a letter from June 1531 by the leader of the 'doce', Martín of Valencia, to the general commissioner of the cismontan Observants, which boasts of the harvest of souls. It is followed by a letter of the Franciscan bishop Juan of Zumárraga to the Franciscan general chapter in Toulouse, which also mentions enormous numbers of baptisms and the destruction of temples and idolatrous images. It closes with an account of the famous martyrdom of the Franciscan friar Andrea of Spoleto in Fez (Morocco) in 1523. It is a clear connection between existing martyrdom heroics among the Muslims and the new martyrdom of the missionaries in the New World.

his heroic (and violently iconoclast) actions, his impenetrable convictions and exemplary lifestyle – armed with the shield of faith, the armor of justice, the sword of the Divine word, the helmet of salvation, and the spear of perseverance (Ephesians 6: 16–17) – he was liberating mankind from the tyranny of Satan.³⁰ These depictions of the missionary *persona* probably served a variety of purposes, including edification of the ‘home-public’, propaganda in the face of criticism and rivalry, recruitment of future members, and the like. However, it still remains to be seen how these depictions were connected with missionary practices on the ground.

Comprehensive Visions of *Christianitas*

The aim of the Observants was to transform populations as a whole into devout and submissive flocks, with all aspects of their lives organized according to evangelical precepts. The Observants had not invented this from scratch. Rather, they built on older traditions that can at least be traced back to the twelfth century. Outlines of such aims are present in some of the Joachimist prophecies concerning the new age of the spirit, formulated by the Calabrian Abbot himself, and elaborated upon by a host of apocalyptic thinkers from later periods, including Peter of John Olivi, Jean of Roquetaillade, and Juan Menesis of Silva. In a more ‘traditional’ orthodox form, it became part of mendicant and predominantly Franciscan conceptions of evangelical renewal, as articulated in some of Francis of Assisi’s own writings, as well as in the writings of subsequent generations of Franciscan writers. It was pushed forward more systematically in a number of mendicant treatises on the *recuperatio Terrae Sanctae*, including that of Fidenzio of Padua from 1290 (which foresaw an ideal Christian Palestinian state under a Catholic *dux*), and it was elaborated upon in very detailed fashion in the famous multi-volume *El Crestia* of Francesc Eiximenis.³¹

30 Sylvest, *Motifs*, 102–03; Joaquín García Icazbalceta, *Don fray Juan de Zumárraga, primer obispo y arzobispo de México (Estudio biográfico y bibliográfico)*, eds. A. Castro Leal & Rafael Aguayo Spencer, *Escritores mexicanos* 43, 4 Vols. (Mexico: 1947), 3: 81. This belligerence, which these authors also deployed to legitimize the mendicant iconoclast program, echoed the rather military portrayal of mendicant traveller-missionaries and Observant crusade preachers in previous centuries. Paolo Evangelisti, *Fidenzio da Padova e la letteratura crociato-missionaria minoritica. Strategie e modelli francescani per il dominio (XIII–XV sec.)* (Bologna: 1998), 204ff.

31 In general, on this conglomerate of totalizing texts, see the work of Paolo Evangelisti mentioned in the previous note, as well as Idem, “Un progetto di riconquista e governo della

Eiximenis's projection of a completely Christianized society, one in which the laity at large lived its daily life (including all socio-economic, cultural, and sexual aspects) in accordance with 'evangelical' precepts, pointed the way towards the Observant program of normative centering properly speaking. In this program, as can be gathered from the sermons and treatises of Bernardino of Siena, Giacomo della Marca, and Cherubino of Spoleto, and from the reforms of Savonarola and many others, all aspects of life, from birth to death, from the bridal chamber to the mortuary chapel, from the market place to the mounts of piety, were disciplined and supervised.³²

For many Observant friars, divine mercy and wrath were intimately connected with the behavior of all members of society. Thus, the existence of 'non-disciplined' elements – be it 'sodomites', witches, heretics, or unrepentant and 'secret' Jews and Muslims – endangered the purity of society, and made it vulnerable to sin and to righteous divine punishment.³³ The fullest expression of this type of thinking emerged in the Iberian Peninsula in the course of the fifteenth century, when lingering doubts concerning the validity of forced conversions and the search for scapegoats for structural socio-economic problems fueled anti-Semitic sentiments and the conviction that converted Jews and Muslims continued to undermine the cohesion and wellbeing of Christian society.

In other words, it was held that the 'bad blood' of *conversos* still defiled Christian purity, and society had to defend itself against these dangers. This is the background (among other things) for the Toledan and other blood purity statutes from ca. 1450 onwards,³⁴ as well as for the ongoing violence against 'crypto-Jews' in and after the 1450s and the violently anti-Jewish *Fortalitiūm Fidei in Universos Christiane Religionis Hostes*, written around 1460 by the Spanish Observant Franciscan friar Alfonso of Espina, confessor of the Castilian King Enrico IV. In the *Fortalitiūm Fidei*, the purity of Spanish Christian society

Terrasanta: strategia economica e militare e proposta di un codice etico-politico attraverso il lessico regolativo-sociale minoritico," in *Alle frontiere della cristianità. I frati mendicanti e l'evangelizzazione tra '200 e '300. Atti del XXVIII Convegno internazionale, Assisi, 12–14 ottobre 2000* (Spoleto: 2001), 135–99.

32 Roest, *Franciscan Literature of Religious Instruction*, 347–539; Lauro Martines, *Savonarola: moralità e politica a Firenze nel Quattrocento* (Milan: 2008).

