

CATHOLIC REFORMER

A Life of

St. Cajetan of Thiene

by

Paul H. Hallett

Contents

	FOREWORD	iii
<i>One:</i>	THE SPARK ENKINDLED	1
<i>Two:</i>	SMOLDERING EMBERS	9
<i>Three:</i>	THE SPARK GLOWS	19
<i>Four:</i>	FLAMES BURST FORTH	33
<i>Five:</i>	THE FLAMES REACH OUT	47
<i>Six:</i>	THE FIRE SPREADS	65
<i>Seven:</i>	DEVASTATING FLAMES	87
<i>Eight:</i>	THE CONQUERING FLAME	109
<i>Nine:</i>	THE FLAME UNEXTINGUISHED	121
	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE	127

Nihil obstat: EDWARD A. CERNY, S. S., S. T. D.
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur: FRANCIS P. KEOUGH, D. D.
Archbishop of Baltimore

July 30, 1959

Foreword

Though the Reformation period is one of the most popular parts of modern history, as it deserves to be, the story of the Catholic Reform (miscalled the Counter-Reformation) is still too largely unknown. Most educated Catholics know something of St. Charles Borromeo and of the work of the pioneer Jesuits. They have read something of the work of Paul III and the reform decrees of the Council of Trent. But how many really know the spadework of the early sixteenth century, which made the zeal of Borromeo and the decrees of Trent as effective as they were? Yet there were men of eminence and sanctity working to reform the Church at the very time Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin were doing so much to destroy it. These men were not “Counter-Reformers”; they were like Hildebrand of the eleventh century, seeking to bring the Church to new health and vigor, and not merely defending it from enemies from without.

The Catholic Reform was first and foremost the work of a clerical *élite*, a body of disciplined priests living under a rule with the ideal of raising the mass of society by acting as a leaven for the clergy in general. These priests were known as clerks regular, of whom the Jesuits themselves were but a species. The clerks regular were established in 1523 by the two men who figure most largely in this book, St. Cajetan of Thiene (not to be confused with the more noted Dominican theologian who was his contemporary, Tommaso de Vio Cardinal Cajetan) and Giano Pietro Caraffa, who became Pope Paul IV. These two men, with their associates, sketched and influenced the adoption of every reform worked within the Church: the residence requirement of bishops, the strengthening of the central administration of the Church, the tightening of regulations concerning benefices and the granting of dispensations, the reform of the Breviary and the liturgy, the systematic education of priests, the improved tone of popular sermons, great attention to scriptural reading among the clergy – the list could be long extended. The Church discipline of today has many of its roots in the Theatine spirit.

Indeed, the name Theatine was almost a generic one in the sixteenth century for any priest who strove by the power of his example to raise the tone of the Renaissance.

The Theatines have never exercised their influence by force of numbers. In the first 244 years of their existence they could record only 4,500 priests. But almost a third of these were elevated to hierarchical rank. To quote Father Philip Hughes:

After nine years there were but a score of Theatines. But as preachers in the streets of the great Italian cities, as apostles of the hospitals and the gaols, as confessors, they made a mark wherever they went. And presently they became an obvious stock from which the Popes could draw reforming bishops; more than two hundred before their first century was out.*

St. Cajetan, incidentally, was one of the first movers of the modern credit union through the Monti della Pietà. that he sponsored in the Italian towns. This work the Theatines in our own

* Hughes, Philip, *A Popular History of the Reformation* (New York: Hanover House, 1957), p. 93.

country have splendidly advanced among the impoverished Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest.

As a Denver Catholic newspaperman for eighteen years, it has been my fortune to know some of the sons of St. Cajetan, who have been stationed in Colorado since the first Theatines came to the U.S. in 1906. No one can estimate how much the Theatines have done for people of Spanish descent, whose relations with the Anglo-Saxon have been so difficult. As these people increase in numbers, both here in the U.S. and below the Border, the work of the men who claim their inspiration from the great Catholic Reformer will become known to an ever-wider circle.

PAUL H. HALLETT

Feast of St. Cajetan
August 7, 1957

The Spark Enkindled

✘ *I am come to cast fire upon the Earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?* (Luke 12:49).

Religion is full of names inapplicable to what they designate, names inspired in the beginning, perhaps, by a spirit of derision – Methodist and *Quaker* come to mind – or bestowed originally on a particular occasion in history, now forgotten to all but scholars – *Protestant* is a prime example – or struck off at first to create a presumption in favor of a cause, which now, after centuries, has lost the salt of controversy. Such pre-eminently is the word *Reformation*.

No one nowadays thinks of the name *Reformation* in the same sense as most people think of the name *Reform Bill of 1832* – as something referring to a change transforming a whole society for the better. One may think the movement initiated by Luther and Calvin right, and the Catholic system wrong, but hardly anyone will say that Christianity today is “reformed” in relation to what it was at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Reformation implies a single object that is changed for the better, and, though much in the Christian religion is changed – even Catholicity in its accidentals – the changes are too conflicting and affect too many varied groups for anyone to speak of a *reformation* of Christianity.

Catholicity, however, has, on the whole and in its human side – the side that is subject to decay, like all things human – changed for the better since the early sixteenth century. Hence we can speak, properly and without a capital letter, of the Catholic reformation of the sixteenth century, as we can speak of Catholic reformations in earlier periods.

This reformation came about only secondarily in the machinery of ecclesiastical government; it had first to begin in the lives of its protagonists. The reform of the papacy began definitely in 1534 with the accession of Paul III, who had been Alexander Farnese. But this reform would not have come about but for the reform in the life of Farnese, who was forty-five years old when he broke with his former laxness of life.

From first to last the reformation of the Catholic Church of 450 years ago was accomplished by men who were, according to their talents, great humanists, like Thomas More; great administrators, like Charles Borromeo; great preachers, like Peter Canisius; great planners, like Ignatius Loyola; but above all and in everything, the man of the Catholic reform was a man who, in Chaucer’s famous couplet,

Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve, He taught; but first he folwed it himselfe.

Lord Acton complains that “the Reformation was extended and established without any strong reaction among Catholics, or inspiring them with a policy.” This is true enough, and tragically true, but policy had first to wait on the formation of character, of persons sufficient in moral weight and numbers to frame and support an effective policy against the poisons spread by the religious revolt. Hence in this biography the development, under Divine Grace, of the character

of St. Cajetan of Thiene will always precede the formulation of the great outlines of administrative reform of which he was a prime designer.

Almost coincident in their life spans, Cajetan (1480 – 1540) and Luther (1483 – 1546), the Catholic reformer and the Protestant revolutionist, led lives of strong contrast.

In willing St. Cajetan's birth to precede that of Luther, notes the Congregation of Rites, God seemed to anticipate an evil that His omniscience could permit. Cajetan, the reformer, was to rekindle the dying embers of Divine Love, whereas Luther, the revolutionist, would tear himself and others from the embrace of Christ's Mystical Body. The Saxon priest was of peasant origin; Cajetan came of one of the proudest families of the Italian Renaissance. One of the great motors that propelled the German Reformation was German jealousy of Italy; Cajetan worked to reform Italian life in precisely those areas that lent most support to German grievances. Cajetan was thirty-six before he became a priest. Luther was about that age when he finally left the priesthood. Cajetan remained the Italian aristocrat all his life, but had great sympathy for the poor and himself embraced poverty; Luther, though he liked to think of himself as *volkstümlich* – one of the German people – turned against the people from whom he sprang in the terrible Peasants' War. Luther's life was probably more dramatic than that of Cajetan, as destruction seems more dramatic than reconstruction; but Cajetan produced fruits that will be with us when Wittenberg no longer evokes passions.

Cajetan (in Italian, Gaetano) was born in October, 1480, in the city of Vicenza, in Venetian territory. He was the second of three sons of Gaspar, Count of Thiene, who at one time had been captain in the service of the Holy Roman Empire. In the town of Vicenza, midway between Venice and Padua, the family shared in the cultural life characteristic of the Italian nobility in the days of the Medici. The House of Thiene had existed in Vicenza as far back as the earliest reliable records can be traced. From the year 1300 the family had enjoyed outstanding privileges under successive emperors. Frederick III, by a grant of 1496, had confirmed the privilege accorded by former emperors to the predecessors of the Thienes, the permission to use the Imperial Eagle on their coat of arms. Two branches of the family later established themselves in France and gave prominent men to that country. The particular branch to which Cajetan belonged has become extinct. But in Vicenza there remain five magnificent palaces constructed by the Counts of Thiene in the sixteenth century, which testify to the splendor of the family. Among them was the beautiful edifice in which Cajetan was born and in which he spent the first years of his life.

The Thiene family had first achieved prominence in Venice as members of the *Condottieri*, those professional leaders of mercenary troops who supported, protected, and strengthened one faction or another in the Italian city-states. For at that time the political unit was the city-state, which by force or stratagem had fallen under the yoke of some leading citizen, who then became its lord or "tyrant." In most of the cities, small tyrannies had been established upon the ruins of republican government, so that toward the end of the thirteenth century there were almost as many princes or tyrants in Northern Italy as there had been free cities at an earlier date. Such conditions led to jealousy, rivalry, and bitter factions. With numerous parties vying for control, military power was vital to supremacy. This need the *Condottieri* supplied.

By ability and sagacity, the family steadily gained prominence and prestige until its members held first rank in the aristocratic circles of the "Queen of the Adriatic." This influence they owed both to their wealth and to the fact that for three centuries they had given their country learned and influential men. Cajetan (the name is the Latinized form of Gaetano) was the namesake of one of these ancestors. The first Gaetano was, as his name implies, born in the town of Gaeta,

while his father was in the service of the King of Naples. Even before the dawn of the twentieth century the little town of Gaeta had become insignificant, but at the time of Cajetan it was an important harbor through which most of the trade between Naples and Rome passed.

In the blood of this illustrious family ran that civic spirit that we see in the best families all through the days of ancient Rome, and which survived in the Italian city-states. Its members found delight in using their talents for the public welfare and liked to think of all their labors as done for the good of their city, plebeian or aristocrat. Any mulcting of the public for personal advantage was abhorrent to them. In short, they were friends of the common folk because they devoted themselves to their service, and friends of the intellectual and aristocratic class because that was their native circle. The family's history was recorded in monuments of Christian charity in the form of churches and convents.

Cajetan reaped abundant fruit from this good vine that gave him life. He emerged rich in a glorious heritage of tradition, custom, traits of character, and domestic virtues. His was a personality always humble, sincere, and simple; yet the blood of the *Condottieri* coursed through his veins to make him a leader of men. In spite of voluntary poverty and the humble tasks that grace prompted him to undertake, he was never able to erase the stamp of his noble origin.

In that origin not only blood but also environment played a part. Vicenza, now a city of some 60,000, was important in the early history of the region of Venice. When it became part of the Venetian republic, it shared in its luxury and wealth. Venice, the powerful and opulent city-state of the Renaissance, had been enriched and aggrandized by the Crusades more than any other center of Europe. Her splendor dates from the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204, when she immediately set up a brisk trade with the East. No other Christian state maintained such extensive intercourse with the Mohammedans during the centuries that immediately followed. Since her waterways and sand dunes made her comparatively safe, she controlled the Adriatic. Shipbuilding was her principal industry, and consequently trade with other cities flourished. As her commerce grew, so also grew her magnificence. Venetian homes contained all the elaborate furnishings that could be obtained from the Orient or the Occident.

To this luxury was added the pleasant life of quiet Vicenza, blessed with a fertile soil, a favorable climate, and an abundance of natural wealth. Centered in this favored spot stood the majestic Thiene castle in all its splendor and beauty. It was surrounded by the ancestral estates that had nourished so many illustrious figures that a saying spread abroad that "Vicenza was as productive of worthy men as it was of delicious fruit," which grew there in abundance during the greater portion of the year.



The Contessa da Thiene, born of the Porto family, a leading house of Vicenza, was a Christian mother. Her natural title of motherhood she enriched by giving good example and shaping characters strong in virtue. Until she gave birth to Cajetan, she had been surrounded by all the magnificence and luxury her rank demanded. When the birth was delayed, the mother took this as a sign that the child was not to be born amidst luxury, but in poverty, in imitation of the Babe of Bethlehem. The good Contessa therefore astonished the attendants and other members of her household by asking to be removed to the poorest and meanest room in the palace. The religious care of her three children, Giambattista (the eldest), Alejandro, and Cajetan, she placed before all else. She was soon to take charge of their temporal nurture as well, for when Cajetan was two years old, Conte Gaspar da Thiene lost his life while fighting under the flag of Roberto Malatesta for the victory of Rome over the Duke of Calabria, an enemy of the Holy See.

In reward for her Christian solicitude the good mother had the joy of hearing the names of Jesus and Mary as the first articulate sounds to be formed by her second son's baby lips. From that time, the child's mouth seemed reserved for speaking of the things of God. Neither the mother nor the nurse ever corrected Cajetan for any kind of unbecoming language.

In 1483, the year when Luther was born, three-year-old Cajetan was occupied in a very serious game of make-believe: He converted a room of his home into a miniature church complete with altar, images, and flowers. To this little sanctuary he went frequently to pray, and often he was delighted because he had succeeded in bringing the family with him. Even at this early age he was fortifying himself for a long and difficult combat against the forces of heresy that were to destroy many real altars and sacred images and which would have destroyed the Mass.

The watchful eye of the Signora da Thiene was quick to perceive the rapidity with which her second son attained the use of reason. Delighted to find in him such talents and grace, she threw herself into his further development. When the child was only five the mother began his instruction in the dogmas of the Church, and soon after continued with that staple of ancient education, grammar and (somewhat later) rhetoric. Even in these tender years Cajetan began to carry on little discussions and controversies concerning the truths of faith. Father Silos, historian of the Clerks Regular, tells us that all who came into the child's presence were filled with awe and admiration to see such a prodigy defend the Catholic interpretation of every phrase and sentence.

As the children reached the age that required a more advanced schooling, the good mother enlisted the aid of the Dominicans in the neighboring monastery of Santa Corona. There, in the silent cloister, in the midst of conventual prayer and the swish of white habits gliding along shadowy corridors, the three Thiene boys received an impression of sanctity that was not to leave them.

With due allowance for the tendency of post-Renaissance biographers to exaggerate the marvels of the supernatural, one may safely conclude that in Cajetan's maturing soul grace found striking means of manifestation. Early accounts claim that he would frequently beg from the servants and members of the family, or would even deprive himself of his own food in order to give to the poor. The things the boy considered "leftovers" were not always regarded as such by the servants, and he received many a scolding for undue kindness to the poor. On one occasion, as he was hurrying toward the door with a suspicious bulge under his waistcoat, an alert servant demanded to know what he was carrying. The boy's composed answer was, "Flowers." Thereupon, the story goes, the baffled servant stood in astonishment as the child innocently loosened his grasp and revealed a miraculously produced bouquet instead of food.

But Cajetan's childhood is for the most part wrapped in an obscurity not to be broken until the time of the completion of his higher studies preparatory to entering the university. The historian Giacomo Marzario acclaimed him at that age *humanis litteris eruditissimus*, and his companions remarked on his spiritual predilections. Each morning found him at the Holy Sacrifice, each afternoon found him returning to Church to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. He went often to Confession and Communion, and the townfolk claimed that after his reception of the Host his cheeks would glow with love.

To the utter disgust and humiliation of his family, he mingled freely with the poor and lowered himself before all. He never appeared in public with personal attendants. He spoke little unless of necessity, and his eyes were habitually cast down. His allowance was spent in giving alms and his time was given to visiting the sick.

At about the age of twenty, he received the first division of the patrimony shared among himself and his cousins, sons of Conte Antonio da Thiene. Cajetan distributed his share to the poor with such prodigality that his relatives again reprimanded him severely. He meekly answered them: “Under the ragged clothing of the poor I see Christ begging a piece of bread, and how can I deny it to Him?”

On one occasion, when an elder relative rebuked the young man for not dressing in conformity with his state, Cajetan told him with considerable heat that he had renounced the world with its vanities and pomps. After reflection, he considered the answer too harsh and resolved to submit “to any penance or martyrdom” to expiate his sin. It is characteristic of the saint’s tender conscience that he considered this outburst of youthful enthusiasm one of the greater sins of his life!



The most natural course of events for the scion of a Renaissance family was to continue his learning in a university – in Cajetan’s case, the University of Padua, where his uncle had become famous in the world of letters. There he entered at about his twentieth year and lived in the home of a relative. Shortly after arrival, he addressed a prayer to the Blessed Virgin, to whom he had consecrated himself in childhood, and implored her to be the guardian of his virtue and his teacher in all sciences. His courses included both civil and canon law and theology. Theology and philosophy drew him irresistibly, since they nourished his intellect and augmented his zeal. Philosophy held for him no subtle net of pride but always led him on to Absolute Truth. His brilliant and vivacious intellect was also quick to penetrate the mysteries of nature, which held such allure for the scholars of the Renaissance.