33 Mormando, *The Preacher's Demons*, *passim*.

34 A.A. Sicoff, *Les controverses des statuts de pureté de sang en Espagne du xve au xviiie siècle* (Paris: 1960); Gregory B. Kaplan, "The Inception of *Limpieza de Sangre* (Purity of Blood) and its Impact in Medieval and Golden Age Spain," in *Marginal Voices*, eds. Amy I. Aronson-Friedman & Gregory B. Kaplan, *The medieval and Early Modern Iberian World*, 46 (Leiden-Boston: 2012), 19–41.

was framed in near-biological terms, and this provided the theoretical framework for the ethnic cleansing policies surrounding the 1492 expulsions.³⁵

Comparable conceptions of Christian society were voiced by the Franciscan Spanish Archbishop of Toledo Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, who oversaw the final showdown with Muslim forces in Granada, engaged in expansionist warfare in Northern Africa (the conquest of Orán, for example), and championed Observant unity and the importance of a regulated Observant lifestyle within the Spanish realm as a *sine qua non* for its complete delivery from infidel, Judaic, and heretical elements. In 1506, Cisneros issued a *reconquista/recuperatio* blueprint in which Portugal, Spain, and England would have to take part, proposing a final crusade to annihilate Islam, reconquer Jerusalem, and rebuild a pristine Christian society in Africa and the Middle East. Together with the advances in the New World, this would amount to the arrival of a unified Christian commonwealth that encompassed the globe.³⁶

When the Observants became involved with missionary exploits in the New World, especially after around 1510 (which coincided with the missionary generation of Bartolomé of Las Casas, Peter of Ghent, Martín of Valencia, Juan of Zumárraga, and Toribio of Benavente (Motolinía), to name but a few of the more famous missionaries), they were heavily inspired by a variety of Observant programs of evangelical renewal. Some of these had Joachimist overtones, combined with aspects of Spanish illuminist mysticism or with notions of Christian humanism along Erasmian lines and those espoused in (or read into) Thomas More's *Utopia*. Although these sources of inspiration were not always very compatible, for eclectic readers these strands of thought all emphasized in one way or another the necessity of a fully Christianized society in which all members, lay and clerical alike, lived up to evangelical ideals.³⁷

35 The *Fortalitiium Fidei*, first conceived between 1459–62 in Valladolid, has survived in many editions, the oldest of which dates from 1464 or 1471. This apologetic exposition of the Christian faith makes a plea for chasing away the Jews from Spain, much along the lines of the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290. It also propagates a harsh policy against converts in general. The *Fortalitiium Fidei* can be seen as a methodological and ideological program for the emerging Spanish inquisition. See Alisa Meyuhas Ginio, "Rêves contre les sarrasins dans la Castille du XVe siècle. Alonso de Espina 'Fortalitiium fidei,'" *Revue de l'Histoire des religions* 212 (1995): 145–74; A. Meyúhas Ginio, *De bello Iudaeorum: Fray Alonso de Espina y su 'Fortaliciium fidei'*, Fontes Iudaeorum Regni Castellae, VIII (Salamanca: 1998).

36 Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 25, 35. More generally, see also José García Oro, *Cisneros. Un cardenal reformista en el trono de España (1436–1517)* (Madrid: 2005).

37 For the alleged impact of Christian humanistic conceptions in early sixteenth-century Spain and in the New World, see Marcel Bataillon's classic *Erasmus y España: Estudios sobre la Historia Espiritual del Siglo XVI*, 2nd Ed. (Mexico: 1966), 1–71.

Within the Franciscan order, these inspirations were interconnected with recent struggles to assert one's own Observant or reformist identity against Conventual and other observantist denominations. This was true for the various French and German order provinces, as well as for the Iberian Peninsula.³⁸ It could be argued that, certainly among the Franciscans but also in other mendicant orders, the early missionaries to the New World were predominantly recruited from among those who were not totally at ease with the mitigated Observant strand that had become dominant in the Spanish Peninsula as elsewhere by the end of the fifteenth century, to the detriment of sometimes far more ascetical and radical eremitical groups, such as the Villacreces and comparable initiatives around Juan of La Puebla and Juan of Guadalupe. Among the latter could also be found friars who espoused forms of 'illuminist' spirituality that would become very suspect in and after the 1520s in Spain and Italy.³⁹

The majority of the Spanish Franciscan missionaries in the first half of the sixteenth century came from the recently founded San Gabriel d'Extremadura province, which was steeped in the traditions put forward by Pedro of Villacreces, Juan of La Puebla, Juan of Guadalupe, and the early Alcantarines. Others came from the provinces of Concepción, Los Angeles, and Aragon, and from the later 1510s onwards also from Observant centers in Salamanca and Alcala. Like the province of San Gabriel, the provinces of Concepción and Los Angeles nurtured more stringent Observant ideals, whereas the Salamanca and Alcala friaries became highly important centers of Observant learning in their own right. Missionaries from outside Spain, such as Peter of Ghent, were predominantly recruited from stringently Observant friaries in Flanders and Aquitaine.⁴⁰ The way in which some of these friars avoided possible conflicts with superiors and 'compromised' forms of rule adherence (for example by signing up for difficult missions in distant lands, where they worked in relative autonomy) resembled earlier missionary 'escapes' to Byzantine and Mongol

38 See Brigitte Degler-Spengler, "Observanten außerhalb der Observanz. Die franziskanischen Reformen 'sub ministris,'" *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 89 (1978): 354–71, who provides an interesting survey of the different reformist/Observant branches in the various order provinces and their struggle to retain their autonomy over against Conventual and different Observant branches.

39 On the intricate Observant trajectories of Spanish reform movements, see Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 30–34, 61–67; Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, *Historia de la reforma de la provincia de España (1450–1550)*, Institutum Historicum Praedicatorum Romae ad S. Sabinae. Dissertationes Historicae, XI (Rome: 1939), *passim*; and Fidel de Lejarza, Ángel Uribe et al., "Introducción a los orígenes de la observancia en España, las reformas en los siglos XIV y XV," *Archivo Ibero-Americano*, 2nd ser. 17 (1957): núm. Extraordinario, 1–1010.

40 Pujol, "La christianisation e la Nouvelle-Espagne," 9.

territories by Franciscan friars with spiritual tendencies in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.⁴¹

Franciscan Observant missionaries were not alone in espousing ideas of evangelical renewal. Rather, comparable ideas were propagated by several Observant missionaries from other orders, such as the Dominican friar Domingo of Betanzos and several Augustinian missionaries active in the New World in the 1540s.⁴² Especially in the wake of the unfolding missions in the Mexican heartland in and after the 1520s, many Observant missionaries began to emphasize the 'providential' missionary opportunities for the orders among an indigenous population untouched by the doctrinal struggles and heretical legacies that haunted Christians in Europe.⁴³ They stressed their own providential role as instruments of the divine will, and hailed the chances to establish an unblemished evangelical Church of 'primitive' purity, in line with their own interpretation of evangelical perfection.⁴⁴