But, unlike so many of his contemporaries, he did not stop at Plato and Aristotle in his search for truth. He knew that, though they glimpsed something of God’s dignity, they were completely unable to fathom His love for men. They had no true grasp of Divine Providence. Cajetan penetrated deeper and deeper into the Divine Nature. He knew God as both the Designer and the Creator of the universe, and in His creatures he found something of the Creator. As his maturing mind became more and more enamored with the Divinity, he spent entire nights in prayer and contemplation. He found in his studies the surest armor, the most pointed weapon for the defense of the Faith. It was for this, above all, that he applied himself each day with the zeal of an apostle.

Student life was just as morally dangerous then as at any other time in history. The universities in general were nuclei of roguery, disorder, and immorality. The youthful Cajetan faced squarely the problem every new university student has to solve for himself. He must either be one of the many, a follower of the undisciplined crowd, or he must reserve for himself a life apart from the others while yet remaining one of them. For him there was no hesitation. Anyone who has ever attended a college or university knows what a sacrifice that is for a youth to make; but Cajetan, after once making his choice, did not waver. Each time necessity brought him into the student body it was easier for him to see the correctness of his resolution, since contact with his fellow students meant being exposed to indecent language and moral levity.

Yet it was an innate trait of Cajetan’s character to love and be loved. He never fully succeeded in living in the solitude he had desired. As almost always happens, his adherence to high ideals won him a position of respect and dignity. The warmth of his personality, which he could never conceal, more surely attracted to him those inclined by nature toward the higher things. Thus,

unknown to himself, he began a silent apostolate that was to be as effective throughout his life as his sermons and writings.

Cajetan never attended any of the public amusements habitually frequented by the university crowd. His favorite recreation was to visit the religious houses of perfect observance where he could admire the harmony of virtue and the beauty of hearts united in the praise of God. During this period of his life the Holy Roman Rota names him *angelicae puritatis imago* (an image of angelic purity).

Two simple answers can be given to any one who wonders at these rare spiritual privileges. In the first place, he had placed himself under the special care and protection of the Blessed Virgin from childhood, whose images he had lovingly honored on his miniature altars when he was “playing religion.” The second cause lay in his incessant mortification, his strict guard over his senses, and his caution in avoiding occasions of temptation. He kept his body in subjection by the use of the hair shirt, scourgings, chains, and fasting. The Roman Rota testifies that he was so rigid in the custody of his senses that a certain noble lady stated that she had tried many times to see the color of his eyes, but had never succeeded. Hardly less strict was his guard over the sense of hearing; his companions did not dare to use any sort of unbecoming speech in his presence. He exempted himself from the observance of certain social customs of his day, such as permitting the kissing of his hands.

Cajetan was no less careful in fleeing temptation, as his own words testify: “Those who do not flee the occasions of sin are either caught in the snare, or they are very sure that they will not be caught. But I, dear friends, truly, with God’s grace, *do not wish to be caught*, because my Lord does not will it. But I cannot trust myself. Fire has always been fire and its property is to burn. . . . Then do not venture into fire if you do not wish to be burnt. Let us fly away – let us fly away.”

Cajetan did fly so far away from evil that many of his companions, recognizing his great purity of life, had recourse to him when they were tempted against the angelic virtue. With his blessing, it is said, he was able to free their minds permanently from impure imaginations.

By the time he had reached his twenty-fourth year, Cajetan had fulfilled the requirements for his degree. His talents had been accorded recognition and honor; he was acknowledged to be one of the most thorough scholars that Padua had produced. He received a doctor’s degree in both civil jurisprudence and canon law on July 17, 1504, and forthwith made plans to return to Vicenza.



Cajetan’s first act after returning to Vicenza was to make known his leanings toward an ecclesiastical career. He went before his bishop and declared himself to belong wholly to the service of God; whereupon he received the tonsure and clerical garb. In this same year, 1504, Martin Luther gave his name as a candidate for admission to the Augustinian Order. The lives of the two men were to be filled with strange parallels and provocative contrasts.

Settled in his Vicenza home, Cajetan entered his name at the College of Jurisconsults, a body of men versed in the practice of civil law, where his elder brother, Giambattista, already held a position. Soon after, the two oldest Thiene brothers came into possession of their patrimony. With it they were in a position to carry on the old tradition of public munificence that marked the Thienes. In order that some of the villagers on their estates might not have so far to walk they built a parish church at Rampazzo. Cajetan endeared himself to his fellow citizens.

But in September of 1505 Cajetan was to sadden the people of Vicenza by telling them that he intended going to Rome. With his name entered on the list of lawyers, and having just completed the village church, he had unconsciously led his people to believe that he was to remain with them indefinitely. They found it hard to accept his surprise farewell, but he felt that God was directing his course.

II

Smoldering Embers

✠ *And my sheep were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became the prey of all the beasts of the field, and were scattered (Ezekiel 34:5).*

Since it is pre-eminently because of his role as reformer that Cajetan is honored on our altars, we must pause long enough to glimpse the peculiar conditions that, taken as a whole, made up the epoch that included his life's span. Without the age in mind, the man would lose meaning, purposefulness, and color.

The age in which Cajetan was born was restless and chaotic, shifting from medieval to modern life. Radical transformations were taking place in the home, the university, the world of politics. These circumstances, and the immediate needs of the times, were determining factors in the life of the saint; under the guidance of grace, they made his life what it was.



The most active period of Cajetan's intense life can be included roughly in the first half of the sixteenth century. The greatest strides in humanism had been made in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and as the next century came into view the reawakening of the intellectual world had progressed far enough to create a new stage of history. The sixteenth century is like a feeble child inheriting both good and bad from its ancestral tree. The pursuit of a pagan culture had planted the seeds of fearful moral and religious corruption. This cesspool was fed by three polluted intellectual streams.

The first was a misguided attempt to revive the classic beauty of Greece and Rome in art and literature. Ancient art was beautiful, but it was saturated with paganism; in the hands of too many Christians, it became a body without a soul. Pagan writings began to gain a hold in the minds of the people to a degree that would have been impossible at any previous period. The printing press was invented in 1452, and thereafter the ancient classics could be reproduced at a rate heretofore impossible. As pagan literature was disseminated, writers began to imitate the ancients, not only in perfection of form, but also in indecent ideas and licentiousness. Since the lives represented in the pagan writings were no pattern of Christian virtue, moral standards were quickly lowered. Pagan and Christian ideals were at contradiction, and scholars attempted the impossible in trying to reconcile them. They tried to fit pagan culture into Christian living by veiling corrupt paganism with Christian forms and religious ceremonies. The inevitable result of this incongruity was that too many of them lived the immoral lives suggested by the pagans, while outwardly conforming to the forms of Christianity. The central figure in Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb" is not a caricature of one type of Renaissance man.

The change in the moral tone of literature can be traced in the works of three of the most representative literary figures in their respective attitudes toward womanhood: Dante, a precursor of the Renaissance, still medieval in thought, showed reverence toward woman – Beatrix is his ideal. Petrarch, a pioneer of the intellectual rebirth, showed deep devotion to Laura but less idealism. Boccaccio, a contemporary of Petrarch, but more typically humanistic, writes of his *Fiammetta* (little flame) in terms of passion.

From this point onward sensuality claimed the pens of many. No festivity in the courts of Ferrante, Sforza, Borgia, or most of the other fashionable palaces was considered complete without the presentation of an immoral play, either obscene in theme or marred by indecent jests. Beccadelli, Valla, Poggio, Ser Cambi, Masuccio, Bentili, Sermini, Vettor, Bandello, and others took relations between the sexes for their favorite subject and concluded by attacking marriage and the family. In such a trend of thought adultery and free love were condoned, provided they were pleasantly veiled with discretion. Paganized Renaissance philosophy placed pleasure, pleasure, pleasure as the only thing worth seeking in life. The “emancipation of the flesh” has been recognized as the forerunner of the great social revolution that in the following centuries shook Europe with social tremors that have not yet run their course.

The second insidious movement of the Renaissance was an exaggerated individualism which put the emphasis on self-assertion and selfish development. The geniuses of the period have not been surpassed. But in ascending to such literary and intellectual heights man lost the fundamental virtue of humility. Pride and personal ambition trod the delicate garden of lovely virtues into sand.

The craving for personal glory claimed many like a diabolical possession. When self was brought into bold relief, ambition and desire for personal glory soon uprooted restraint and mortification. The highest exterior polish was often combined with revolting depravity and cruel cunning. The greed of pagan times overrode Christian ideals. With egoism pitted against fraternal charity, swift upon the heels of avarice followed extravagance, lust, deceit, fraud, robbery, and murder. In such turbulent streams of social disorder, no other than Machiavelli was impelled to exclaim: “All Italians are irreligious and wicked in the extreme!”

The third seed of evil germinated in a minimizing of faith. With a newly felt independence of human reason, some thinkers were challenging all traditional modes of thought, questioning simple faith, abandoning tradition, and discrediting holy and divine things. They preferred to place love of material culture and of the human intellect above the divinely revealed religion of their ancestors. Pagan philosophy was greeted as a liberation from Christian restraint.

Beccadelli, an extreme spokesman for this school, thus expressed one trend of feeling of the time: “What has been produced by nature cannot be otherwise than holy and praiseworthy. . . . Nature is the same, or almost the same, as God. . . . The business of man is to enjoy the good things of nature, and these to the fullest. . . . God consists in the gratification of mind and body, no matter from what source derived.” This attitude was not confined to a few writers, but became a fashionable thing. To scorn and ridicule Christian truths became a kind of amusement. In court entertainments, sacred ceremonies were travestied and parodies of the *Our Father* and *Glory be to the Father* were enjoyed.

Pride of intellect and the discrediting of tradition, imbedded as they were in an unstable society, produced a questioning of all constituted authority. Cries for freedom degenerated into murmurs against the great bonds that had heretofore held society in check. It was the result of these combined forces that made it possible for entire sections of Europe to cut loose from the papacy before another century had dawned. One historian, quoted by Ludwig Pastor, made this

sweeping statement: “The revival of learning was the first great act of that immense moral transformation in which Europe was involved and whose marked epochs are: The Italian Renaissance, the German Reformation, and the French Revolution.”



The papacy during this period of transition in thought and politics was called upon to play a unique role. In the uncertainty and strife of political life, the people had no civil unit to follow that would represent a unifying force, a maintenance of order, a centralized authority. Since the papacy belonged to all nations, all turned to it. It was considered the last recourse for maintaining order and the strongest single binding force in Europe.

Entangled itself, however, in the web of international politics, the papacy partially lost its sacred aspect in the minds of the people. At that time, in fact, it was almost inevitable that the popes should have to rely dangerously on the state. As material interests began to overshadow the spiritual, the election of popes was controlled by influential factions. Consequently, the character of the men elected to the Chair of Peter declined, with a resultant weakening of papal prestige. Constant quarrels with the emperors as well as the Western Schism (1378 – 1417) worked toward a decline in the spiritual influence of the successors of the Fisherman. The mere fact of a seemingly twofold papacy must have shaken the confidence of the masses in the authority of the Holy See. Probably no other single condition so thoroughly paved the way for the great apostasy of the sixteenth century as did this schism. To this cause add the disorganization suffered by the hierarchy during the Avignon period, which led to a wave of ecclesiastical corruption.

It could hardly be expected that the revolutionary thought of the time could fail to question papal supremacy. In fact, the infallibility of the Church’s teachings became a favorite subject of controversy. Since medieval theology had not thoroughly defined or emphasized papal primacy or infallibility, at first no authoritative answer could be given. Quibbling about the authority of papal pronouncements further undermined the confidence of the people in their spiritual head.

If the position in which the popes now found themselves was that of worldly princes, then the manner of life of worldlings could hardly help making its way to the Vatican. The decline in the moral tone of the papal court began with Paul II (1464 – 1471) and grew worse during the rule of Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII; it reached its nadir under Alexander VI (1492 – 1503). After passing through its darkest night, the papacy saw a troubled dawn, during which the halfhearted efforts of Pius III, Julius II, Leo X, Adrian VI, and Clement VII, whose reigns extended to 1534, were incapable of stemming the worldly spirit that had engulfed the Holy See.

A change set in with the pontificate of Paul III, but it was not until the accession of Paul IV (1555 – 1559) and Pius IV (1559 – 1565), who were set against every kind of abuse, that the upward trend was strikingly manifested, and the papacy reached a high plateau, as it did in the noonday splendor of Pope St. Pius V (1566 – 1572).

The papacy, it is true, if it sinned at this time was also sinned against, and its faults were grossly exaggerated. Involved in matters of state, it was too often the victim of factional disputes and rancors. The popes were guilty of favoritism toward their relatives, but this in turn was largely due to a condition that drove them to protect themselves against their enemies by appointing men they thought they could trust. But nepotism provided an all-too-easy target for critics and the faults of the papacy were puffed up and spread by every wind. Overzealous reformers, even well-intentioned Catholics, would expose in the heat of criticism the disorders of

the Holy See in their ugliest aspect. Personal hatred and prejudice contributed greatly to the more severe attacks on the popes.

But, after all allowances for exaggeration are made, the very vehemence of these criticisms showed that the papal court was in drastic need of reform, that the lack of respect and devotion for the central See of Christendom was a vulnerable spot where the poisoned arrows of heresy could find their mark. There was no doubt about the necessity of a complete renovation. This stupendous task awaited reformers within the bosom of the Church, and Cajetan, from his youth intimately associated with the papacy, was a pioneer in fostering a restoration of its early Christian vigor.



The misuse of wealth, together with the disorders and immorality to which it led, was the greatest evil in the Church. Many writers confirmed this fact. Among them was Nicolas de Clémangis, who declared in a sermon before the Council of Constance that “money was the origin of the Schism [of 1378 – 1417] and the root of all confusion.”

Pluralism, or the possession of several benefices by one ecclesiastic, was a far-reaching cancer in the Church. The holders received the revenues, which were usually immense, and employed uninterested and poorly paid substitutes to do their work. One prelate might hold several bishoprics and in addition receive the revenues from rich abbeys and other benefices. Since no one person could attend to the duties that so many offices required, the spiritual functions remained unfulfilled in the absence of the incumbents. To this practice there were hardly any limits. Cardinal Passerini, an extreme example, held over fifty benefices. The evils resulting from such a condition need scarcely be explained. Churches were permitted to go to ruin; pastors became negligent in the care of souls and the administration of the sacraments; the moral tone among the laity was vastly lowered. In some places, parishioners carried their religious devotions no further than the reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist during the Easter season.

Nepotism, to which we have already alluded, was equally prevalent. With worldly power at their command, some ecclesiastics succumbed to the temptation of bestowing position and wealth upon those of their own choosing, “to keep it in the family.” Bishoprics and various types of lucrative benefices, as well as choice offices, were given to near relatives at will. In most cases (St. Charles Borromeo is a brilliant exception), the recipients of such favors possessed no worthy claim to them beyond that of blood relationship.

There was a particular type of benefice known as *commendam*, a name applied to distinguish it from one held *in titulum* (by right), which constituted a permanent benefice. The *commendam* gave a prelate, or even a lay prince or nobleman, a vast portion of the income of a monastery, an abbey, or some class of ecclesiastical property. The holder had the obligation of protecting his possession and of performing certain pious exercises daily, such as the recitation of certain prayers in honor of the Virgin. If the recipient was an ecclesiastic, he was entitled to some jurisdiction, but he did not exercise any authority over inner monastic discipline. Ambitious or avaricious men, some of whom were not even ecclesiastics, sought *commendams* merely for personal advantage or to enrich their friends and relatives, with no attention to the spiritual obligations involved. Those who held these benefices often required the religious under them to live in the shabbiest poverty, while they squandered the in-come in luxury and dissipation.

Of ecclesiastical positions the nobles held practically a monopoly. A bishopric was always an acceptable gift, if it were lucrative enough, for the sons of the nobility and princes. It was one

way of seeing that all members of the family were properly and comfortably situated. Monasteries, too, were sometimes used for this purpose, principally through *commendams*.

There is little need to dwell on the immorality of many members of the hierarchy and religious orders of this period. It is far better to understand the abusive customs of the times, which led to irreligion. Practices resulting from pagan thought, but contrary to true Christian instinct, had come to be considered the ordinary way of life. The looseness and grossness of morals were the outgrowth of a number of disorderly conditions to which we have alluded.

A prevalent evil was the worldly spirit of the clergy. A contemporary author wrote: "The clergy are to be found in inns and taverns and at sports and theaters more frequently than in consecrated places." Monks were roundly condemned for roaming abroad instead of remaining within the enclosure of their monasteries.

With the frequenting of public amusements came the putting aside of religious garb. Clergy were often seen going about in modish styles of secular dress. Silks, laces, and robes cut to the knees supplanted the long, plain clerical garb, and full-length wavy hair often flowed down from a pate that should have worn the tonsure. With this mode of living the simplicity of the Gospel, chastity, and the love of God could hardly coexist.

Any reference to unchastity captures the attention and, if found in the clergy, instills horror. Hence this unlovely aspect of Renaissance life has been exaggerated, or dwelt upon beyond its merits. As a matter of fact, of all abuses avarice was the most widespread, the most deeply rooted, and the most far-reaching in its effects. Many priests who were otherwise sincere and zealous fell a prey to covetousness. It was this vice that supplied the fuel for the most dangerous anti-Roman passions in Germany, and it was this vice that Cajetan, with his rigid insistence on the poverty of his order, was to do great work in combating.

Frederick the Great in his *Memoirs* declared: "If the causes that promoted the spread of the Reformation were reduced to their last analysis, they would be found to be as follows: In Germany it was interest; in England, lust; and in France, a love of novelty." If we consider the immediate causes in each instance the statement is true enough. But the remote and actual causes were the combined evils that undermined the entire structure of the Church and left her weak and disorganized when the time came to face a powerful foe. The Church of Christ lived through the Reformation, by Divine Providence, but her interior defects were so grave that they permitted entire sections of Europe to break from her unity.

This entire period, however, should not be painted darker than the facts warrant. Evil never exists alone. Crime, vice, and lawlessness send their lusty cries around the world, whereas virtue walks a noiseless path, and her fruits are passed on to posterity unrecorded. To say that *most* priests and religious were unworthy of their calling would be a grave injustice. There were many good priests, and their virtue deserves all the more praise because of the strength required to combat so many spiritual obstacles.

All too clearly, however, the times were such that a force was needed mighty enough to strike the hearts and imaginations of men so hard that they would be brought back to a realization of the great truths of God.

No small part of this force was Cajetan of Thiene. That Italian aristocrat, as we have seen, embraced poverty from his infancy in order to vanquish the evils of wealth; he grew in humility and mortification throughout his intensely active life in order to subdue pride and sensuality. He warred against ecclesiastical disorder chiefly by his irreproachable example. In his own words: "If God gives me the grace to place before the eyes of the secular clergy a religious clergy outstanding for innocence, poverty, modesty, and sanctity, the seculars will leave their vices and

give themselves to the practice of virtue.” By his example he proved a torch lighted by the fire of Divine Love to start the conflagration that was to culminate just after his death in the Council of Trent and result in the completed Catholic reformation.



Opposed to the few wealthy Churchmen were the impoverished many of the lower clergy. Many of them had scarcely a livelihood. They had no fixed salary, and had to depend for a living on their tithes and stole-fees. The evils resulting from their destitution were often quite as serious as those occasioned by the misuse of ecclesiastical wealth. The priests were far too numerous for the means at hand for their support. Many, finding that they were unable to support themselves, gave their time to layman’s occupations in order to subsist. Discontent and loss of spirituality were the outcome of these conditions. More lamentable still, this lack of vitality in the shepherd showed itself in a weak and uncared-for flock.

Another factor that lay at the foundation of the prevalent disorders was the insufficient training and education of the lower clergy. In the first instance, not enough care was taken in the examination and acceptance of candidates. Often adolescents, untrained men, or men without good morals were ordained. To say that the lower clergy were all untrained and ignorant would be untrue; but many historians do state that many were admitted without sufficient understanding of their sacred duties. Often the fault that he was not properly trained did not rest with the candidate but in the educational system, which did not provide for seminaries for those aspiring to the sacred calling. Even the most sincere were meagerly qualified. The bishop directed the education of his priests, if he was not absent from his diocese, as too often was the case, and/or he was not a man insensible to the spiritual needs of his flock. If the diocese had a bishop who evaded his responsibility, the faithful became the victims of an unfit clergy.

If the bishop assumed the care of their training, candidates for holy orders had two types of school available, the cathedral and the monastic. The cathedral type, from which many of the young secular priests received their training, was conducted by one or two teachers – a meager provision indeed with which to form a youth capable of combating the evils and raising the spiritual life of the day! Nor could the monastic school take the place of the seminary in the training of secular priests. In the first place, they were not numerous at the time. Few monasteries maintained schools for any save their own students for the religious life.

The universities of Europe at this time drew many away from the monastic and cathedral schools, but comparatively few priests were educated in the centers of higher learning. About one per cent of the clergy were able to attend university courses. Even if more priestly aspirants had been university students it would have been a poor solution of the problem. There were no special candidates for the priesthood, and consequently no special provisions were made for their moral and spiritual training. On the other hand, they were exposed to moral danger and confronted with temptation by close contact with the other students, who too often led unedifying lives.

Cajetan, who had been able to withstand the temptations of university life, was in education and training as well qualified as possible for one of his time. In the community of regular clerics he founded, the high ideal of learning was maintained in its integrity, and the holiness of the Clerks Regular was there for sin-blurred eyes to see. “Cajetan,” said the Roman Rota, “was sent by God . . . as a new angel to reform [the] depraved habits, customs, and vices” of the time.



When we consider the intellectual rebirth of Europe that followed the fifteenth century, we should never forget that the Renaissance was an ornament of the upper class. The new intellectuality did not spread among the masses, and hence directly affected a comparative few. While the upper strata were questioning all traditional modes of thought, and discrediting sacred traditions, the great bulk of the population was wholly incapable of discerning the subtleties of the controversies of the day. They easily fell prey to a clever tongue or followed the views of those to whom they were more or less in political or economic dependence. Thus, with a weakening of faith in the upper levels of society, an enfeebling of moral vigor in the rank and file was inevitable.

A tide of immorality swept over Christian Europe. The *élite* set the pace, and a looseness of morals prevailed everywhere, exacting a heavy toll of innocence. An immoderate love of luxury culminated in a sensuality shameless and coarse. The moral decline of the age was in great measure the fruit of the bad example of persons of prestige and influence.

Women living by prostitution were common in both small towns and large, and their comparative numbers increased by half in the single decade, 1490 – 1500. By the latter date, there were about 11,000 such persons in the city of Rome alone. As their numbers grew they came to be held in less and less horror and ill repute. They appeared in all public places and were accompanied by their friends when they went for a stroll or to church. Yes, they went to church. The changing appellations of these women indicate the trend toward leniency in their regard. Previously they had been called *peccatrici* (sinners); in the fifteenth century, the more fastidious term “courtesan” came into use; and in the sixteenth century we are favored with the designation, *etherae* (the light or airy ladies) – a fit symbol of the frivolous, pleasure-loving spirit of the age.

All classes of society continued to wear a Christian veneer. Grievous disorders crept into the most sacred practices of religion. In some places the solemn processions degenerated into public amusements, accompanied by feasting and rioting. Sometimes the church itself was made a banquet hall. Sacrilegious practices, such as the reception of the Holy Eucharist in the state of intoxication, were noted in the decrees of contemporary synods. No other period in history is so stained by the records of murders in churches – a fact that probably more than any other shows to what an extent the moral sense had become blunted.

There is no need to review the entire catalog of abuses of the age. Enough has been given to show the contradictions of a society nominally Christian in which great numbers lived a pagan life. The time was indeed ripe for a strong clergy, upon whom the faithful could rely for guidance and example. Too often, however, “the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed,” until Cajetan came with his Clerks Regular, who were to preach penance, revive a blameless clergy, found and reform religious houses, provide homes for Magdalens, and bring back reverence for holy things and beauty into divine worship.

What good could Cajetan find in such a society? What were its redeeming qualities? If we bear in mind that the Church is a divine institution and that in the plan of the divine economy there are those who must “fulfill those things that are wanting in the sufferings of Christ,” one can readily understand that a period in which God’s justice is atrociously outraged must likewise abound in heroic souls of great sanctity, whose superabundant sufferings may be applied to the withered branches of the Vine.

The distinctive mark of this period is, then, that it is an age of great sinners and of great saints. Apparently ruled by the powers of darkness, this era was as rich in the heroes of grace as any that history can show. We need name only such lights as Antonio Maria Zaccaria, Jerome Emiliani, Andrew Avellino, Ignatius Loyola, Philip Neri, Francis de Sales, Vincent de Paul – the list could

be extended to many lines. Ludwig Pastor enumerates eighty-eight canonized saints during the period between 1400 and 1520, almost one for each year. Within eight pages of one volume, he lists ninety saints and *beati* from one portion of Italy alone. The evil in men's lives was so glaring that those who were not corrupted were stimulated to exert themselves in virtue. On the few who were disposed to receive His help, the watchful loving-kindness of God poured a profusion of grace, so that through their merits He might extend the life-giving waters to those dead in sin.

To support this view we need recall only the immense number of churches erected. In those sacred buildings were to be found examples of architecture, painting, and sculpture that are among the most exquisite ever produced. Even before the world knew of museums or art galleries, Christian churches virtually filled this function. Thus, the greater part of the art that has been worthy of veneration through the centuries was based on religious subjects. Unlike the art of the pagans, it was vibrant; it possessed a soul. Christian charity, too, manifested itself to an extent not reached at any previous time in Europe. Every class of suffering humanity was helped – by orphanages, by homes for the aged, by refuges for incurables, by hospitals. This splendid type of work was chiefly the result of a solid piety that kept alive an exalted sense of honor and justice among the working classes, and in turn stirred the coals of fraternal charity.

The instrument through which the working people performed their temporal works of mercy was the guild. Secular in their function, the guilds were with few exceptions religious in their origin. Persons employed in common pursuits might wish to keep a light burning before a certain shrine, or to have a chapel for their own use. These chose a patron saint who in some manner was connected, either in legend or in history, with their occupation. Each guild had its chapel and chaplain, as well as its hospital and physician. If large and wealthy enough to assume the burden, the guilds founded orphanages and asylums for all types of social dependents. The statutes of the guilds were mostly religious in character. They required frequent reception of the sacraments, exhorted members to reverence sacred functions, to love virtue, and to refrain from profane speech. At the same time they enjoined various kinds of charitable works, both within their own membership and in the community at large.

Within the organization of the guilds were established separate confraternities, societies, and brotherhoods, whose aims and works in no way differed from those of the guilds to which they owed their origin. The size of the various guilds sometimes made them unwieldy, but the associations within them were workable units. The confraternities' first aim, like those of the parent guilds, was primarily the spiritual betterment of the members, and secondly various types of works of mercy. Small groups of persons, who by occupation belonged to no craft or guild, but who wished to find mutual spiritual support and consolation, formed societies and chose a convenient meeting place, most frequently a church. In time such organizations were established among all classes, the nobles and hierarchy as well as the working people. Within these social units the Renaissance took on a truly Christian character. These societies, wherever they existed, made the appropriate adornment of churches a principal aim. The churches and basilicas which they either erected or helped support were sumptuously endowed with sculpture, painting, and carving. The confraternity hall founded by Bartholomew Bon in 1517, for example, had fifty-six large biblical pictures.

Wherever guilds or brotherhoods were founded, simple customs of piety germinated in the hearts of the people and proved that the faith of their fathers was still the dearest thing in their humble lives.

In their constant concern for the poor, the guilds were the first to try to adjust the economic malpractices of a day when fraud, deceit, and usury were rising with the dawn of capitalism. Often they were helped in this work by religious orders which discerned usury as a prime evil of the day. Both Christians and Jews were guilty of demanding exorbitant interest. In 1420, in some places, moneylenders were forbidden to ask more than twenty per cent! In the city of Florence about the year 1473 usurers were exacting thirty-two per cent for loans. These instances show how far the “loan sharks” had gone in bleeding the poor.

Various societies arose to protect the villagers and small townfolk who needed the ready cash just coming into use in the Renaissance. They founded institutions where anyone in want could obtain ready money without interest, in exchange for some small surety. The capital for such a system was supplied by voluntary gifts, legacies, and donations. The poor were the owners, contributors, and sharers of these institutions, which came to be called by the significant name of *montes pietatis* (mounts of mercy). The papacy realized from the first the value of the *montes pietatis* and a *mons* was founded in the Papal States. Thenceforth, the Holy See endeavored by every feasible means to encourage their wide establishment. With the sanction of the Church, the good work spread, until the total wealth of the charitable organizations of Italy alone, including that of the *montes pietatis* and those of the city of Rome, was estimated at \$4,000,000 in 1570.

The principle of the *montes* has lived on through the centuries. The various kinds of credit unions of the modern day are direct outgrowths of it. Since St. Cajetan founded a *mons* in Naples, the Theatines, following his example, have never ceased to carry on this good work. In America and elsewhere flourishing credit unions mark the Theatine parish or the field of activity of the Theatine priest.

Other types of charitable Renaissance action have lived on. The Society of Divine Love, begun by Cajetan in Rome in 1517, the year of Luther’s ninety-nine famous theses, was the seed of the Catholic reformation in Europe. From this small germ the reform movement burst into full bloom in the Council of Trent. The Society of Divine Love is active today under the charge of the Theatine Fathers, and issues the periodical called *Providencia* in honor of their founder.

The work that Cajetan performed in connection with these various associations is beyond estimation. Practically all the hours of his mature years that were not devoted to the administration of the sacraments, or the fulfillment of other priestly or religious duties, were given to various confraternities. He fostered the spirit of piety and devotion and encouraged the members to perform acts of mercy. He instilled a renewed zeal for the things of God. By his extraordinary administrative ability and shrewd business acumen he placed the confraternities on a safe and sound basis. But above all, as is the way of a saint, he rendered his greatest services by his good example, by giving all his own possessions to Christ’s poor and tending with his own hands Christ’s infirm members.



When the wealth of ancient art and science overpowered the world in its rebirth, the Church, the guardian of human progress, showed herself the champion of intellectual advance and culture. Rome was the logical center for intellectual freedom and artistic achievement, and it was impossible completely to separate pagan from Christian influence. Pitted against the properly pagan revival was the Christian Renaissance. The Christian school of the Renaissance attempted to sift pagan culture and to retain what was good and bring it into conformity with Christian principles. These staunch friends of the Church brought about a period of magnificence in

architecture, painting, sculpture, and poetry – leaving behind in each field illustrious monuments of Catholicity. It was this group of scholars, who transplanted the beauty of the ancients to Christian soil, that saved the intellectual rebirth from its own suicidal hands. These scholars insisted that scientific investigation and Christian teaching should not be separated, but they would suffer no words disrespectful to their faith, nor would they tolerate materialistic or pagan views. Through the Christianized Renaissance the genuine and lasting benefits of the age passed on to posterity. To Christianize the Renaissance was no small part of the mission of Cajetan and the other protagonists of the Catholic reform.

III

The Spark Glows

✠ *They that are according to the spirit, mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace (Rom. 8:5-6).*

When Cajetan went to Rome in September of 1505, he found a city in the full bloom of the Renaissance. Every day, almost every hour, masterpieces of antiquity were being unEarthed, and men stared, admired, marveled.

The glories of the present were just as striking. At this time Michelangelo's titanic art was peopling the Sistine Chapel with human forms that were not to die. Raphael was placing his Madonnas in the Vatican – bits of genius-born grace and naturalness.

Roman society was cosmopolite. As in the days of the Caesars, the throngs that moved along its streets spoke every tongue, and presented a checkered pattern of good and bad. A visitor could have the Rome he liked, for the asking.

The inclinations of the young Cajetan led him naturally toward the artistic and intellectual. Now in his twenty-fifth year (four years younger than Luther when he made a similar visit), the young Italian aristocrat noted the splendor and frivolity around him. He felt pity for the misguided, and he longed to check the tide of sin.

Cajetan visited the famous shrines, catacombs, and martyrs' graves. He went about in plain and simple attire which gave no hint of his noble rank; but it was not long before Julius II, the soldier pope, began to hear of a youth who in the midst of Roman society was living an apostolic life. One interview was enough to impress him, and he asked Cajetan to remain in Rome as a domestic prelate. Even at that early age, the young man gave the energetic pontiff the hope that through him he would be able to accomplish some measure of reform.

Not long after this appointment, an apostolic prothonotary died, and the anxious eyes and expectant ears of the elder domestic prelates were waiting to learn of their promotion. With surprise, and no little consternation, they learned that the young lawyer from Venetia was to fill the position. The appointment came in 1508, the year when Luther was sent to Wittenberg.

The prothonotaries in those days were writers of note, usually priests of merit and integrity. Their duties were to keep Church records. They came to be called prothonotaries, though a more descriptive term would have been "chief chroniclers." Such duties as the writing of hagiographies and the careful recording of the particulars of the deaths of martyrs fell to their lot. But in Cajetan's time these officials had evolved into a group of chancellors and notaries, or secretaries, at the service of the Holy See and of its subordinate offices of government. Often their tasks were of a delicate and confidential nature, and the notaries acquired an intimate knowledge of the machinery of Church administration. Hence their positions sometimes opened the way up the ecclesiastical stairs.

When Cajetan took over his duties under Julius II, he found himself working under the most forceful of Renaissance popes. Not for nothing did Julius merit the title of *Il Terribile*. In him were combined a strong and determined statesman and a conscientious spiritual ruler. When he convened the Lateran Council, in 1513, he was on the verge of putting through the long-desired reformation of the Church. His death was to defer the project and, perhaps, leave the road open to the wild chariot of Luther.