The Observant friars constituting the bulk of the missionary taskforce combined their specific Observant religious agendas with older eschatological notions: connecting the 'innocent' indigenous population in the New World and its innate tendencies towards Christian humility and poverty with the lost tribes of Israel, for example, or seeing the conversion of the American natives as part of an eschatological endgame that depended upon the Christianization of the peoples *in finibus terrae*. Inspired by such allusions, many scholars have pointed at the enduring Joachimism and millennialism inherent in these missionary statements.⁴⁵ But, as Elsa Frost and Rubial García have argued with reference to a number of Dominican and Franciscan authors, many such ideas could also be developed within more strictly Augustinian and orthodox

41 Hence, the dissident spiritual groups led by Angelo Clareno in the early fourteenth century worked for a number of years in Greece, and there became acquainted with the Greek mystical tradition. See for instance Benoît Gain, "L'influenza di Basilio su Angelo Clareno (d. 1337)," in *Basilio tra Oriente e Occidente* (Bose: Edizioni Qigajon, 2001), 235–51; Felice Accrocca, *Un ribelle tranquillo – Angelo Clareno e gli Spirituali francescani tra Due e Trecento* (Santa Maria degli Angeli: 2009). For an evaluation of Spiritual influences among sixteenth-century Spanish missionaries, see also Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 31–33.

42 Pujol, "La christianisation e la Nouvelle-Espagne," 9.

43 Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 12.

44 Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 93.

45 Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, trans. Frances M. Lopez-Morillas (New York: 1992); John L. Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, 2nd Edition (Berkeley: 1970); Georges Baudet, *Utopía e historia en México. Los primeros cronistas de la civilización mexicana (1520–1569)* (Madrid: 1983).

parameters of Christian renewal, in which a loosely and metaphorically applied eschatological end-time vocabulary was combined with references to the experiences of the Apostolic Church.⁴⁶

Not surprisingly, many Observant friars espoused models of societal organization that aimed to safeguard the purity of the newly converted under the paternalistic spiritual care of Observant priests, and protect them from the corrupting influence of Spanish settlers. This is clear from the missionary program promoted by the famous 'doce' in New Spain after 1524, led by Martín de Valencia, who might have been influenced by eschatological concepts cherished in the reformist San Gabriel d'Estremadura province. Before that, it had already become a topic in the missionary writings and actions of Bartolomé de Las Casas, who had been one of the first (alongside of the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos in Española in November 1511) to lament the Colonists' exploitation of the indigenous population, at a time when the Franciscans (by the mouth of Juan de Quevedo) were still prepared to defend the exploitation policies of the *conquistadores*.⁴⁷

The idea of isolating and thereby 'protecting' the indigenous population more or less emerged after the failure of the Dominican and Franciscan missionary experiments on the Venezuelan coast (Cumaná) between 1512–1515, in which Indians and Spanish farmer-settlers were supposed to live together in equality, as well as in reaction to the visible drawbacks of Indian exploitation in the *encomienda* system. Over the years, the abuses of this system drew condemnation from a number of Dominican and Franciscan missionary spokesmen (Bartolomé de Las Casas, Cristóbal de Río, Bernardino de Minaya, Marcos de Niza, and Juan de Zumárraga). To guarantee the fair treatment of the indigenous and the creation of an evangelical and 'pure' Indian Church, the Indians ideally were not to come in contact with Spanish settlers. Moreover, the Indians were to be concentrated in villages or smaller towns, instead of being allowed to live completely dispersed throughout the countryside 'like wild animals', which made efficacious mission with a small number of missionaries cumbersome.⁴⁸

46 Elsa Cecilia Frost, "¿Milenarismo mitigado o imaginado?" in *Memorias del simposio de historiografía mexicanista* (Mexico: 1988), 73–88; Idem, "A new millenarian: Georges Baudot," *The Americas* 36:4 (1980): 515–26; Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 127–29.

47 Lewis Hanke, *Bartolomé de las Casas: An Interpretation of His Life and Writings* (The Hague: 1951); Tibesar, "The Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross," 384–86 (a tendentious account).

48 Icazbalceta, *Don fray Juan de Zumárraga* I: 161–62; III: 96; IV: 235.

Many missionaries in the 1520s and after therefore promoted a nearly autarkic pueblo system in which the converted natives could prosper under the paternal guidance of missionaries, who would guide their flock by word and example and guard ideals of social justice not unlike those put forward in Eiximenis's *El Crestià* or discussed in More's *Utopia*.⁴⁹ This idea also motivated mendicant missionaries to advocate for the indigenous population's exemption from normal tithes and complete submission to normal episcopal (and inquisitorial) control. Although Observant missionaries had no realistic hope of achieving this, several of them still pursued such ideas in the early 1570s, when an episcopal hierarchy was very much in place.⁵⁰

Observant mendicant missionaries had more success in resisting a complete 'castilianization' of the natives, against the explicit wishes of the Spanish crown. From at least 1538 onwards, the Spanish crown expressed misgivings about the practice of preaching and teaching in native tongues. It came to see the dissemination of Castilian among the indigenous population both as a unifying and assimilating instrument within the conquered territories, and as a means of maintaining proper control over the religious message. To an extent, the friars successfully fought these policies, ensuring that they could continue to preach and teach in indigenous languages, as well as facilitate indigenous literacy in the local vernacular. In 1580, Nahuatl was officially recognized by the crown as a general language within New Spain.⁵¹ Still, the mendicant embrace of indigenous languages was itself highly instrumental and hegemonic, geared towards the missionary goals of the friars, and thus should not be interpreted as a genuine attempt at safeguarding the continuation of indigenous cultures. One could argue that the use of indigenous languages by the missionaries was in itself artificial, cutting through and streamlining a plethora of existing dialects and language groups, and reshaping them in accordance with profoundly European grammatical and semantic categories.

The mendicant missionary blueprints postulating the creation of a 'pure' Indian Church embodied a series of contradictions, due in particular to the twofold depiction of the 'primitive' indigenous convert. On the one hand, missionaries praised the sincerity and humility of the indigenous population. The missionaries understood this as a sign of the inherent rational capacities that the natives shared with other human beings. It also made the missionaries

49 José Antonio Maravall, "La utopía político-religiosa de los franciscanos en Nueva España," *Estudios Americanos* 1:2 (1949): 214ff; Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 99.

50 Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 112–15, 124–26; Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 79–81.