Cajetan was not moved by the honors and acclaim that soon were his. His spiritual insight quickly mastered the maneuverings of diplomacy, the contagion of ambition – and the general moral decay. His manner was firm and unwavering, and no one dared approach him with a view to personal advantage. Pitting himself against the abuses of the rich, he made himself the champion of the poor. The destitute had recourse to him to obtain an audience with the sovereign pontiff, and his good offices were not without fruit.



The most striking example of Cajetan's diplomatic and executive ability during this period was the work he performed in the League of Cambrai. The city of Venice had enlarged her frontiers by wresting small towns and broad areas of the countryside from neighboring territory. The other European powers became envious or alarmed, and their rulers met in Cambrai, in Flanders, where they created a formidable league to check and counterattack the Venetian empire. This pact was kept secret until its solemn announcement in Rome in 1509. The members comprised the greatest powers of Europe – Julius, Emperor Maximilian, King Ferdinand of Spain, King Louis XII of France, and the representatives of Mantua and Ferrara. Each power hoped to recover the cities that Venice had occupied.

Venice was alarmed but courageous. Its senators mobilized a strong navy and an infantry of 30,000 men, to which was joined a regiment of horsemen 10,000 strong. Their forces, placed under the command of the Count of Pitigliano and Bartolomeo Alviano, were soon at the disputed border.

Julius, foreseeing the bloodshed that would result, advised Venice to make restitution to the domains of the Church before a fixed date; Ravenna and other cities of Romagna were to be returned. The “Queen of the Adriatic” spurned his plea, and by doing so incurred ecclesiastical censure and precipitated actual warfare.

Cajetan felt all the scandal that More or Erasmus knew at the spectacle of this discord among Christian princes, among whom the pope seemed in no wise distinguished. He felt it keenly, too, that Venetian territory, his own beloved land, was to suffer the scourge of war. He realized that Venice was deprived of the sacraments, of public prayer, and of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass because of the papal interdict that had been laid against her. Cajetan wrote personal letters to the nobles of Venice, urging them by penance, prayers, and alms to appease the anger of God and in sorrow to await the forgiveness of their sins.

Meanwhile, the war raged on without decisive victory for either side. The tide began to turn in the Battle of Giarra d' Ada, where the Venetian army was conquered by the French. Thereby the French gained the cities of Caravaggio, Bergamo, Brescia, and Cremona; only Treviso and Vivedal di Belluno remained under Venetian control.

When complete defeat seemed imminent, the Sultan of the Turks offered Venice the assistance of 10,000 soldiers and enough food and ammunition to continue the war. Many another Christian state of that time would not have boggled at the offer. Only a few years later Francis I was to cement an alliance with the ancient enemies of Christendom. In the age of

Machiavelli, however, the Venetian leaders gave a striking manifestation of international conscience. They were of one mind in preferring to lose the war, and even their lives, rather than to receive help from those who would destroy their religion. Cajetan was not the man to lose the opportunity presented. He used all his grace and power of argument to persuade *Il Terribile* to raise the interdict.

Encouraged by his first overtures, Cajetan set the Venetian Cardinals, Dominic Grimani and Marco Cornaro, to work removing the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that were hindering a just and early peace. Through them, the Venetian senators chose six of their number to ask forgiveness of the Holy See. As soon as the commission arrived, Cajetan went again to plead their cause with the Holy Father. He showed how faithful to Christianity they had been in refusing Ottoman aid, and represented that Christian nations should not be divided but united against the common foe. Julius received the ambassadors kindly.

Julius, however, was too much a child of his age to give in readily. Influenced by the League, he demanded territory that the Venetians would not relinquish.

Cajetan lost no time in obtaining an audience, first with His Holiness, and then with the senators. His zeal, prudence, and diplomacy at last brought the complete submission of Venice to the Holy See. The strife ended in 1514, in which year Julius removed the interdict and bestowed his blessing on the Venetian republic.

The Venetians manifested their joy by three days of solemn processions and public prayers of thanksgiving. Cajetan, as was his wont, gave the credit to others, in this case to the two cardinals. But the Venetians discerned the hand of the young domestic prelate from Vicenza.



Scarcely three years after the reconciliation with Venice, Julius died, to give way to a child of the Medici, Leo X (1513 – 1521). In him the most glorious and inglorious traits of that family were alloyed. Not for nothing was he the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. The papacy knew no more generous patron of the arts, no one more cultivated and urbane. While he was being instructed in sacred studies, he was taught by the most distinguished of the humanists. Through the influence and prestige of his father, he was made a cardinal at the age of seventeen. He was elected to the papacy at the age of thirty-eight, likewise through the influence of his family.

When he mounted the Chair of the Fisherman, Leo at once displayed one of the most noteworthy of his family's traits – an inordinate love of pleasure and the fine arts. Although he seemed inclined toward reform, his mind and his time were bent on the world. The crying needs of the Church made little impression on him. He lived through his pontificate with no perception of the storm clouds that were gathering in electoral Saxony and which were to spread over Europe.

This pontiff chose for his secretaries Pietro Bembo and a cousin of Bembo's, Giacomo Sadoletto. Bembo was the court favorite. His was a fascinating personality, enriched by a ready wit and a light-hearted joviality; withal, he was a warm and devoted friend. Cajetan perceived underneath this exterior a deep religious sense and a noble generosity, and his friendship with Bembo grew with the years.

Sadoletto was mild, gentle, pious, a man of action and learning who scrupulously fulfilled all the duties of his sacred office. In 1513, Leo named him pontifical secretary, and it was at the time of this appointment that he and Cajetan formed a friendship that was to redound to the interests of the Church.

The qualities of Cajetan were not lost on Leo, and he wished to keep the young notary in the service of the papacy. But Cajetan was not able to work effectively in the worldly atmosphere of the new regime, and he saw in the change of pontiffs a chance to retire from service. He requested his release, and finally, shortly after his coronation, Leo consented.

During the next three years, Cajetan suffered a violent interior conflict. He felt a consuming desire to become a priest and to offer the Holy Sacrifice daily; yet something was holding him back. One reason for his hesitation was no doubt natural. The Signora da Thiene was still living, and she had expressed a wish in her will that her sons might yet have male heirs. The eldest son, Giambattista, had only a daughter, and there was no male heir to the patriarchal estates. The best authorities, however, agree that his struggle was predominantly spiritual. For three years, says the Bishop of Taranto, his heart was a balance weighing the power of love against humility, while God was pleased to await the outcome. At last, in September, 1516, the balance swayed. He obtained permission from the pope to receive Orders before the end of the month. Minor Orders came September 27; the subdiaconate, on the 28th; the diaconate, on the feast of St. Michael, the 29th; and the priesthood came on the feast of St. Jerome, the 30th.

It is characteristic of the man that Cajetan did not approach the altar until after he had spent three months in retreat. He meditated, read, and prayed, and his spiritual exercises culminated in a fast of seven days on bread and water. From the earliest evening hours, he kept strict silence, and during the last thirty days he went to confession every day. He often spent as many as eight hours in meditation.

At the end of this time, he celebrated his first Mass in the basilica of St. Mary Major on Christmas day, at the altar where tradition says a relic of the manger of the Infant Jesus is preserved.



In 1517 the turbulent Augustinian monk of Wittenberg was attacking the issuance of the Crusaders' Bull and the granting of indulgences for alms given to assist the completion of the Basilica of St. Peter's. At the same time, Cajetan united himself with his old friends of the papal court, Bembo, Sadoleto, and others, to form a confraternity. They called it the Society of Divine Love, the *Divino Amore*, and placed it under the protection of St. Jerome. Their rendezvous was the little church of Sts. Sylvester and Dorothy, offered them by its pastor, Giuliano Dazio. In this quiet sanctuary, adjoining the slope of the Janiculum, these fugitives from the noise and welter of a too-temporal Rome held pious exercises, preached, and disputed questions of dogma, the better to defend a faith against the poisons that the blindest could see.

Cajetan is not always given full recognition for the founding of the society; some authorities are inclined to give more credit to Sadoleto, or even to some unknown earlier person. Other authors believe it to be the outgrowth of the reforming influence of the Fifth Lateran Council (1512 – 1517) and do not specify a founder. Since some sources state that he himself requested admission into the brotherhood, many assume that it was impossible for Cajetan to have been its founder. This would not necessarily be the case, since in the lives of the saints it has often happened that those who were responsible for a foundation or institute asked admittance out of a spirit of humility.

An inscription in the Roman Archives in the series *Chiese* seems to give full credit to Cajetan in the following words: "The Church of Sts. Sylvester and Dorothy, Volume IV. The Archconfraternity of Divine Love of St. Cajetan was established by this same saint, in the year 1517, in the Church of Sts. Sylvester and Dorothy in Trastevere, and subsequently, in the year

1750, on the 13th of September, was transferred to the Church of St. Andrew della Valle, the Church of the Theatine Fathers, where they now hold their services; especially the devotions in honor of St. Andrew Avelin, who is honored in his private chapel of the above mentioned church.”

Whoever may have been the founder, the confraternity must have received inspiration from Cajetan, for it bears the impress of his personality in every feature.

The society was confirmed by a bull of Leo not later than March 10, 1517. In its ranks were the most influential and illustrious men of Rome. There were the philosopher, Contarini; the humanist, Bembo; Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, Bishop of Chieti and Archbishop of Brindisi, who was to become Pope Paul IV; Luigi Lippamanno, an author of note; Matteo Giberto, later a strong reforming bishop; Giuliano Dazio, the parish priest of Sts. Sylvester and Dorothy; and others of like ability and station. In this union no one held higher rank than the others; there was no need of executive positions.

The numbers of the Society of the *Divino Amore* probably at no time exceeded sixty; it was not the intention of the founders to increase the membership or to propagate the society. Its meetings were not frequent, since it was not intended to be an active organ. It was founded solely as a spiritual aid for a group whose thoughts and ideals ran parallel. But under Cajetan's persuasion and influence its membership swelled and included the names of many who ended their lives as bishops, cardinals, papal legates, and even popes.

The statutes of the society were directed in the first place toward the religious renewal of its members through pious exercises, common prayer, preaching, and the frequenting of the sacraments, and secondly toward the renewal of the religious spirit in others. The one essential thing they wished was personal sanctification; by this they would fight the evils of the day. The very eminence of these men, who were all of the noble and cultured class, was of the utmost importance in effecting results. They were in a position to influence the hierarchy and humanistic society, at the same time that their labors extended to the poorest and most unfortunate.

The letters exchanged among the members of the Divine Love show some of the practical results that were being accomplished in the city of Rome and elsewhere. They state that the priests were now examining themselves; churches were being repaired and redecorated; orders concerning confessors were being issued; churches that before were empty were now crowded; Mass was being offered daily, and other religious exercises were being held regularly. Thanks to it, Roman society was slowly but surely being released from the meshes of humanistic paganism.

After supplying their own spiritual needs, the adherents of the Divine Love turned their labors to works of mercy. In Rome they erected a hospital for incurables, called the Hospital of St. James, and later founded a hospice for fallen and repentant women. Cajetan showed a lively interest in the numerous hospitals that existed in Rome at this time but, with the exception of the two institutions mentioned above, they may have had no connection with the Oratory of Divine Love.

The number of pious and charitable institutions with which the Oratory became affiliated, though great, is not definitely known. Since its members were frequently associated with other organizations, the activities of these various religious societies were often merged and their purposes united for the attainment of common ends. Cajetan, Giberti, and others were enrolled in many confraternities. Wherever he became a member, Cajetan rebuilt the organization and placed it on a firm financial footing; then he prescribed for it rules and practices similar to those of the Oratory of Divine Love. Thus the *Divino Amore* of Rome apparently absorbed them all;

yet in each case the societies that Cajetan reformed retained all that was good in their original organizations.

The cities that founded oratories most closely resembling the one at Rome were Verona, Vicenza, Brescia, and Venice. Each of these societies urged the sanctification of the individual, genuine principles of reform, frequent use of the sacraments, and works of mercy. In these cities the pristine fervor of primitive Christianity was perceptibly revived. These principal centers in turn founded smaller societies until the whole of Italy was sprinkled with little bands meeting in the name of the *Divino Amore*.

According to the Congregation of Rites, Cajetan chose the Oratory as the one joy of his soul. It was his academy of letters and music, his only recreation. His happiness consisted in knowing that this association drew noble priests and laymen to a more earnest observance of their religious duties and to works of charity. Since the organization existed in the center of Christendom it claimed members from the papal court itself. Its foundation was the initial event that set into motion a series of achievements that was finally to bring about the Catholic reform.

The solicitude of the Divine Love for public charity brought about the appointment of a bishop for the supervision of the hospitals of Rome. The strongest personalities in the original confraternity in a few years entered more intensive fields of reform, which severed them from active membership in the Oratory. Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, Cajetan, Paolo Consigliari, and Boniface of Colle were to constitute the first Theatines; Matteo Giberti became the reformer of the bishopric of Verona; Sadoletto began a reform of the diocese of Carpentras, and Contarini became an active diplomat. Since the work of the Confraternity was absorbed by more active organs, there was no longer a need for the original organization. Although it continues to exist elsewhere, it was dissolved in Rome by a papal bull dated September 25, 1525.

That the spirit of the society lived on is indicated by the fact that some of these men – Contarini, Caraffa, Sadoletto, Giberti, and others – were appointed by the pope to form a commission for a reform of the Church in 1537, the *Consilium Delectorum Cardinalium de Emendanda Ecclesia*. From this small beginning the Theatine Order was brought forth in the year 1524, and reform movements were begun that were to see completion in the Council of Trent.



Cajetan, at the time of his ordination, was thirty-six years old. He was a small, thin, energetic man. His countenance was slender, with high cheek bones, and his cheeks and chin were studded with a short, thin beard. His temperament was intrepid and impetuous. His nature clamored for action and he possessed the qualities of leadership which, combined with his gentle and distinguished bearing, would have won him recognition anywhere. Cajetan continued to behold the grand pageantry of public life as one follows the acts on a stage, without at any time becoming a part of the scene. His convictions and ideals were fixed and firm; he lived his convictions. He endeavored to express his ideals in their most concrete and exalted form, *saintliness*. This desire began to direct his every act. His tender love of Christ grew more intense; we begin to hear that he was favored with ecstasies. His realization of his unworthiness of such supernatural favors caused him to scourge himself to bleeding, and his fasts were so rigorous that they seemed impossible to those who knew him. New and difficult undertakings found him eager and tireless.

Saints are only men, though they are the best of men, the heroes of our fallen race. They are the prudent ones who have used all their faculties, all their natural gifts as the foundation of their

supernatural life and have erected thereon an edifice of sanctity. They are those in whom all Earthly, natural affections, all little propensities and habits, have been given wing and directed toward the final end and purpose of their lives – God. They see all things in Him and through Him, “in whom we live, and move, and are.”

Cajetan did not find his Earthly affections incompatible with sanctity. He perfected natural affection by elevating it, ennobling it by a worthy motive, overshadowing it with the intensity of Divine Love, purifying it and treasuring it as a precious gift of God. Saints love more deeply and tenderly than other men, because a saint is an unselfish person, and loves not for self but for God, and to lead the loved one to God.

Since the degree of sanctity is the degree of Godlikeness in a soul, it must be that, in just the same proportion as a soul advances in holiness, so it experiences a transformation of the natural affections. The soul expands so as to push away the barriers tending to confine it to the limitations of self-hood, and to share in a self-divested way in the lives of others. As the measure of the indwelling of the Godhead is increased in the soul, so are its capacities for faithfulness and constancy augmented. As it becomes more and more united to the Word it becomes more like Him who taught the sacredness of natural ties by becoming flesh.

Cajetan saw Earthly affection as it existed in Christ, and a pronounced trait of the saint’s character was his ability to lead others by his example. It was this magnetic quality that drew around him the close and intimate friendships that formed the Society of Divine Love.

Some time after leaving the papal court, Cajetan formed a close friendship with a youth from Brescia named Bartolomeo Stella, and discovered in him such virtue that he was pleased to call him “Son.” Previous to this acquaintance, Stella had chosen for his spiritual director, or spiritual mother, as he called her, Laura Mignani, an Augustinian nun of the Convent of the Holy Cross in Brescia. He told Cajetan of her virtue, with the result that the saint wrote to her and asked her to accept him, too, as her spiritual son and become the director of his soul.

The aged nun, discreet in recognizing holiness, was deeply moved by the humility of Cajetan’s letter. She not only took him under the wings of her soul but continued to correspond with him and to pray for him. Their correspondence discloses many of Cajetan’s interior emotions more surely than most of his public letters.

Many of Cajetan’s letters are still extant. They all bear the stamp of humility and the divine charity that the *Divino Amore* aimed to cultivate. One letter he wrote from Rome to a friend said that he experienced one of the greatest joys of his life in being freed from the family ties with which he was burdened at Vicenza. This strange statement can be explained only by the fact that his family was never in accord with his practices of humility and his mingling with the poor. Since the resolve for sanctity was stronger in his soul than the ties of blood and kindred, he must at last have felt relief in being left free for the practices to which grace impelled him.

Every scrutiny into his life at this time indicates that his soul had ripened – full, rich, luxuriant. A refreshing naturalness and sincerity mark his dealings. True to his aspiration to work by example, he drew others with him into a holy contest of self-sacrifice for the Master.



Of all the churches in Rome that received the visits of Cajetan, St. Mary Major was the one he most frequently attended. The reason was perhaps that it contained the relic of the holy crib of Bethlehem, which profoundly stirred Cajetan’s ardent nature. On Christmas eve of 1517, just a year after his first Mass there, Cajetan went to this church to contemplate the mystery of the Incarnation, to which he had a great devotion. He knelt in a place that served as a *prie dieu*, close

to the holy relic, and while he was absorbed in contemplation he declared that the Virgin appeared to him with the Holy Infant in her arms. His soul, he tells us, was filled with a profound calm and he remained motionless. Then, his special patron, St. Jerome, bade him approach nearer the holy Pair. Obediently, Cajetan drew closer and the Blessed Mother placed her Son into his outstretched arms.

The best account of this, as of other apparitions, is found in the letters the saint wrote to Laura Mignani. Cajetan described his experience in these words:

I . . . was in front of the relics of the Manger, and courage was poured into my heart by my dear father and lover of the Crib, St. Jerome, whose ashes and bones repose in the nearby niche on the side of this same crypt. I took the tender Child from the hands of the young Virgin Mother, my patroness. . . . My heart must have been of the hardness of a diamond, for it did not melt at this moment. The same thing happened when I was there for the Feast of the Circumcision, though my senses remained uncircumcised. Later, again, on the Feast of the Epiphany, though there is nothing in me except the hardness of iron and a weak effeminacy. With the company and protection of some saint, I shall try to be again at the same spot, to hear with them the sweet canticle of Simeon, as well as the strong and bitter words of prophecy: "This Child will be the cause of the salvation and condemnation of many in Israel."

Many biographers, in an attempt to explain the words: "With the protection and company of some saint," infer that Cajetan enjoyed frequent intercourse with the blessed in Heaven and participated in their joy in the celebration of the great mysteries. However we may judge these occurrences, they give testimony to a man for whom the unseen world was never far away.

After this apparition, Christmas was always the feast of joy for Cajetan. At the moment the Child was born in his consecrated hands in the Christmas Mass, he was transported to the scene of Nativity. In the excess of his emotion, he dimmed the vision with his tears, and his voice faltered.

Today, in the same crypt that holds the Crib near which Cajetan knelt, there stands a white marble statue of the saint with the Child Jesus in his arms. A Latin inscription reads: "Here St. Cajetan, with the protection and encouragement of St. Jerome, whose bones rest not far distant, did on Christmas eve take in his arms the Child Jesus from the Blessed Virgin Mary."

In Naples and the surrounding villages a tender devotion to the Manger is observed. The churches contain touching representations of this apparition of Cajetan's, and the prevalence of this devotion to the Infancy of the Savior is ascribed to him.



Amid these celestial happenings, a mundane thing came into the life of Cajetan. In 1518 Giambattista died and left his wife, the Contessa Maria da Porto, and a daughter, Elizabeth. The Signora da Thiene was alone and helpless. Cajetan knew that he was a favorite child and that his absence from his mother at this time would grieve her deeply. He assumed responsibility where he saw a duty.

The thought of being involved in monetary worries and the administration of the family estate filled him with dread. He wrote to Laura Mignani, "I shall leave Rome with regret, and I foresee many anxieties of spirit."

After obtaining the blessing of the pope, Cajetan departed. When he arrived at his mother's palace in August, he found it splendidly arrayed in anticipation of a visit from so eminent a

member of the papal court. Cajetan was unpleasantly surprised. Quietly he withdrew to the public hospital of Vicenza, where he chose a humble room which allowed him to visit and serve the sick. From these dingy quarters he visited his home daily. He found that his mother's health had suffered a severe blow at the death of her eldest son. The presence of her beloved Cajetan brought only temporary improvement. On August 22 he was to write to Laura Mignani, giving a full account of his mother's illness and death on the eve of the Assumption.

Just previous to his mother's death, Cajetan was to have an important influence on a religious order of women. The noble and venerable Mother Domitilla Thiene, a close relative, wished to observe the Benedictine rule with greater strictness in the convent she had founded. Cajetan encouraged her and promised to exert his influence in Rome for the approbation of her undertaking. With three companions, Mother Domitilla began her reform in May, 1518. The primitive observance was renewed and the rule confirmed by the bulls of Adrian VI and Clement VII, obtained through Cajetan's offices.



Once again in the place of his birth, Cajetan became intensely interested in the spiritual opportunities afforded the villagers of his estates. He heard of the Oratory of St. Jerome and promptly met with the principal members to learn their rules. He found that the membership was recruited from the common people, not the nobility, and that the members were lukewarm and slow to act. In short, the society showed signs of cooling fervor. Cajetan nevertheless asked to be received as one of them, and immediately threw himself into this new work with his usual ardor. He preached to the society every Sunday and had the satisfaction of observing a renewal of the Christian spirit. He taught the art of mental prayer, and changed the name to the Oratory of Divine Love, for the renewed organization was patterned after the society in Rome. The Oratory so flourished in deeds of charity that it became the model for others.

Cajetan's family was not pleased by its scion's mixing with the rabble. His relatives accused him of disgracing the noble name of Thiene and of debasing them in the eyes of the world. But Cajetan was not moved. Doubtless, his upbringing had left a deep impress of fastidiousness on his aristocratic sensibilities, but in himself this had been wholly surrendered to Christ. He extended his work among the populace, particularly in the way of hospital service.

Hospitals were then not places of white-clothed figures, modern antiseptics, soothing anaesthetics. The only relief to the sick was afforded by voluntary personal services. The afflicted were crowded together in ill-cared-for wards, where they died like flies.

There is no means of comparison between a hospital then and now. "I was sick and you visited Me," in those days meant that the benefactor had overcome his natural fastidiousness and emptied himself of self in order to minister to Christ in the person of the sick. To persevere in this heroic work, those who performed it – and they included a large proportion of the nobility – taught themselves to recognize Christ in His suffering members. It was to him that they offered their services and it was from Him that they begged the grace to persevere. But, since the work was voluntary, it was usually somewhat haphazard. People did it when they had the leisure or when they wished to perform a special act of penance or charity. This meant, in effect, that many persons visited the hospitals just when the notion struck them.

If this was the care given to ordinary patients, it is impossible to describe the misery of those suffering from incurable diseases. Because of the hopelessness of their cases and the burden to society involved in their care, the incurables were pitifully neglected. Cajetan was touched by their plight and asked the confraternity to sponsor a hospital for incurables. He paid for the

erection of the building from his own patrimony, and his tireless benevolence was so unbounded that a friend asked him to moderate his generosity. The saint replied: “I will never stop giving everything I have to the poor, until I find myself reduced to such poverty that I will not have five feet of ground for my burial.”

As he had done in Vicenza and was to do in Venice, Cajetan, instead of putting up at the houses of Verona, sought no other quarters than the general hospital, where he remained for the six months of his stay in that city. By chance or design, he used this opportunity to transform that institution into the Hospital for Incurables, where, in the presence of the brethren of the revived Oratory, he lavished his tender care day after day on “the modern lepers,” the syphilitics, and by his example taught the members of the company to interpret the teaching of the Gospel in a manner that went to the soul.

In this center of charity at Verona, which opened to despised sufferers of Christ’s Mystical Body the charitable heart of the Saint of Providence, the physician-poet, Jerome Fracastoro (1480 – 1558), was to find, years later, the inspiration for his poem, *Siphilis sive de Morbo Gallico*, which was to give the name to the terrible disease that was the worst fruit of Columbus’ voyages. The famous Veronese physician, the precursor of all others in antisiphilitic therapy, gained his experience of the havoc left by the disease, which he described so vividly in his poem, in the Hospital of the Incurables founded in his native city by the prelate of Vicenza, who cared for the victims with his own hands.

Cajetan’s zeal led him to do what the world calls folly. He spent hours at the bedside of the sick. Each morning’s sun found him on his daily round seeking the poor, the afflicted, the disreputable. The lowly flock that followed him through the streets swelled into crowds. He ministered to them, gave them alms, and blessed them. Prisoners, too, knew the warmth of his presence, his words of encouragement, his power of satisfying hungry hearts with the Word of God. Some of these unhappy ones rejoiced when he paid the small debts that robbed them of their liberty, and others awaited his absolution before death gave them their release. The value Cajetan placed on works of mercy he aptly expressed in these words: “In this Oratory [of Divine Love] we try to serve God by worship; in our hospital we may say that we actually find Him.” But Cajetan did not neglect the spiritual preparation of those under his care. He induced his sodalists to receive the Eucharist twelve times a year, where before they had received but four times. He held the Blessed Sacrament in his hands when he preached, and men said that it seemed that Christ preached through him. His winning nature began gradually to move the hearts of the members, until many of them were nourished at the Sacred Banquet each week, all feast days, and all Fridays – no common thing in those days.



At Verona there existed the Confraternity of the Most Holy Body of Christ, whose records indicate that its Oratory was in the Church of Sts. Siro and Libera. Its progress had been of much concern to Cajetan, and in 1519 the members addressed a petition to the confraternity at Vicenza and asked that it be taken into their fellowship. Cajetan was anxious to affiliate the two societies, since through the Verona oratory he hoped to reach private families, and through them influence the greater part of the city’s population. With some of the Vicenza group, he set out for Verona, which was then on the frontier of the Germanies, and in consequence was suffering an infection of Lutheran heresies. Cajetan immediately set the society to work to counteract this influence. In his mind, there was no type of work that the various confraternities founded in the name of the *Divino Amore* could not perform, and he endeavored to adapt their work to the needs of the

place. The Roman Rota states: “While others were giving themselves up to a life of ease, he was ceaselessly trying new paths . . . finding no more refreshing nourishment than in testing new ideas and inventing new ways by which he could help toward the salvation of souls.”

But Cajetan’s work in Verona was cut short. He was needed in Venice to take over the management of a hospital that was not operating efficiently because of poor supervision. He had referred the matter to his confessor, a Dominican friar named Giambattista da Crema. This spiritual director saw that he would have a larger field in Venice and unhesitatingly advised him to take up the new work in that city. So, after being in Verona scarcely five months, he called the members of the Oratory together to bid them farewell. It was December, 1519. Cajetan took with him a little furniture and a mattress. Everything else he sold, even his library, to raise money for the poor.



In the midst of clamorous duties, Cajetan took advantage of the break afforded by his change of locale to make a two-day trip to Brescia to visit Laura Mignani. Their correspondence had been a mutual help in their striving for perfection, but they had not met in person. It was during this interview that Cajetan first expressed his wish to bring into the bosom of the Church a congregation of Clerks Regular to be exemplary priests and a model for the clergy.

When Cajetan bade the aged nun farewell, it was with the realization that they would not meet again. Laura Mignani’s health was poor and failing rapidly. She died, after leaving a lasting impress on the character of a man who in his turn was to influence multitudes.

As a pilgrim of Divine Love, Cajetan arrived at Venice near the end of 1520 or at the beginning of 1521. The “Queen of the Adriatic” was then at the apex of its grandeur. Under the standard of St. Mark, here 3,300 ships plowed the seas, from the coasts of the Levant to the western Mediterranean. More than 16,000 workers filled her arsenals, and 31,000 men were in her navy. The constant going and coming of ships laden with iron, timber, precious stones, sandalwood, cinnamon, marble, incense, sugar, wine, tanned hides gave her the air of a cosmopolitan city. But the religious aspect of this picture was not quite so bright. Cajetan paints it in a letter to his friend, Father Paolo Giustiniani, in forbidding colors: “City truly magnificent – how can one help weeping for thee? There is no one here who seeks Christ.”

At Venice Cajetan either founded or established – our information is not certain – an Oratory of Divine Love, and at once enlisted in its ranks the generous members of the aristocracy, who could give both their purses and their services to a project he always had near to his heart – the care of the sick poor. With the financial help of Pietro Contarini, Bishop of Paphos, and a few others, the work made rapid progress.

The need for a new hospital at this crossroads of the world was all too evident. It was a festering point for the strange new disease that had been brought over from Haiti – syphilis. It was then termed the “incurable disease,” as it was in too literal truth. Its victims included orphans, the heirs of their parents’ sin, the women of the streets, the riff-raff of the seven seas. Shame as well as repulsion marked the disease, then no less than now.

It is indicative of how near even the semi-paganized Renaissance was to the ideal of personalized charity that Cajetan was able to attract to the care of the despised syphilitics two noble matrons, Maria Malipieri and Maria Grimani, who had received into their homes three women afflicted with the “French disease.” With the help of these matrons Cajetan established a new hospital, the Hospital of the Incurables, the second known to have been established in Venice.

Cajetan was able, in fact, to count on the personal assistance of illustrious representatives of the Venetian aristocracy – men like Vicente Grimani, the son of the *doge*, who gave their personal attention to the sick.

But the dangers that threatened Venice at this time were not all of the physical order. On the frontiers of the republic an apostate German friar and a renegade Swiss priest lashed out in insults against the Church and the papacy. The validity of indulgences, the usefulness of good works, the efficacy of the sacraments, the free will of man, the primacy of the pope, and the infallibility of the Church were the object of invectives from both Luther and Zwingli. With all the means in his power, by work, by writing, in public and private, Cajetan devoted himself to protecting Venice from the invisible contagion of a heresy that spread more swiftly than an epidemic, with even more disastrous effects.

The hearts of the people were touched to see a famous and noble prothonotary of the papal court divested of the robes of a dignitary and going about clad in rough clothing and a canvas apron, making beds, sweeping the wards, caring for wounds, passing full nights at deathbeds, and even taking the bodies of the dead in order to assure them respectful burial. Seeing this, the Venetians could not but feel that the ancient religion, so mightily attacked, had a power not of this Earth.

As it was suffering spiritually from the proximity of the Protestants and Mohammedans, so Venice was suffering materially from the threat of war. Charles V of Germany and Francis I of France were engaged in a jealous struggle for power and Italy was chosen as the theater of their bloody rivalry. At the same time, Europe was in fear of a new Moslem invasion. The Turkish sultan had besieged the island of Rhodes with so much determination that he was heard to declare that he would rather lose his empire than to fail to capture the island. Rhodes could not withstand his fury, and the Venetians feared lest the Turks next attack the islands of Cyprus and Candia, which were Venetian possessions.

As Cajetan's popularity at Venice steadily increased, the frightened populace turned to the saint for help. He responded to their cry and emerged as a leader; his forceful words put courage into the hearts of his listeners. To avert God's wrath he preached penance and instituted public prayer. He introduced for the first time in the history of the Church the practice of the public exposition of the Blessed Sacrament above the altar, in a monstrance, with decorations, candles, and lights. His reason for this innovation, he explained, was "in order that the people may pray more earnestly in the presence of Jesus Christ and thus incline God's heart toward forgiveness, since He would see above the altar our Mediator and His Son." For the first few times exposition was held in the oratory, but afterwards in all the principal churches of Venice. The people went in droves, impelled by the ardent desire to save the republic, and also by the novelty of the devotion. Cajetan further promoted devotion to the Body of Christ by encouraging frequent Communion. It was at this time that he wrote: "I shall never be content until I see Christians flocking like little children to the priest to feed on the Bread of Life – with eagerness and delight, not with fear and false shame." The world was to wait until the opening decade of the twentieth century, in the reign of Pius X, before Cajetan's attitude toward frequent Communion became general.

To the wonder of historians, Venice was the only republic of Italy that maintained the blessings of peace. As one author commented: "When all Europe was converted into a battleground, Venice alone, through the prayers of Cajetan, was preserved, and not only remained unharmed, but obtained the restoration of the towns and cities that she had lost."

Cajetan's works of mercy during his stay in Venice are a repetition of those at Verona. The Archbishop of Taranto related:

At dawn he would leave his house and go among the most destitute to ease their misery. With hands filled, he quietly sought the lodgings of those who were ashamed of their poverty and, once in their homes, generously emptied his provisions. As his steps turned homewards, he was often followed by a troop of beggars and the poor, whom he took to his own dining room, where he served them a satisfying spiritual banquet after their corporeal meal was finished.

"It is not enough to feel love," wrote Cajetan, "we must act it." For him the walls of the incurables could not contain the longings of his soul. Leaving home at the break of day, he went in search of the sick, both housed and houseless; he gathered in the unfortunate throughout the city, helped secretly the poor who were too proud to beg, and visited the prisons. On the docks and in the arsenals went the servant of God, stepping between the labyrinth of boats and sailing vessels, between mountains of cordage and forests of mastheads. Pilots, mates, captains, underworld chiefs knew Cajetan as the apostle of the seafolk.