51 *Recopilación de leyes de los Reynos de las Indias* (Madrid: 1943), Book VI, tit. I, Law XVIII.

hopeful that once the natives could be freed from their bondage to the devil (expressed by their idolatry and sacrificial practices) they should be capable of becoming devout Christians. This required a ruthless destruction of all forms of idolatry, in order to ensure a complete breach with the heathen past and allow for a fresh start in the new life of Christ.⁵² Once this precondition was met, the missionaries needed the natives to steer free from the temptations of worldly civilization. They therefore had to be isolated from indulgent and carnal colonists, so that native society could fulfill its potential to develop into a perfect Christian commonwealth based on pure faith and a life of transformative poverty, humility, and mutual support.⁵³

On the other hand, the same primitive and 'childlike' characteristics of indigenous converts made them, in the eyes of many missionaries (and settlers), barbaric by nature. This perceived deficiency reflected the doctrine of *limpieza de sangre* espoused by many Spanish colonists and friars alike, who could not see the indigenous converts as equals, and by Spanish political theorists such as Juan Ginés of Sepúlveda, who legitimized enslaving the American population, with reference to its obvious inferiority.⁵⁴

Although the friars emphasized the innocence and purity of the new converts and their participation in a common humanity, the realities on the ground and the prevailing attitudes of Europeans soon thwarted any attempts to recruit indigenous converts as priests and missionaries within the religious orders. As early as 1538, the constitutions of the Franciscan province of the

52 Cf. Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523–1572* (Berkeley: 1966), 284–88; Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 101–02.

53 Toribio of Benavente Motolinía, *Historia de los indios de la Nueva España, relación de los ritos antiguos, idolatrias y sacraficios de los indios de la Nueva España, y de la maravillosa conversión que Dios en ellos ha obrado*, ed. Edmund O'Gorman (Mexico: 1969), 87–94, 124–26, 178–81, 217–18; Jerónimo of Mendieta, *Historia eclesiástica indiana*, 4 Vols. (Mexico: 1945), 3: 91–113; Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, *Epistolario de la Nueva España*, 16 Vols. (Mexico: 1939–42), 3: 93; Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 121; Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 44–46, 52–53; Pujol, "La christianisation e la Nouvelle-Espagne," 9. See also the letter issued in 1537 by the Dominican Julian Garcés, in which he cited the prophecy of Elias to denounce the slavery of Indians and hailed their capacity to become genuine Christians as free men: *De habilitate et capacitate gentium sive Indorum novi mundi nuncupati ad fidem Christi capessendam et quam libenter suscipiant* (Rome: 1537).

54 Anna Foa, "Limpieza versus Mission: Church, religious orders, and conversion in the sixteenth century," in *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Steven J. McMichael & Susan E. Myers (Leiden-Boston: 2004), 299–311.

Holy Cross in Española forbade friaries to recruit converted indigenous people and mestizos.⁵⁵ Likewise, it proved to be difficult to allow indigenous and mestizo recruits educated at the newly erected Franciscan college of Santa Cruz of Tlatelolco (opened on January 6, 1536 by Zumárraga) to become priests, and therefore to reach positions of spiritual authority. Not only the resistance of settlers was responsible for this. Many mendicant missionaries found it difficult not to see the natives as perpetual children in need of guidance and discipline, which blocked the road towards a full anthropological and religious emancipation of the missionary charges.⁵⁶ Such deeply entrenched prejudice was enshrined early in the statutes of the first provincial council of 1555, for example, which simply forbade the ordination of indigenous people and mestizos.⁵⁷ It also paralleled comparable developments in Spain, where the Dominicans, the Franciscans, and the new Jesuit order had by then issued *limpieza de sangre* statutes to avoid the contamination of their ranks by 'crypto Jews'.⁵⁸

Naïve convictions concerning the primitive innocence and innate purity of indigenous converts also allowed for a dramatic disenchantment, as missionaries discovered that the submissive Indians, once so willing to undergo baptism and engage in penitential exercises, were hiding an intransigent adherence to the idols and 'superstitions' of their pre-Christian belief systems. This disenchantment found expression in sometimes dramatically violent interventions. Missionaries were quick to meet out severe bodily punishments for idolatrous transgressions and non-Christian rituals, and also allowed their youngest and frequently most fanatical converts to mistreat and even kill indigenous priests/shamans and caciques who continued to practice the old religions. Under Zumárraga and contemporary friar-bishops and missionaries, a number of indigenous converts were put on trial for idolatry. In the worst case, this could result in death by burning, as happened with Carlos Chichimecatecutli, an

55 "...en nynguna manera sea reçevido nynguno confeso ni mestizo pues claramente nos consta por muy clara esperiència por los unos venir nuestra en obprobio y dirisum omni populo y por los otros aver hecho muchos escandalos." Antonine S. Tibesar, "Constitutions of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross in Española (1538–1540)," *The Americas* 13:4 (April 1957): 391–97, there 391–92.

56 *Código Franciscano, siglo XVI: Informe de la Provincia del Santo Evangelio al visitador Lic. Juan de Ovando, Informe de la Provincia de Guadalajara al mismo, Cartas de religiosos, 1533–1569* (México: 1941), 90; Mendieta, *Historia*, 3, Ch. 22, 444 & Ch. 23, 448–49.

57 Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 154–56, 172–73; Sylvest, *Motifs of Franciscan Mission Theory*, 40–41, 55–56, 115.

58 Cf. Kaplan, "The Inception of *Limpieza de Sangre*," 30.

indigenous alumnus of the Franciscan Tlatelolco college.⁵⁹ The larger the disenchantment and the sense of betrayal, the more violent was the reaction of mendicant missionaries and bishops. This, at least, seems to explain the atrocious extirpation campaigns of Diego of Landa in Yucatan as late as the 1570s, at a time when many friars had become opposed to inquisitorial procedures against their 'erring' indigenous charges.⁶⁰

Among the more eschatologically inclined Observant friar-missionaries, the 'failure' of the Indians to live up to the standards of the primitive Christian Church raised fears that the population of the New World was not suited, after all, to be shaped according to the image of the Apostolic Church or that of the final Church near the end of time. Hence the end of the world, or at least the fulfillment of God's promise to mankind, could only be brought forward by moving towards the next missionary frontier: the evangelization of the Far East/China. Such sentiments are, for instance, present in letters and other works of Juan of Zumárraga and the Dominican Betanzos from the 1540s.⁶¹ According to the Franciscan chronicler Mendieta, this was even the wish of Martín of Valencia, the missionary leader of the famous Franciscan 'doce'. Gradually, in line with a rising disenchantment over the missionary outcomes in New Spain, he developed the hope that people in the Far East, who were yet to be discovered, could offer more fertile ground for missionary remuneration.⁶²

Pastoral Instruments

One of the enduring legacies of the fifteenth-century pastoral engagement of Observant friars had been the professionalization and streamlining of pastoral instruments, including catechisms, prayer guides, iconographical programs,

59 Miguel León-Portilla, *Los franciscanos vistos por el hombre náhuatl Testimonios indígenas del siglo XVI* (Mexico: 1985), 32ff; Francis Borgia Steck, *El Primer Colegio de America, Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco* (Mexico: 1944), 17ff.

60 On Diego of Landa, see David Timmer, "Providence and Perdition: Fray Diego de Landa Justifies His Inquisition against the Yucatecan Maya," *Church History* 66:3 (1997): 477–88; Inga Clendinnen, "Disciplining the Indians: Franciscan Ideology and Missionary Violence in Yucatán," *Past & Present* 94 (1982): 27–48; John F. Chuchiak, "In Servitio Dei: Fray Diego de Landa, the Franciscan Order, and the Return of the Extirpation of Idolatry in the Colonial Diocese of Yucatán, 1573–1579," *The Americas* 61:4 (2005): 611–46.

61 Hence, in 1545 Zumárraga asked the Spanish crown prince Philip for permission to embark on a missionary venture in the Far East. This request is included in Motolinía, *Historia*, Trat. III, Cap. v, 137.

62 Sylvest, *Motifs*, 123; Jerónimo of Mendieta, *Cartas de religiosos de Nueva España 1539–1594* (Mexico: 1941), 396.

more encompassing books of religious formation, and the systematic promotion of popular devotions to the suffering Christ and the Virgin Mary. The Observant production of such pastoral instruments was enormous. Moreover, and contrary to what some evangelical humanists and Protestant reformers believed, this production was of tremendous importance for the religious and moral formation of the population at large in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

This pastoral professionalism did not immediately translate into effective missionary work in the New World. The first Observant missionaries were hampered by an idealized vision of missionary prowess inherited from older hagiographical models. They also ran into significant cultural and linguistic barriers in their attempts to reach the indigenous population. Aside from mass baptisms (frequently under the veiled threat of military force), early missionaries were hard put to proclaim the Christian message, depending at first predominantly on a rudimentary sign language, as well as on the services of a few interpreters whose translations could not be vetted. It was only in the generation of Bartolomé of Las Casas, Peter of Ghent, and Juan of Zumárraga (notably after the conquest of Mexico by Cortés in 1519 and the first large-scale missionary campaigns in Mexico from 1524 onwards), that missionaries fully understood the importance of developing more effective instruments and methods. This was carried out in collaboration with the Royal Council of the Indian lands, through which the crown wished to control Christianization and keep the influence of European order leaders in check.

The friars engaged with the missions in the 1520s and after were shaped by their education in Observant study houses in Spain and the Southern Low Countries, and were also well-acquainted with the plethora of pastoral instruments used to reach out to Europe's urban and rural laity. Once active in the New World, these friars began to adapt the existing formats of such instruments to make them work within a new cultural context. They also began to invest in language study, notably the study of Nahuatl, Tarasco, Otomi, and related tongues, and to engage in a serious hermeneutical interaction with indigenous cultural codes in order to 'translate' concepts of Christian doctrine in ways that were understandable (or at least acceptable) for the indigenous population.

Within a very short time span, these 'second generation' Franciscan and Dominican Observant missionaries succeeded in producing a large number of texts and so-called testerian manuscripts or pictorial catechisms.⁶³ It has been

63 Named after the Franciscan friar Jacobo of Testera (1490?–1554), who arrived in New Spain in 1529 and was an avid propagator of illustrated catechetical tools. See Fidel Chauvet, "Fray Jacobo de Tastera, misionero y civilizador del siglo XVI," *Estudios de Historia Novohispana* 3 (1970): 7–33.

estimated that, between 1524 and 1572, the Observant friars (and notably the Franciscans) wrote some 109 works in indigenous vernacular languages specifically geared to their missionary work.⁶⁴ Eventually, the dominant models included the shorter *Doctrina cristiana breve en lengua mexicana* of the Franciscan Alonso of Molina (1543–44), and the Nahuatl elaboration of the larger *Doctrina cristiana para instrucción e información de los Indios por manera de historia* of the Dominican Pedro of Cordoba.⁶⁵ Other than language, the major difference between such instruments and those developed by their Observant colleagues in Europe was the manner in which they tried to appropriate indigenous religious and metaphysical concepts, in order to make their religious message more palatable and understandable.⁶⁶

Transforming Idea(l)s of Mission

Missionary exploits in the New World went hand in hand with vehement discussions about legitimate ways in which to expose natives to Christianity. One aspect entailed the question of whether mission should be peaceful and without military pressure and, more generally, whether people could be forced to become Christians and punished when they lapsed into idolatry.

Many missionaries were of the opinion that a peaceful proclamation of the Gospel was to be preferred. The model of a true apostolic mission had quite a few defenders, especially during the early decades.⁶⁷ Yet efficacious mission without proper military ‘protection’ was difficult, as experiments in the Caribbean and on the Venezuelan coast had shown. In that respect, the situation in the New World was not fundamentally different from missionary efforts in the Muslim world in the final stage of the *reconquista*: without military pacification of the area in which the missionaries were to become active, mission could easily turn into martyrdom, which was not conducive to Christianization. Soon, therefore, Observant missionaries began to legitimize mission under military protection by presenting the conquest as part of God’s plan to allow

64 Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 65–67; Sylvest, *Motifs*, 108.

65 *Doctrina christiana. Breve y mas compendiosa doctrina christiana en lengua mexicana y castellana* (Mexico: 1539); *Doctrina Cristiana para instrucción e información de los Indios, por manera de historia*, Facsimile Edition (Ciudad Trujillo: 1945).