When the galleons of the Orient put in at the Malamocco Canal, there was our apostle waiting for his friends, the most hapless of convicts, the condemned galley slaves. Cajetan went up to the ships, welcomed everyone, expressed interest in the health of all, and listened to a minute account of their troubles and needs. He taught them the rudiments of Christian doctrine, prepared them for the sacraments, heard their confessions, and gave them Holy Communion.

Since Lutheranism had injected its poison into the veins of the city, Cajetan preached assiduously and wrote booklets of doctrine and instruction. Elucidating the thoughts of the Fathers, he explained the points attacked. Archbishop Carraciolo claims that Cajetan distributed these writings by the thousands. He found willing helpers who faithfully copied the originals until they were disseminated among the people like bits of paper scattered by the winds. This work of dissemination, which was common enough among the Protestants, was too seldom followed by the Catholics. Had Cajetan's industry been more widely imitated in Germany, its history might have been different.

The profound influence exerted in Venice on the thought and lives of the people cannot be estimated accurately, but the words of Father Sesti, a Dominican, imply that it went far beyond the realm of the spiritual. He states:

The name of Cajetan reached such a high degree of honor in Venice that the senators took him as their director and teacher and depended on him in all their undertakings. It seemed to them that they were blessed by good fortune in having at hand a man who in any necessity of the Republic could apparently dispose of Heaven at his will. No one went to him in sorrow who did not leave filled with consolation.

The appreciation of the Venetians was no passing thing, for when the Theatines went to Venice after the sack of Rome, the governor of the city, together with those in charge of the hospital, wrote a memorial in remembrance of the good done for the people by Cajetan's labors in the hospital and elsewhere.

Vicenza, Verona, and Venice had each in turn profited by the priestly labors of this apostle of love. It was a common saying in these cities that Cajetan was an angel at the altar and an apostle in the pulpit, and everywhere a merciful hunter of souls.

At the end of this time, his former spiritual director, Giambattista, was appointed superior of the Dominican house of Venice. The friar told Cajetan to return to Rome and again to associate himself with the Society of Divine Love. The adviser knew the power of Cajetan's influence and desired that he employ his efforts and talents in the center of Christendom, and thus affect the entire Christian world. Without hesitation, Cajetan returned to Rome, in the year 1523.

IV

Flames Burst Forth

✠ *Be not solicitous, therefore, say. ing: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed. For after all these things do the heathens seek . . . Seek first the kingdom of God, and His justice (Matt. 6:31 – 33).*

Cajetan had left Rome during the pontificate of Leo X. Changes had taken place during his absence of which he was intensely aware. Adrian VI, the dour Dutchman, was wholly unlike the great Medici who preceded him. He was of poor parentage and his education had been in jurisprudence, theology, and Scholastic philosophy. He saw the prevalent abuses with clear spiritual eyes, but circles of ecclesiastical influence were not inclined to welcome one who was foreign to them in thought and manner of life. In his twenty months' reign, the 63-year-old pontiff was a lonely and pathetic figure.

No reformer at this time, whoever he might be, had a simple or easy task. Corruption had made the hearts of many obdurate. The papal finances were in a deplorable condition. The funds for which Adrian thirsted in order to execute his reform measures had already been consumed by the lavishness of Leo X. The struggle was too great for an aged and frail man, and he was soon in his grave. The short inscription in his memory epitomizes his life and his age: "The best of men are sometimes born in a time that is unsuited to their virtue."

Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici) ascended the papal throne in 1523. He had been given the broad and classical education befitting a Medici. Like most of his family, he was inordinately given to the patronage of the arts, to statecraft and to diplomacy. An apt description of him has been left by the historian Armstrong: ". . . learned, clever, respectable, and industrious . . . he had little enterprise and less decision." High ideals he had, but his feeble and irresolute will paralyzed the good he wished to do.

It seems tragic, to our limited modes of thought, that the Church had to pass through one of the most critical periods of her history under a weak pontiff. Few epochs in the history of the Holy See have witnessed so many events and changes of supreme importance, so many world-shaking catastrophes, as did the vacillating pontificate of Clement. The rapid and fundamental transformations in domestic and social life, in culture, and in politics continued without a halt under this pontiff. The discovery of the New World, the restless transition from the medieval to modern political systems, the struggle between France and Spain, the menacing conquests of the Islamic forces – each factor in its peculiar way affected all of Europe. Within the bosom of the Church the inveterate abuses of both hierarchy and laity, and the augmenting of these evils by the Avignon captivity of the popes, gave rise to a dangerous spirit of unrest and incredulity which needed only the slightest impetus to erupt into religious revolt. This calamity, the loss of

unity of belief, occurred during Clement's pontificate and thrust upon the Church the gravest crisis she has ever had to encounter.

With the rise of heretical sects, Europe received a shock without parallel in her history. The whole continent was unnerved by this violent break with the traditions and beliefs of the past. All the things that for 1,500 years had been the supreme consolation and peace of life and death for countless millions seemed suddenly swept away. The sanctity of all that had been stamped with the blood of martyrs and the heroic self-conquest of the saints now seemed a myth, a dream, a mistake of human judgment. All the wealth of Catholic doctrine that artists, poets, and scholars had consecrated in undying masterpieces was now the object of desecration and destruction.

But from the bosom of the Church rose signs of recovery which are never lacking in a crisis. From the Oratory of Divine Love, which had drawn into its brotherhood the choicest members of the papal court, together with noble priests and sincere laymen, the Catholic Reform arose. When the clouds hanging over the center of Christendom were darkest, Cajetan, obedient to his confessor, prepared to resume his work in Rome with plans more defined and specific than heretofore.

Cajetan probably reached Rome in January. Soon after his arrival, he visited the Oratory and was pleased to learn that its membership had increased. In accordance with his former custom, he visited the principal churches and basilicas, the tombs of the martyrs and the catacombs, but particularly the Church of St. Mary Major, the place of the apparitions of the Infant Jesus. A great part of his time was spent in the hospitals, especially since his arrival found the city suffering a great pestilence. To a casual observer, Cajetan was pursuing the same manner of life that he had lived when he first came into the shadow of the papacy.

But now a new force was moving him; he was certain that God wished him to bring into the Church a new congregation of priests. God, he thought, had manifested this to him in a vision. Among other things, he was given to see a great field of white lilies of wondrous splendor, while high above soared beautiful birds of every species singing the praises of the Most High. Then God indicated to Cajetan that those flowers were elaborately clad without spinning their own silk, and that the birds were well fed without planting or harvesting their grain. He heard a voice say: "That is the pattern of your institute."

Without further deliberation, Cajetan set out for Venice to renounce all that he owned or would ever fall heir to in the future. During his short stay he lodged near the Hospital of St. George, where he could easily visit the sick, and at the same time have access to the notary who was preparing the legal document that would divest him of his possessions. Feudal estates and trusts were given over to their respective tenants and to relatives. He left a good share to his niece, the fifteen-year-old Elizabeth Thiene, and for himself he reserved only the right over a few tithes, that he might have something to give to the poor. The document was published September 1, 1523.



The Society of Divine Love had accomplished much in its seven years of existence, but it still remained nothing more than a confraternity lacking constant membership and strict discipline. Cajetan could see the need of men wholly disengaged from other interests, giving their entire time to the work of Christian reform. To him, community life with a fixed rule and a membership bound by vows seemed the expedient means of procuring the needed stability and unified direction.

The evils Cajetan wished particularly to attack were:

1. The loose and dissolute manner of life among the people generally;
2. A spirit of intellectual pride, which led to the scorning and debasing of holy things;
3. The rapid and furious propagation at that time of the Lutheran heresies;
4. The relaxed and dissipated lives of the clergy.

It was on the fourth disorder that Cajetan was to concentrate his efforts and thereby indirectly attack those of society at large. If Christian society were to be remade, it must have a concrete and durable foundation on which to rest. This foundation was a holy priesthood. A moral reconstruction was impossible until a virtuous priesthood arose to stand between Heaven and Earth as dispensers of the riches of the kingdom of Heaven and to point the way to God. But how could the clergy be remade in the image of reform?

Sadoletto and Cajetan, two of the most active members of the Society of Divine Love, did not quite agree to take the same course and unite their efforts; rather they each wished to follow their own inclinations and work with their own interests. Sadoletto set about assembling councils to spread their influence to bishops and other high officers in Church and state, and thus influence a greater area. Cajetan resolved to appeal directly to the priests, individually and by preaching, but above all by example, since he realized that it was useless to assail in others something the reformer had not corrected in himself.

So absorbed were many of the clergy of the time in their own interests that little or no time was given to the spiritual welfare of the flock entrusted to their care. This condition made Cajetan firmer than ever in his resolve to make poverty his ideal. Heretofore, his strict observance of the virtue had been in order to obtain a spirit of detachment and to give to God's poor. Now, he understood the supreme role it would be called upon to play in the work of reform. Voluntary poverty was the only means of disentangling the world-bound hearts of clerics and of permitting them to soar to spiritual heights.

We have alluded to the part played by the neglect of evangelical poverty in the progress of clerical decay. The Theatines made its cultivation one of their chief distinctions. Pastor says of the beginnings of the Order of St. Cajetan that, in poverty "it aimed to go farther than the Seraph of Assisi." The specific discipline of the Theatine Congregation in this matter was simple but drastic: It was not to live from an income or from the begging of alms. The life of the community was made dependent on free-will offerings spontaneously made.

Poverty thus practiced was to be an effective antidote against greed and ambition and a reassuring demonstration that culture, distinction, the dignity of the individual, qualities so esteemed in the Renaissance, were compatible with priestly detachment and the simplicity of the Gospel.

It was not Cajetan's purpose to found a new religious order. He found no pattern in any form of religious life after which he might fashion a community of Clerks Regular. Seclusion, the ideal of the early ascetics, was incompatible with an active priesthood. The monastic ideal of self-sanctification within monastery enclosure did not offer the freedom necessary for an active ministry. The bands of friar preachers of later origin had fallen miserably from their pristine fervor.

Cajetan wanted simple priests who would imitate as nearly as possible the lives of the Apostles. He wrote to Matteo Giberti in regard to the papal bull of approval:

... among the most important things, we wish our clerical institute to be approved by the Holy See in such a way that it would not seem that we are going to found a new

congregation, as truly we neither wish nor can do. Even if we could found one, we would not do so, for we do not want to be anything other than Clerical Fathers living a community life and having everything in common, observing the three vows, because this is the most fitting way for the Fathers to keep faithfully the spirit of a common clerical life.

In the same spirit, Cajetan did not wish to write a rule of life at the beginning of the institute, because, as he declared, its rule was already written in the Acts of the Apostles:

And the multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul. Neither did any one say that aught of the things which he possessed was his own: but all things were common unto them. . . . For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them . . . and distribution was made to every one, according as he had need. (Acts 4:82—35).

He called the Apostles the holy Fathers, whom the group should imitate in zeal for the preaching of the word of God and in simplicity and sanctity of life. The brotherhood was to hold as its prime objective a return in all simplicity of heart to the manner of life of the first Christians.

The active life of the clerical ministry was not to exclude the contemplative. The time not required for public priestly ministrations was to be spent in seclusion from the world, in meditation and spiritual exercises, combined with great interior mortification and rigorous penitential practices. Idleness was to be avoided. Time not given to the regular exercises of piety or to clerical duties was to be employed in profitable study or writing. Members were to have no part in controversies over questions of dogma, but were to give themselves to unlimited activity and charity for others. They were to dress plainly and uniformly in black clerical garb. They were not to accept titles or benefices but were always to remain poor, simple priests distributing spiritual food to souls. They were to pledge undying loyalty to the Vicar of Christ and live in immediate dependence on the Holy See.

Poverty, let us once again repeat, was to be the sharp instrument used to sever the abuses from Christ's Church. Going beyond the mere renunciation of property, the Clerks Regular were not to be allowed even to beg. They were to rely wholly on the voluntary contributions of the faithful and trust implicitly in Divine Providence. The spirit of their poverty was summed up by the future Paul IV, one of their founders, in a letter to his sister, Maria:

Religious ordained for the administration of spiritual things, preaching, confessing, and so on, have need of nothing, for the Lord has commanded that they live by the Gospel, and wills that they be sustained on that which is their due, since He said: "The laborer is worthy of his hire!"



Probably the first to whom Cajetan communicated his plan was a close friend, one of the original members of the *Divino Amore*, Boniface of Colle. The name of Colle was ancient, noble, and respected in Italy, and the young Boniface was given an education comparable to that of the most favored youth of his day. Immediately after finishing his university course with the highest honors, he, like Cajetan, had the rare privilege of being admitted directly to the Roman court.

There is much in the life of Boniface of Colle that is strikingly similar to that of Cajetan. Like the saint, he was given to the practice of virtue from his earliest years, and like Cajetan he was

large in his generosity to the poor. The two men soon formed a fast friendship, and when Cajetan suggested his plan for a new foundation, Boniface was eager to follow him.

Cajetan and Boniface talked their plans over with other friends. Boniface discussed them with Caraffa, little aware, perhaps, of the decisive figure he was bringing into the scene.

Severe in aspect, stately and commanding in personality, Giovanni Pietro (John Peter) Caraffa, Archbishop of Brindisi and Bishop of Chieti, was a man of extraordinary learning, powerful intellect, and prodigious memory. He spoke five languages fluently and excelled in the use of Greek and Hebrew. He was unchallengingly acclaimed the most learned man of his learned age. In fact, it was believed that he knew every language of Europe, since at a later time, when he occupied the Chair of Peter as Paul IV, he did not use an interpreter to negotiate with foreign princes and kings.

Profound in thought and energetic in action, he combined ceaseless activity with remarkable endurance, moral courage, and probity. These qualities abiding in a personality so intense and impetuous made him from youth a man of position and influence. Fortunately, his indomitable will was blended with a delicate sense of justice, and the tenderer and finer virtues formed a contrast to his formidable bearing, so as to make of him a dual personality. His extraordinary ability invited every kind of honor, and yet any distinction filled him with embarrassment and confusion. Like a bashful child, he tried to escape the applause merited by his deeds, and seemed to wonder how he had ever got into the public eye. An observer of his iron-gloved hand of authority noticed with delight his simple and affectionate devotion to his friends. His life was chaste; he fasted rigorously and carefully guarded his senses.

Caraffa was born in Naples of the illustrious family of the Counts of Maddalone on June 28, 1472, which was the vigil of the feast of St. Peter, whose successor he was to be. His impetuous nature showed itself early in life when he attempted, at the age of 12, to run away from home and join a monastery. This was repeated two years later. At the age of 18, Giovanni was taken to Rome by his eminent uncle, Cardinal Oliver Caraffa, and from that time he took an active part in all the affairs of the papacy.

By the time Caraffa had reached more mature manhood, he had attained great sway in the papacy. His uncompromising ideas of right and wrong were acid to the vacillating figures of the court, and it was probably to rid himself of this gigantic force that the pleasure-loving Leo X appointed him to the Archbishopric of Brindisi.

Under the more rigorous regime of Adrian VI (1522 – 1523) Caraffa returned to Rome and began small, hushed attempts to reform the clergy, but the early death of this pontiff interrupted his plans. When Clement VII (1523 – 1534) came to power, he immediately appointed both Caraffa and Sadoletto members of the Commission for Reform, and upon Caraffa imposed as well the special task of superintending the clergy of the city of Rome.

Caraffa was resolutely inaugurating reforms, and provoking no small opposition in so doing, when he heard of Cajetan's plan of founding a poor and hardy priesthood. Unhesitatingly he determined to leave everything and devote himself to this new life. A streak of stubborn determination in Caraffa made him always the sturdy pioneer, a blazer of new paths, a conqueror of difficulties. But Caraffa's eagerness was not met with equal enthusiasm by Cajetan. The original plan was to produce a simple, poor, and modest clergy without titles or offices. Caraffa possessed influence, power, prestige, and wealth. Cajetan objected to his entrance into the new clerical institute for these reasons, and also because he felt that the iron prelate was too sorely needed both in his own diocese and in the papal offices.

Caraffa loved obstacles; he found pleasure in overcoming them. He therefore argued the point with Cajetan with his accustomed keenness. He claimed that he had himself intended to begin such an organization of priests but that he had not made known his plans to anyone. He expressed his desire to forfeit title, wealth – everything – in order to be accepted. Cajetan remained mild but firm. For once Caraffa's eloquence failed him, and he was speechless in the presence of the serene dignity of Cajetan. But the resolute prelate had never known defeat and, characteristically, he changed his strategy. The giant Archbishop, who among the small-statured Italians was a head taller and several heads wiser than the average, fell to his knees and asked God to witness their interview. Then he raised his majestic head and demanded the account of his soul from Cajetan, if he did not take him from the world and bring him into the peaceful harbor of his religious institute. Cajetan was at last overcome. He put his hand on the Archbishop's shoulder and said: "Monsignor, come with me; be assured that I shall never abandon you."

Caraffa's vehemence found fitting check and balance in the warm and loyal friendship of the composed and gentle Paolo Consiglieri, another member of the Society of Divine Love. The Consiglieri family was originally from Bologna, where it was known by the name of Ghislerio. A few years later this lineage gave the papacy its first saint in centuries, Pope St. Pius V (1566 – 1572).

Paolo, like Cajetan, was early trained in the Christian virtues, and while working with the Oratory he contracted such a firm friendship with Caraffa that their intimacy was likened to that of David and Jonathan. For both Caraffa and Consiglieri, it seemed that Cajetan had solved the problem of reforming the Church and making headway against heresy. Paolo expressed his wish to renounce his wealth and take the Theatine habit that he might give Caraffa a more helping hand in the new enterprise.

All the members of the Oratory rejoiced when they learned of the brave new venture. Probably as many as thirty-eight asked admittance, but as they learned more of the austerity of the life proposed and the absolute poverty it involved, they one by one, like the young man in the Gospel, turned away disheartened.

But Cajetan was not the man to be discouraged by lack of numbers. Now that he had at least three companions upon whom he could depend, he decided to take the initial step in assuming an apostolic manner of life. He wrote in a letter to his relatives of August 22, 1524, details about the rights and privileges over the wealth and property to which he had legal right as heir of the noble house of Thiene. The letter was evidently the final execution of the legal document drawn up and published September 1, 1523.

The letter asked the Thiene family to accept the legal documents that Cajetan had prepared and to reserve only fifty ducats to repay a certain debt that he had contracted in giving alms to the poor. He finished by admonishing them to use the wealth he bequeathed to them in such a way as not to attach their hearts to them, since sooner or later all Earthly possessions must be abandoned.

Cajetan at this time renounced not only all that fell to him by hereditary title, but also what had accrued to him by ecclesiastical right, both through benefices and titles of prelacy. The extraordinarily lucrative benefice of St. Malo in Venetian territory was placed in the hands of the Pope, that its revenues might relieve the needs of the Church. He preferred this to increasing his family's prestige by making his relatives the beneficiaries of the income – a most un-Renaissance-like action! From the revenues he received through his position in the papal curia, which amounted to thousands of *scudi*, he reserved a small sum to prepare a chapel and buy the

few things necessary for the home of the new religious family. The rest was distributed to the poor.



Cajetan and his confreres presented their petitions to Clement VII on May 3, 1524, the feast of the Finding of the True Cross. At once opposition developed. The four reformers were called hypocrites, visionary fanatics, fake reformers who were desirous of revolutionizing the Church. Malicious tongues found their way to the cardinals assigned to examine the case, and they were not denied a hearing. Not only the common people lent an ear, but some of the highest prelates of the Church were misled. The cardinals assigned to the task deliberated for over forty days and then decided to call the four founders to a papal audience, not only in the presence of Clement VII, but also before the entire College of Cardinals, that they might answer the numerous objections brought before them.

Clement knew the truth too well to be deceived by the calumny. The difficulty uppermost in his mind was the loss of a firm and staunch support like Caraffa. With a forthrightness and an energy that were not his wont, he told the Archbishop of Brindisi that the world was expecting greater and greater things from his talents, energy, and virtue, and reminded him that he had under his care two important dioceses, which would ill become him to abandon. The times, he concluded, were those of labor and strenuous effort and not of rest.

But Caraffa would not yield. With characteristic humility, he told the pontiff that he did not see in himself the resources capable of repairing the wrongs suffered by the Church, with which Clement had credited him. Other able ecclesiastics in Rome were perfectly capable of sustaining the honor and decorum of the Holy See:

As for withdrawing from the world, it is not in order to flee from work and shirk the fight; rather it is that I may gain more strength to continue with greater vigor. Retirement always strengthens virtue. If I have up to the present waged battle in open camp, then surely if I were enclosed in a cloister . . . I could fight the enemies of the Church to better advantage.

Doubtless, Your Holiness remembers from ecclesiastical history that it is nothing new for a Bishop to give up the crozier in order to retire from the noise of the world and devote himself wholly to God. St. Gregory Nazianzen did exactly this. . . . St. Albert the Great deposed his miter of the Diocese of Ratisbon and fled to his convent of Cologne. . . . Pope St. Peter Celestine, in the year 1294, renounced the highest dignity on Earth to return to his Benedictine monastery.

Caraffa defended himself with such power and eloquence that Clement and the Cardinals present seemed to feel that their first objection had been overruled, and the second and more basic difficulty was now presented. The entire Roman court agreed that the society that Monsignor Cajetan intended to introduce into the Church attempted to institute a mode of life consisting of two wholly incompatible functions.

The life of a cleric combined with the life of a contemplative monk was an unheard of novelty. Surely, they argued, the life of the clergy should consist in hearing confessions and administering the sacraments – in ceaseless activity for the spiritual welfare of the faithful. These things had no place in the monastic life, which should consist in prayer and meditation in cloistered solitude. The two modes of life were utterly incongruous, and one would be the destruction of the other. How could anyone hope to unite them?

Cajetan's answer indicated the deliberation he had given to the matter. He explained that he did not intend to introduce anything new into the Church, but simply to renew the spirit of the early clergy. In the first Christian centuries, Cajetan explained, with the help of well-selected quotations from the New Testament and the Fathers, this was evidently the manner of life lived by the Apostles, who certainly found no incompatibility in combining their contemplative life with the active ministry. They lived a common life on alms freely given and devoted themselves to prayer and the singing of God's praises.

He showed that, as the apostolic way of life became relaxed with the passing of time, it was renewed and invigorated by the zeal of many holy bishops. Among these he named St. Polycarp, St. Ignatius Martyr, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Martin, and St. Isidore. He showed that many other saints had tried to keep alive the practices of primitive Christianity in this matter until nearly the fourteenth century. It was only with the advent of neopaganism that the hallowed traditions of earlier ages were abandoned.

From these facts, Cajetan maintained that the two types of life, the active and the contemplative, had been combined in almost every century in some part of the Christian world. He reaffirmed that his intention was not to introduce something new, but rather to bring back something that the Church had lost.

Cajetan's able argument carried the field with the august assemblage, and only one more point remained to be considered. Every existing religious society, it was pointed out, had a fixed income or permitted the members to beg in order to keep body and soul together. The pope and cardinals did not hesitate to remind the founder of the Clerks Regular that his idea of a band of priests that should live on the free and spontaneous offerings of the faithful was hardly practical in contemporary society, which often failed to help even those who begged with tears and evident destitution. They warned him that, even if the society were approved, its impossible ideal of poverty would limit its days.

Cajetan answered, not with practical arguments, but with a bold appeal to the Gospel: "I cannot understand how it is possible for anyone not to believe in the promises of Christ or how anyone could condemn those who are striving to live in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel and the counsels of perfection. Christ Jesus commands me not to be over-solicitous concerning what I shall eat or what I shall put on; He reminds me that His eternal Father feeds the birds of the air and lavishly clothes the lilies of the field without any tiring exertion on their part. I confidently trust that He will take much more care and pains in providing us with food and dress, without our going from door to door to beg. Are these not the promises Our Lord makes us in the Gospel of Matthew?"

The College of Cardinals remained silent, stunned with Cajetan's superb confidence in the Gospel, which he quoted from memory. No more objections were offered, and the pope was heard to remark: "I have not seen so great a faith in Israel."

Matteo Giberti, Bishop of Verona and one of the pillars of the Oratory of Divine Love, was present and supported the new congregation through the tedious hearing. After all difficulties were surmounted, he humbly requested the pope to relieve him of his bishopric that he might join the new society. The pontiff firmly refused to grant him permission to relinquish his diocese, although he had granted that liberty to Caraffa. Cajetan, too, deemed it better for Giberti to use his extraordinary talents for the good of the Church at large, especially since he was needed badly in the papal court. Another reason was that Giberti, though personally spotless, was of illegitimate birth, and it was feared that his membership in the new institute would invite contempt and ridicule.

Giberti, as it turned out, rendered inestimable services to the new society as a friend from without. The first of these was the favorable examination of a petition drawn up by Cajetan, asking for approval of the constitution of the institute. This petition concluded by placing the new community under the special patronage of St. Peter, whom Cajetan named the true founder of the order and the first exemplar of the apostolic life.

After nine months' intense effort, worry, and anxiety, the first Theatines received their papal bull of approval dated June 24, 1524. The bull showed with what enthusiasm the new Clerks Regular were welcomed into the Church. Clement stated that it was his wish that the Society of St. Cajetan should remain immediately subject to the Apostolic See, not to any bishop or cardinal protector. The disputed question of poverty was left largely to the discretion of the new congregation, which was permitted to insist on absolute poverty, *unless it was found impossible*. In that case, they might at least insist on the apostolic spirit as far as the members found it practical. And one task was enjoined on them for which they had not petitioned, that of correcting, reforming, and editing the Canonical Hours of the Church. This duty testified to the confidence of the Holy See in the society's ability, fervor, and spirit of oneness with the Church.



As soon as he heard of the papal approval, Caraffa resigned his benefices in favor of the Holy See and placed his two miters at the feet of Clement. All that was left him he used to relieve the poor. His personal library, his vestments, and numerous articles from his chapel were reserved for the new foundation. The pope, however, in spite of Caraffa's vehement protests, firmly insisted that he retain the title of Bishop of Chieti. The two other members likewise divested themselves of everything, except that Boniface of Colle reserved a house that he owned in the Campo Marzio as the first abode of the founders of the Clerks Regular.

With simplicity duly modified by pomp, the public profession of the first Clerks Regular was at last solemnized on September 14, 1524, the feast of the Exaltation of the True Cross. The pope had selected St. Peter's for the occasion, as if to signify that it was fit and proper for this apostolic order to be born in the very church dedicated to the Prince of the Apostles. Since no religious order in history had heretofore enjoyed this privilege, the very novelty of the thing attracted an immense and curious crowd. The entire papal court was present. Bishops, canons, and priests of the basilica attended the ceremony. There were Benedictines, Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and members of various other religious orders, who by custom and tradition took part in the many elaborate ceremonies of the Vatican.

After the Mass, celebrated on the altar of St. Andrew, Giovanni Pietro Caraffa mounted the steps leading to the high altar and handed Monsignor Bonziani, Bishop of Caserta and Chief Apostolic Datary, the brief that had been granted Cajetan on June 24. The Datary passed the document to the Notary to be read publicly. After this formality, each of the four fathers of the society read his formula of profession, beginning with Caraffa, then Cajetan, then Boniface of Colle, and lastly Paolo Consiglieri. Then each of them took off the garb denoting his respective rank as prelate and put on the simple habit of the new order.

Leaving the main altar, they went a little to one side and elected Caraffa their first superior. Then the party returned to Monsignor Bonziani at the altar of St. Peter and formally obtained the sanction of their choice. Thus ended the ceremony. The first Theatines had received canonical institution. The illustrious prelate, Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, was now by vow as poor as the poorest of men, and Cajetan of Thiene, Apostolic Prothonotary and Doctor, was named in the

pontifical brief simply Gaetano, with his name placed immediately beneath that of the Bishop of Chieti.



The aims and ideals of the new Christocentric order, patterned after the Apostles and primitive Christians, were thus set forth by John Capycius of Naples, an early member and a contemporary of the founders:

1. To be a pattern of the imitation for other priests.
2. To be in the vanguard of the reform movement.
3. To practice poverty as the Apostles had done, which meant that they could possess neither a patrimony nor a common income, nor obtain stipends from begging; but they would be compelled to place confidence wholly in Divine Providence and in the spontaneous liberality of the faithful.
4. To effect a more reverent observance of divine worship, especially on the part of priests, and a greater frequentation of the sacraments on the part of the faithful.
5. To restore the practice of sacerdotal preaching, which had become almost obsolete in that century.
6. To aid parish priests in their work, with all their strength, without regard to their position or their circumstances.
7. To assist and care for the sick and the dying, and to console and exhort criminals who are about to undergo capital punishment.
8. To protect the Church against the attacks of heretics
9. To apply themselves diligently to the comforting of souls by hearing Confessions, by sermons, and by letters, being constantly mindful of every means that might turn to the salvation of souls.

Though Caraffa's force of character caused him to be elected the first superior of the Clerks Regular, Cajetan's spirit was dominant, and he is in all truth named the patriarch or founder of all succeeding Regular Clerics.

Likewise, he stands first in the great line of reformers of the Catholic Reformation. Just as the Oratory of Divine Love was the cradle of the Theatine Order, so the Theatine Order was the cradle of the Catholic Reformation. As one writer has observed, the Theatines did not establish a seminary for priests only, but also for bishops, who rendered weighty service to the reform movement.

The interest the public exhibited in the solemn profession of the Theatines soon changed to curiosity as their aims and manner of life became better known. Who were these men? What did they propose to do? And their name of Theatine? What did it mean and why were they so called? Their strict observance quickly drew ridicule from the worldly-minded. They were looked upon as eccentrics, fanatics – as neither monks nor simple clergy, but rather as dangerous innovators. Unmindful alike of approval or disapproval, the Theatines continued their mortified way with devotions to the sick and poor and the unwearied care of souls. It was not long before the word Theatine began to stand for something holy, even to the pagan-minded.

The name alone came to signify the heights of Christian perfection, so that one given to a more perfect life than the ordinary, regardless of his particular vocation or station, came to be known as a "Theatine." But the exact etymology of the name continues to be a matter of

controversy. The most probable and generally accepted view is that the word came from Caraffa's title of Bishop of Chieti, a city of the Abruzzo province, which translated into Latin becomes *Theate*; hence his followers might easily be known as *Theatines*.

But the Dominican historian, Father Bzovio, claims that the appellation is derived from the Greek, and means illustrious, or contemplative of Heavenly beauties. The Jesuit Father Negrone confirms this supposition when he states that the name comes from the Greek *Theos* (God) and *theatis* (contemplator). He adds that the name alone is a glory to those who bear it.

Even before any of the Theatines had left Italy, the sanctity of their name preceded them abroad. In Spain the name was held in such veneration that Suarez records that when the fathers of the Society of Jesus showed themselves remarkable in virtue they were called Theatines. Father Negrone and other Spanish Jesuit writers of the time confirm the fact of this misnomer, but, far from being offended by it, they consider the title a glory to themselves, since the Jesuits were given the name because of their outstanding sanctity of life. Even St. Teresa of Avila could not escape being called a Theatine by her contemporaries.

Cajetan leavened the lives of the early Theatines, not only by the forceful spirit of his example, but also through his able executive measures. The wise regulations he prescribed struck many spiritually-minded persons as a sure and true guide to holiness. Among these was a cardinal from Saxony, the country of Luther, who ordered them to be reprinted in Germany for his personal devotion. In Cajetan's preface to the constitutions of his order, he declared that the rule of life was taken from the Acts of the Apostles, since the purpose of the society was to renew in the world the spirit of the early Church. All that formed the daily life of the Theatine stemmed from two well-known basic rules. The first demanded a poverty so austere that the members had to have undaunted confidence in Providence. The second required a life of both action and contemplation.

The two fundamental precepts of the Gospel, love of God and love of neighbor, pervaded every phase of conventual life. With the admonitions for the observance of the three vows, there were included a high regard for divine worship and an exact performance of religious services; obedience to the divine precept to preach and administer the sacraments; charity toward the poor, infirm, and sick; rigid requirements for the admission of novices; an exact specification of garb; and legislation by a general chapter and government by a superior. With the exception of the vows, particularly that of obedience to a superior, all their practices had been embodied in the observances of the Oratory of Divine Love, and were simply carried over into the new organization, confirmed by habit and experience, and approved by the Holy Spirit.

The early Theatines did not stress the importance of a written rule. Rather, the original ideal was that a well-defined spirit and fixed objectives should dictate their manner of life. It was intended that, as the young society forged ahead, it should formulate such enactments as would contribute to the general welfare. But as various houses became established, a written rule became imperative in order to maintain uniformity. As early as 1526 Caraffa put certain regulations into writing. As various general chapters passed regulations, confusion was inevitable. Caraffa saw the need of systematic arrangement and codification. The task was undertaken and the body of enactments accepted and confirmed by Clement VIII on July 28, 1603. The next year the rule was put into practice and became known as the Rule of Caraffa.

The fact that the Theatines lived a common life from 1524 to 1604 without a formally approved rule testifies to the firmness with which the ideal of the priesthood and the practice of the apostolic life impressed itself on the pioneers. "We have no other precepts," say the constitutions, "than those contained in the natural, divine, or ecclesiastical law, or in the three

vows.” Cajetan counseled: “Three things stabilize and conserve the contemplative life: Purity of heart, enclosure, and watchfulness over the avenues of the senses.”

For him the love of Christ was the only force bridling fallen nature. Christ-love sweetened the strictness of discipline and engendered a stern sense of responsibility. Like the Rule of St. Benedict, the great charter of Western monasticism, the Theatine charter was to draw its compelling force from the soul expanding with the love of Christ, not from restrictions imposed from without.