66 Ch. Duverger, *La conversion des Indiens de Nouvelle-Espagne* (Paris: 1987), 184f.

67 Such as the Dominican Bartolomé of Las Casas and the Franciscans Andrés of Olmos and Juan of San Francisco. Cf. *Cartas de religiosos*, 128; *Código Franciscano*, 225.

missionary progress to take place, and armed domination of the New World as justified divine punishment for its idolatry.⁶⁸

Only under military protection was it possible to destroy non-Christian places of worship on a large scale, to 'convince' large gatherings of people to be baptized and attend sermons, and to make the caciques accept the changed status quo and compel them to send their sons to be educated in the friars' missionary schools in Tezcoco, Mexico, Tlaxcala, Huejotzingo, Cuauhtlán, Tepotzotlán, Ahuacatlán, and elsewhere. Such procedures became common practice, first in the 1510s on Española and, in the later 1520s, in New Spain and New Galicia. Observant missionaries and bishops, including the Observant Franciscan Zumárraga, repeatedly asked the Spanish crown for more wide-ranging powers to force the caciques to send their boys and girls to mendicant religious houses for their formation. Soon, moreover, many such indigenous aristocratic youngsters would become a great help in the mendicant missionary labor: teaching basic doctrine to others, helping with the destruction of images and the denunciation of resisting natives, and providing translation services and tutoring friars eager to learn the indigenous tongues.⁶⁹ The friars exploited, as it were, the innate social prestige and cultural roles that the children of caciques fulfilled among the lower classes (macehuales).⁷⁰ Such policies show that most friars did not have any qualms about destroying the vestiges of the old religions with military support, and that they were willing to use and transform existing hierarchies to convey the missionary message. It is possible that in the minds of many missionaries this was not at odds with a doctrine of 'peaceful' mission. The military 'pacification' allowing for mission to take place could easily be represented as a benevolent development, in line with God's divine plan.⁷¹

Between 1524 (the arrival of the famous 'doce' in New Spain) and 1533 the friars (at least according to Juan of Zumárraga) had destroyed more than five hundred heathen temple complexes and twenty thousand 'idols', and they had

68 These and comparable positions found their most elaborate treatment in works that looked back on the first missionary failures and successes from the vantage point of the 1550s and after, such as the histories of Juan Focher and Toribio of Benavente Motolinía. Sylvest, *Motifs*, 117–19.

69 José María Kobayashi, *La educación como conquista (empresa franciscana en México)* (México: 1984), 159, 182–83; Rubial García, *La hermana pobreza*, 151–53; Tibesar, "The Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross," 386.

70 Cf. *Códice Franciscano*, 148; Luis Weckmann, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, trans. Frances M. Lopez-Morillas (New York: 1992), 180.

71 Toribio of Benavente (Motolinía), *Carta al Emperador Carlos v*, in Idem, *Historia*, 311. Comparable ideas are also to be found in the works of Antonio of Guevara.

done so with the help of both Spanish soldiers and young neophytes recruited from caciques families who had been indoctrinated in mission schools.⁷² According to their own accounts, the same friars had by then baptized millions of Indians. Friars such as Peter of Ghent and Benavente of Motolinía would have baptized thousands each day in simplified collective baptism ceremonies, which resembled some of the collective baptisms organized after the Granada conquest by Cisneros.⁷³

To legitimize their policies the friars habitually referred to the Gospel message, notably the passages in Luke 14: 16–24, which suggested that the servants of the Lord were allowed to make the ‘guests’ enter the banquet hall (*compelle eos intrare*).⁷⁴ The friars were well aware that the Spanish crown was in principle well disposed to providing the military support to achieve that end. Several royal decrees issued between 1493 and 1526 had declared that all those who refused to listen to preaching and catechetical instructions could be enslaved. This, moreover, was not seen as inimical to other statements, such as the agreement of La Coruña (19 May 1520), that stated that the indigenous population should be considered free, with the right to be treated well and to be brought to the faith by the means ‘established by Christ’.⁷⁵

Underlying all of these efforts was a conquest that had received initial papal legitimation. As early as 1493, Pope Alexander VI had approved of the new conquests in four papal bulls, followed by additional bulls issued in 1499, 1501, and 1508. All of these built on earlier fifteenth-century ‘crusading’ bulls that had

72 J. García Iczbalceta, *Don fray Juan de Zumárraga, primer obispo y arzobispo de México* (Mexico: 1881), Appendix, Document 9, 60. See also Pujol, “La christianisation de la Nouvelle-Espagne,” *passim*.

73 The Franciscan practice of summary baptism became a point of friction with other clergymen (regulars and secular alike), and after the papal bull *Altitudo divini consilii* of 1 June 1537 and the Mexican episcopal conference of 1539, the Franciscans eventually had to conform to the existing guidelines, although they could see Paul III’s formulation of the 1537 bull as a vindication of their position regarding emergency baptism. J. Meseguer Fernández, “A doubt of the franciscan missionaries in Mexico solved by pope Paul III at the request of cardinal Quiñones,” *The Americas* 14:2 (1957): 183ff; Sylvest, *Motifs*, 112–13.

74 Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiastica Indiana*, 1: Chapter IV, 24–26. This exegetical interpretation was not new. It had been elaborated by Augustine, and did not deviate significantly from the arguments put forward by the Spanish canonist Sepúlveda, who also justified the conquest of America as a civilizing process and even defended the enslavement of the indigenous population with additional Aristotelian arguments concerning their natural inferiority (also after their conversion). See Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* (London: 1959).

75 Pujol, “La christianisation e la Nouvelle-Espagne,” 2–3.

supported the *reconquista* and acknowledged the Spanish and Portuguese territorial expansions (and the demarcation between them), supporting the rights of the crown to the newly conquered territories (the famous *patronato real de las Indias*). Yet they made these rights dependent upon the responsibility to facilitate large-scale missionary activity amongst the crown's new subjects. As the papacy's natural allies since the thirteenth century, the friars would not have questioned the validity of this argument, not even friars such as Bartolomé of Las Casas, who advocated for more 'peaceful' missions and a better treatment of the indigenous population. Instead, most missionary friars looked for royal logistic and if need be military support to push forward their missionary endeavors.⁷⁶

Once the indigenous subject was made to listen to the missionary and his doctrinal instruction, new questions arose around the extent to which indigenous pupils should be made accountable for the way in which they accepted the missionary message and comported themselves as new Christians. As mentioned before, Observant missionaries and Observant bishops could at times react vehemently when they discovered that the flock they were responsible for had 'betrayed' their trust by continuing to engage in idolatrous practices. At the same time, missionaries were generally keen to maintain a paternalistic relation of trust with their charges. Whereas missionaries did not frown on severe punishments for relapses and transgressions, they habitually wished to continue a relationship in which it remained possible to reconcile their erring flock with recourse to appropriate pastoral instruments and disciplinary penitential exercises.⁷⁷

As can also be perused from the missionary instructions issued in 1523 by Quiñones for the 'doce' aiming for Mexico, and in the 1532 instructions of Nikolaus Ferber of Herborn, the missionary had a special, almost parental responsibility for his charges, not unlike the responsibility of the first apostles for the budding Christian communities.⁷⁸ This also meant that Observant missionaries could be hesitant in allowing inquisitorial investigations to be started

76 H. Vander Linden, "Alexander VI and the Demarcation of the Maritime and Colonial Domains of Spain and Portugal, 1493-1494," *American Historical Review* 22 (1916): 1-20; W. Eugene Shiels, *King and Church: The Rise and Fall of the Patronato Real* (Chicago: 1961), 75-91, 283-91; Sylvest, *Motifs*, 12-16.

77 Sylvest, *Motifs*, 118.

78 Juan Meseguer Fernández, "Contenido Misionológico de la Obediencia e Instrucción de Fray Francisco de los Angeles a los Doce Apostoles de Mexico," *The Americas* 11:3 (Jan. 1955): 473-500; Johannes Beckmann, "Die erste katholische Missionslehre der Neuzeit in einem Basler Druck von 1555," *Zeitschrift für schweizerische Kirchengeschichte/Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique suisse* 57 (1963): 55-63.

against the newly converted. They would have been well acquainted with the forms of inquisitorial attention given to the conversos and moriscos in Spain, which created an atmosphere of distrust and strengthened the conviction that most recently converted Jews and Muslims were guilty of a *conversio fingida y simulada*.⁷⁹

The same suspicions and tensions began to spread in the New World with the application of inquisitorial procedures against new immigrants from Spain accused of heterodox or heretical (illuminate, Lutheran, and even Islamic) tendencies. After a number of unsatisfactory experiences with inquisitorial investigations against 'lapsing' indigenous converts, notably during the 1530s and 1540s but also in later decades (see above), many mendicant missionaries and bishops alike came to realize that the application of inquisitorial procedures and concepts to newly converted indigenous people would jeopardize the missionary effort. It could turn nearly all indigenous Christians into suspects ripe for invasive investigation, due to limits of doctrinal understanding and the ongoing impact of indigenous practices that could easily be interpreted as heretical. Increasingly, therefore, members of the regular clergy lobbied with the Spanish crown to limit inquisitorial authority to European settler communities, maintaining that the indigenous peoples who erred should be brought back with a firm but fatherly missionary hand, and not necessarily condemned by an inquisitorial tribunal.⁸⁰

It is interesting to note that these American experiences also began to affect the European missionary landscape. As we have seen, a well-developed paternalistic system of missionary engagement had been established by the early 1530s, supported by a stratified educational network for the formation of indigenous youth, catechistic routines for the instruction of pueblo populations under missionary control, systematic language training of prospective missionaries, and a quickly growing body of pastoral instruments in Nahuatl, Otomi, and other languages. Around the same time, an amended image of the professional missionary was being created in Observant hagiographical and

79 Anna Benito, "Inquisition and the Creation of the Other," in *Marginal Voices*, eds. Amy I. Aronson-Friedman & Gregory B. Kaplan, The medieval and Early Modern Iberian World, 46 (Leiden-Boston: 2012), 42–67; Mercedes García Arenal, *Inquisición y moriscos. Los procesos del Tribunal de Cuenca* (Madrid: 1983); Angus Mackay, "The Hispanic-Converso Predicament," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 35 (1985): 159–79.

80 Jorge Klor de Alva, "Colonizing Souls: The Failure of the Indian Inquisition and the Rise of Penitential Discipline," in *Cultural Encounters. The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, eds. M.E. Perry & A.J. Cruz (Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford: 1991), 3–22; Richard E. Greenleaf, *The Mexican Inquisition of the Sixteenth Century* (Albuquerque: 1969).

historical narratives – witness the first *vitae* devoted to Martín of Valencia and Peter of Ghent, and the representation of missionaries in the works of Motolinía – and in the growing number of letters that missionaries began to send out to their order superiors in Europe. In time, both this professional system of missionary engagement and the changing image of the professional missionary began to flow back into the pastoral realities in Europe itself.

The first vestiges of a reshaped pastoral approach in Europe had already been foreshadowed in the *Libellus ad Leonem X* of the Camaldolese monks Paolo Giustiniani and Pietro Querini, as well as in the decrees of the Fifth Lateran Council. Yet the wars in Italy, the concomitant weakness of the papacy, the ongoing pressure of Ottoman power, the rise of several types of Protestantism, and the belligerent ambitions of lay rulers made it hard to develop an efficacious reformist policy. As the erection of the supreme tribunal of the Sant'Uffizio in 1542 and its development under Cardinal Carafa make clear, the panic over the successes of heresy and heterodoxy made the call for repression via military and inquisitorial means very strong.

Leaders of religious orders and clerical authorities in Europe were faced with the vulnerability of Europe's population to heretical doctrines. They were also startled by the similarities between the idolatrous and magical practices of newly Christianized peoples in the New World and those encountered in Europe's more isolated rural areas. They accordingly became convinced that inquisitorial action against simple lay people found guilty of doctrinal transgressions did not suffice to safeguard the victory of Catholicism. Thus, alongside inquisitorial action against heretical ringleaders, religious orders and clerical authorities embraced an ongoing missionary commitment to the population at large, one built in part on the pastoral programs developed in earlier phases of the Observant pastoral offensive, and now also shaped as a proper missionary program in line with the missions taking place in exotic lands.⁸¹

By 1529 or shortly thereafter, the Franciscan bishop Antonio of Guevara had stylized Europe's uncultured countrymen in his *Relox de Principes* as animals in human form, who had monstrous qualities but nevertheless possessed an extraordinary intelligence and eloquence. Behind their bestial façades, he argued, was a hidden humanity and intelligence that needed only to be brought out. The parallels between this portrayal of the 'good savage' and the missionary descriptions of the American natives were clear.⁸² Around the same time,

81 Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: Inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, Biblioteca di cultura storica, 214 (Turin: 1996), 619, 621ff.

82 This idea popped up in his *Libro llamado Relox de Principes o Libro aureo del Emperador Marco Aurelio* (Valladolid: 1529/Madrid: 1531). It has for instance been discussed in Carlo

comparisons between the 'primitives' in the Americas and the country dwellers in Castile, Spain, were drawn in the works of the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria. Both types of savages lived in the darkness of idolatry and sin, and both could be saved in comparable ways.⁸³ In the late 1540s, the Jesuit Silvestro Landini went as far as to suggest that the real inspiration for his pastoral work in rural Italy came from reading the letters of missionaries in the Far East.⁸⁴

Such convictions made it possible for Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins, and Jesuits alike to engage the allegedly uncultured inhabitants of Europe's 'wilderness', or the *Indie di quaggiù*, with missionary methods from outside Europe. This implied approaching the people not as heretics that had to be forced into submission, but as savages who, because of lack of instruction, remained immersed in cultural practices alien to Catholicism. This vision of the intrinsic correspondence between internal and external mission spread after the 1550s, when the Observant Franciscans and Dominicans, alongside the new Jesuit and the Capuchin orders, returned to the Catholic countryside, to rural and urban regions 'regained' from Protestant control, or worked as clandestine missionaries in Protestant lands.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Due to a maximalist interpretation of the sources, historians have overestimated the scope and impact of the missionary efforts of the mendicant orders during the middle ages, including the Observant branches that developed an impressive arsenal of pastoral instruments in the course of the fifteenth century. Mendicant pastoral engagement was always far more directed towards the religious edification and subjugation of the Christian flock within Europe than geared towards missionary outreach to the non-Christian world. In fact, most missionaries active outside Christian Europe worked among Christian

Ginzburg, "Making Things Strange: The Prehistory of a Literary Devise," *Representations* 56 (1996): 8–28.

83 Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*, 555.

84 V. Augusti (ed.), *Epistolae mixte ex variis Europae locis ab anno 1537 ad 1556 scriptae*, 5 Vols. (Madrid: 1898–1901), 5: 698–702.

85 Elena Bonora, *La Controriforma*, Biblioteca Essenziale Laterza, 35 (Bari: 2001), 82–84; Louis Perouas, "Missions intérieures et missions extérieures françaises durant les premières décennies du XVIIe siècle," *Parole et mission* 27 (1964): 644–59; Marc Venard, "Vos Indes sont ici, Missions lointaines ou/et missions intérieures dans le catholicisme français de la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle," in *Les réveils missionnaires en France du Moyen Âge à nos jours (XII^e–XX^e siècles)* (Paris: 1981), 83–9.

minorities living in Muslim lands, among Christian slaves and captives of war, and in Christian *fondacio*'s along the Southern Mediterranean coast.

This maximalist interpretation and the triumphalist self-representation of the mendicant orders has led historians to overestimate the scope of the Observant missionary effort as well as its professionalism immediately after the discoveries of Columbus. Notwithstanding reports in chronicles such as that of Nikolaus Glassberger concerning the boundless enthusiasm of the Observant Franciscans once they heard about the missionary possibilities in the New World, it took two decades or more before a substantial number of missionaries with more or less realistic modes of procedure were active in the conquered territories. Early accounts of mass baptisms should not be taken at face value, and certainly not as proof of an efficacious missionary engagement with the indigenous other.

By the 1520s, a much more in-depth missionary effort had taken hold, with impressive investments in language training and the production of vernacular catechistic instruments. This missionary effort was not necessary benign and peaceful, however. It went hand in hand with various types of enforcement, and with a radical large-scale destruction of non-Christian cult sites and many other vestiges of non-Christian religious culture. It also was fuelled by contradictory views of the target population. On the one hand, missionaries held high hopes of transforming the native heathens into a pure and obedient Christian flock. This entailed projecting ideals of a Christian commonwealth in line with existing European blueprints of a fully Christian society, as developed by previous generations of mendicant authors. For some missionaries, this was also connected with more eschatological expectations and a sense that their work was tied in to salvation history. On the other hand, most missionaries could not envision a fully emancipated Indian Christian Church in which native people held positions of clerical authority, let alone an American society in which native people could hold clerical authority over European settlers. Lingering notions of European racism, re-enforced by Spanish conceptions of *limpieza de sangre*, put an end to that. A gradual disenchantment with the ways in which the natives responded to the missionary effort also played a role in this. In the end, the newly converted were not so pure and full of promise as once believed, which made it easier to focus on their 'natural' shortcomings and to deny them a status of equality. A few exceptions notwithstanding, Observant mendicant missionaries of the sixteenth century questioned neither the conquest nor the fundamentally subjugated position of the indigenous population. At best, they could envision some type of segregation and an avoidance of exploitation through an apartheid model, in which the natives would, of course, remain under the guidance of Observant priests.

Observant missionaries were fundamentally agents of the Spanish crown. Whatever their genuine interests in the wellbeing of indigenous peoples and whatever their fascination with indigenous languages and customs, they worked within the accepted parameters of an emerging colonial society. Moreover (something not explored in depth in this essay but important to remember nevertheless), not all Observant mendicant friars mentioned as missionaries were necessarily working primarily towards the conversion of the indigenous population. Whatever the stories in mendicant chronicles about heroic missionary journeys and struggles in precarious missionary outposts, the core mission of the various religious orders in the New World might have been directed first and foremost to European settlers. A more open-minded evaluation of the sources seems to confirm this. Although the production of sermons and catechistic instruments in indigenous languages was impressive, it formed only a minute portion of the religious writings produced by Spanish friars in the New World during the sixteenth century. In that sense, many Observant missionaries traveling to the New World did exactly what their Observant predecessors and contemporaries were doing in Europe, namely, focusing primarily on the indoctrination of European Christians and their offspring.

Furthermore, in the course of the sixteenth century, many Observants acquainted with pastoral work in Europe's less urbanized regions discovered uncanny similarities between the idolatrous nature and magical practices found among Europe's rural population and those described in letters and reports sent home by missionaries working in far away lands. This fed the idea that the Christianization of Europe's countryside had only just begun, and that the effort needed for this included overcoming huge cultural and linguistic barriers not unlike those faced by the missionaries in the Americas and Asia. In the end, this helped to forge a new conception of mission as universal, in which experiences from elsewhere could either assist or motivate the work of the missionary working within the nominally Christian European continent.