To keep their hearts turned toward God, the members were bound to practice mental prayer at least twice a day; renew their solemn vows every evening; keep rigorous silence at appointed times; make retreats at specified intervals; and sing the divine praises, not only with the voice, but especially with the heart.

This continual striving after personal sanctity necessitated extreme care lest laxity make inroads, as it did in so many other religious communities of the time. Hence special precautions were taken in the admission of candidates. Neither expediency nor worldly prudence could dictate their acceptance. When an eminent scholar and poet, Marcus Antonius Flaminius, applied for admittance, he asked, on account of his delicate constitution, to be allowed some distinction at the common table and that he be permitted to go for a stroll in the fresh air when he wished. Flaminius had an ardent devotion, not unappreciated by Caraffa. But the superior of the Theatines was adamant against making concessions.

When friends of the Venetian senator represented that Flaminius had been a generous benefactor of the congregation and could give Theatine students valuable cultural contacts, Cajetan replied that this did not impress the society, which sought “no advantage but the love of the Cross and the zeal of perfect observance.”

The wisdom of such a stand, seemingly based on blind adherence to rule, proved itself a few years later when Flaminius let himself be seduced by the Lutheran doctrine that faith alone suffices, although he later returned to orthodoxy. The liability the young society would have suffered from the presence of a heretic might have been great enough to crush it.

A zeal for divine worship manifested itself no less than did rigor of admittance. The first precept of the constitutions concerned the recitation of the Divine Office. Propriety and decorum were to be observed in the conduct of all divine service, since this constituted the first duty of a priest. In order to ensure that no prescribed ceremonies be omitted, Cajetan compiled a special book, *The Roman Ceremonial*. In later years if there was a doubt in the mind of any member concerning anything not included in the book, the Fathers followed the example of the early Theatines, whom they knew to be a model of exactness. Special emphasis was placed on the care of churches, altars, vestments, and sacred vessels. The priests were to conduct themselves with every outward mark of reverence, and thus manifest their interior piety. Cajetan, although overburdened with the duties of the ministry, often scrubbed the floors and decorated the altars out of reverence for the presence of the Deity. The Theatines in their zeal for the Holy Sacrifice not only succeeded in removing every appearance of dinginess and uncleanness from their own church, but they impressed others, who followed their example. Their strict personal poverty did not detract from the ornateness of their churches or from the costliness of the objects used in worship. They strove for elegance without luxury.

The preaching of the word of God was a grave duty for the Theatines, for they realized that the carelessness shown by most of the clergy in this regard was the cause of many abuses among the laity. Cajetan and Caraffa were both gifted with extraordinary eloquence. The topic of their sermons was generally the frequent reception of the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. As

the membership grew, the priests were trained to be good preachers. Their subject matter was selected to appeal to the hearts of their hearers and to move them to contrition and the love of God.

Also incorporated in the spirit of the rule was gratitude toward benefactors. Cajetan knew there was no better way to beg the blessings of Providence than by being grateful for gifts received. The names of benefactors were recorded in a book and read at table, that the religious might never forget them in their public and private prayers. This spirit of gratitude has been fostered among the Theatines to the present day.

The Flames Reach Out

✘ *Unless they be converted, He will whet His sword, He will bend His bow and take aim with it. And He will prepare deadly weapons for him: He will make His arrows things of fire (Ps. 7:13 – 14).*

The first home of the Theatines was a little house belonging to Boniface of Colle, on the Via Leonine, near the Campo Marzio in Rome. The Fathers immediately upon being established obtained access to a nearby church in order to celebrate the Holy Mysteries and to chant the Divine Office. The members arose during the night to chant matins, Cajetan always being the first one present for choir.

After this morning office, which was said a little after midnight, he did not return to bed as did the others but remained in prayer through the long hours until time for Mass. The Mass was followed by the “little hours,” or prime, tierce, and sext, after which the community went to a meager breakfast.

Although Caraffa had in his hands the reigns of government, he did not exercise his authority without the advice and guidance of Cajetan, whom he called his “right eye.” There was plenty that needed the combined wisdom of both men.

War was raging between various Christian princes, principally Charles V and Francis I. But a source of even greater distress was the spread of the Lutheran heresies, which had reached into the palaces of Kings and the Holy Roman Emperor. With the protection of authority, the heretics had grown bolder, and Luther had cried out in a public square:

Give me yet two years to finish my job, for at the end of that time there will be neither pope, nor cardinal, nor bishop, nor priest, nor monk, nor nun. Neither will there be found tower bells, churches, Masses or vigils; neither friars’ habits and hoods nor priests’ tonsures, nor rules and statutes, for the whole papal kingdom will have vanished like smoke.

In this troubled state of Christendom, Cajetan abandoned himself to prayer, fasting, and scourgings. He asked the other members to join him in evangelizing the people. To all parts of Rome they went preaching penance and purity of faith. After the new religious had set the example, many learned men joined them. The city of Rome and the adjoining territories were divided into sections and the Theatines and their friends were each allotted a district in which to give missions.

The Theatine Father Chislerio, famous for his *Commentaries on the Canticles of Jeremias*, later wrote:

Before the institution of our order, the public preaching of the Word of God was so neglected that priests were ashamed to preach – they considered it unbecoming to the clerical state. In the pulpits no one was seen except monks and friars regular. I remember having heard from my teacher when I was a schoolboy that all Rome was filled with amazement when the people first saw the new clerics of Cajetan appear in the pulpits with surplice and biretta.

The four pioneers continued to preach and absolve, to visit the sick and baptize. Wherever souls needed care, there was a Theatine to be found. Cajetan was happy. Their apostolic lives, he thought, exemplified the words: “To a soul that loves God, all things work together for good.”

In the meantime, many Roman prelates and noblemen were visiting the new foundation to see for themselves the wonders performed by the little community making its way without a source of income or the privilege of begging. The cardinals, particularly, were more than stupefied at seeing an institution that they had opposed being blessed with abundance. Spontaneous offerings did not fail them. After their evening meals, the food that remained was not put away for the next day, but distributed to the poor. This did not always work for security of livelihood, as it was not meant so to work. One morning’s repast found the little band with four beans and a crust of bread to divide among them. But such days were rare. The prejudice of the hierarchy and nobility was overcome by what they saw.

Membership now began to increase. Before the end of the year eight new candidates were admitted. The learned Gianbernardo Scotto of Parma was received April 80, 1525. Scotto was later to be a cardinal and a principal figure in the revision of the *Roman Breviary*. After him came two Roman nobles, Jerome Consigliari and Andrea Verso. Five others of different nationalities followed, until the group made up the symbolic number of twelve.

Clement VII, who had announced the opening of the Holy Year of 1525, now presented Cajetan and his companions with a wide field in which to work. They continued to preach in the public squares; they heard confessions in the principal churches of Rome; they exhorted and instructed the pilgrims in the inns; they went to the main entrances of the city to meet the foreigners and to accompany them to St. Peter’s and other churches in order that they might participate in the great spiritual benefits of the jubilee. Father Oliva, the Superior General of the Jesuits, wrote of the Roman Theatines some time later: “They have nothing in mind save to sanctify themselves and save their neighbors . . . No one would believe that men in human flesh could live a life so far from human and so near to that of the angel – so pure, so solitary, so enamored of souls and Heaven.”

As his duties of administration and the expanded activities of the Holy Year grew, Cajetan did not neglect his early love for the sick. Sometimes alone, sometimes followed by his companions, he made his way regularly to the hospitals and to every kind of den of death where he might find Christ’s suffering members. Cures were recorded that were beyond the reach of human remedies, certainly beyond the reach of the unscientific medical resources of the period. If there was no cure the saint prepared the sick for a happy death. He and the other eleven had complete charge of hospitalization in Rome during the plague of 1526, at least as far as the victims of the plague were concerned. All the funds provided for their care passed through the hands of the fathers.

As membership grew, the little house near the Campo Marzio did not offer sufficient room. Cajetan asked Giberti to find them a larger place – secluded enough that they might retain the strict observance of the contemplative life, yet located conveniently enough for the practice of their ardently active life. In 1526 the Clerks Regular went to live in a home Giberti had provided

for them on the Monte Pincio. The new dwelling was near the church of Santa Maria a Popolo and also within a short distance of that of St. Philip. The two churches provided ample scope for the clerics' zeal.

Though the new lodging was roughly built and too small to accommodate the growing community comfortably, Cajetan accepted it with deepest gratitude. Behind closed doors the religious began their new enterprise with a spiritual retreat of many days. Under Cajetan's direction, every undertaking for the honor of God or the salvation of souls was begun in this manner. The Theatines built a church and dedicated it to the Virgin. The time of the religious was so regulated that they pursued the studies of theology, Scripture, canon law, and the writings of the Fathers. Generous friends soon found the way to Monte Pincio to aid them.



Shortly after the Theatines had established themselves on the Pincian Hill, two weary travelers, Fra Luigi and Fra Raphael Fossombrone, trudged into Rome. They had come to obtain a brief from the Apostolic See that would give them the right to withdraw from their Franciscan Institute and to wear the Capuchin habit. Fra Matteo da Bascio, the first to urge the Franciscan reform, had obtained the permission orally in 1525, but the two friars, wishing fuller assurance that they were fulfilling God's will, came to Rome in 1526 in order to obtain the same permission in writing. They knew no one in the city, and did not have much success in obtaining an audience with the Pope.

One day as they were walking along the streets they met the *limonsiniere*, or pope's almsgiver. Seeing their rough habits, he thought they were hermits and stopped to inquire into their manner of life. In the course of conversation, Fra Luigi asked the prelate to help them in their purpose. The almsgiver replied: "If there is anyone who can help you, it is Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, for there is no more influential man in Rome than the Theatine Bishop."

The friars turned to the Pincian Hill, where Caraffa, whose masterful countenance could command respect for every occasion, heard them out with mingled surprise, sternness, distrust, and disapproval, but always with interest. The Bishop of Chieti was a many-sided man and considered a question from every angle.

Caraffa's active mind could see in the way of life of these "reformed" friars, who were asking to practice privately their life of austerity, an open door for every capricious idea of individual religious who wished to live apart, yet as members of a community. The furrows in his broad brow deepened with thought. His eyes narrowed as he remembered the many monks and friars who were roaming abroad because they had succeeded in obtaining a decree to live outside the cloister. He knew, too, that many heretics were spreading their poison under the cover of a religious garb that no one had seen before. He had been influential in the arrest of numerous apostates from religious orders in the city of Rome and he had an eagle eye for uncovering them. His background had brought him first-hand knowledge of every type of ecclesiastical abuse. Hard thoughts crisscrossed his mind as he looked at the two poor travelers. His stormy countenance grew more threatening as his deep voice rumbled his misgivings. The friars exchanged glances of despair.

But in this experienced reformer, zeal was accompanied with prudence and keen discernment. He questioned them as to their plans for the future. He offered objections to test the sincerity of his visitors – and of their worthiness he was convinced. He made a right-about-face and promised to obtain an audience with the Holy Father for them.

The fiery words of the Bishop of Chieti burned away every difficulty in the mind of Clement VII. He ended his customary indecision by saying: “We want to do whatever the Bishop of Chieti requests, for if it were not a just and honest thing he would not have asked it.”

Before leaving Rome, the two friars related to Cajetan all that they had endured in attempting their reform – so similar to the fears, disappointments, and opposition he himself had known. Since the poor man of Assisi was a saint of Cajetan’s special devotion, he was deeply interested in the Franciscan reform. He encouraged the friars to continue. The poor brothers replied that this was the first consolation they had received since they had begun their strict observance.

The documentation now available gives ample evidence of the heroic role of Father Bonaventura in the reform of the Franciscan convents of the Venetian Province under the inspiration and counsel of the Theatine reformers. In the Vatican Library there are four letters written by Bonaventura to Cajetan in 1531 which show that the saint actively participated in the reform of the Franciscans that was to lead to the establishment of the Capuchins. In fact, some passages of this correspondence suggest that the initiative in the Franciscan restoration began with the Theatine founder, who found in this fervent son of the Patriarch of Assisi the man who was needed to convert his reforming ideals into reality. “Blessed be the Lord,” wrote Bonaventura in reference to Cajetan, “and may He not permit my sins to spoil the work of the just man.”

Twin brothers in their works and loves, Francis and Cajetan are especially akin in the spirit of evangelical reform, which was to culminate in the love for Holy Lady Poverty.



Sincere souls in the city of Rome had long been preaching penance. Divine chastisement for the sins of the city was expected from day to day. It came in May, 1527. The city of the caesars and the popes has never witnessed worse trials.

The Duke of Bourbon, turned heretic, enlisted in the army of Emperor Charles V, against whom he had formerly planned treason, in order, as he hoped, to become King of Naples. The Duke knew that Clement VII and Charles V had just completed a peaceful agreement and that the Pope had dismissed his army and those of his colleagues. Deceived by the agreement and unaware of the Duke’s treachery, the Pope was helpless when he suddenly saw troops appear at the gates of Rome and surround the city for a long and heavy siege.

At the time of the attack, Monday morning, May 5, the Theatines were having breakfast with a friend, Paolo Giustiniani, the founder of the Reformed Camaldolese Hermits. Suddenly, the stillness of early morning was broken by the roar of guns. The frightened Theatines did not know what had caused the hostility, but they did know that many souls needed to be prepared for death. They went out into the streets, where they found terrified throngs fleeing to secret shelter.

The Duke had assaulted the walls of the city, but the courageous papal general, Renzo di Ceri, defended it bravely with a handful of troops. The cunning Duke had not expected resistance. Infuriated, he commanded his officers to loot everything they could find within the walls. By sunset the army began its entrance and on the morning of the sixth the imperial troops broke through the Cavallegeri gates that guarded the Vatican. The pope and many members of his court took refuge in Castel Sant’ Angelo, where they were held captive until the following December. Rome was the helpless victim of mercenary troops composed mostly of German Lutherans, together with a great number of Italians and Spaniards, most of them heretics. Forty thousand loot-crazed men began their pillage.

They took over the possessions of prelates, princes, ambassadors, and nobles – everything of worth that they could find. They took possession of monasteries, convents, and the homes of the poor; they massacred the patients in the hospitals, burst open the prisons and freed the inmates. They destroyed as they went, reducing the whole population to misery. To learn of hidden treasure, they tortured husbands in the presence of their wives, and children in the presence of their mothers. They violated wives, mothers, daughters; nor did they respect the convent. No mercy was shown to anyone, no matter what age, sex, or condition. The nobility, priests, bishops, and cardinals, with their insignia and vestments – all that might designate ecclesiastical rank – were paraded on donkeys along the streets and killed at the end of the humiliating journey.

In an attempt to escape, some of the victims tried to find refuge in the churches, but there they met death all the more quickly. The soldiers were more thirsty for gold than for Catholic blood. They stole the costly furnishings of the churches, the precious candlesticks, the priestly vestments. The sacred vessels of the altar were destroyed and desecrated. In their madness the looters robbed the bones of the holy martyrs of the silver or gold interred with them. Gemmed rings were stolen from the fingers of long-dead prelates. The Blessed Sacrament was profaned and the consecrated Hosts were trampled upon.

The Vatican Library and its precious documents were left in ruins. The papal archive collections were thrown under the horses' hooves; the papal chapel was converted into a stable. Some soldiers donned cardinals' robes, and in the sacristy of St. Peter's one dressed in the pontifical vestments while his fellows shouted: "Long live Pope Luther."

For eight days the air was thick with horror and pleas for mercy, met by hideous laughter and blasphemy. The streets were strewn with bodies lying in their own dried blood and dotted by drunken soldiers. At the end of the week the disorders mitigated somewhat, but they did not cease entirely for two months.



The Theatines, providentially, had been spared. They moved among ruffians; they rebuked; they threatened; they reproved; they bore in their hands the crucifix, which the heretics hated. Any one of these acts was enough to invite a cruel death. Yet these soldiers, who respected nothing sacred, became tame before the Theatines. There was on their countenance something that made them feared and respected.

Cajetan went to the most crowded streets and with crucifix in hand comforted the dying and rebuked the brutal. Caraffa made full use of his eloquence. His vigorous and majestic bearing seemed particularly fitted to calm the multitude. He went about among the prelates, consulting them as to what could be done to meet such an emergency. He even had influence with the soldiers of Charles V, for he had been in his court.

One day he met a group of Spanish soldiers who recognized him and knew of his prestige in Spain. Immediately they dropped to their knees and, according to the custom of their country, asked his blessing. The Bishop of Chieti was both angered and grieved that these men who were under excommunication should dare to approach him.

"How in the world can you, who are guilty of sacrilege, ask me to bless you, if you are cursed by God?" Then Caraffa, drawing his shoulders up and adding to his six-feet-plus stature, went his way, leaving the bewildered soldiers kneeling in the street.

That good friend of the Theatines, Bishop Giberti, had evaded the cruelty of the Imperial army for a time, but the invaders' malice caught up with him. They bound him with chains and condemned him to die on a scaffold in the public square, the Campo del Fiori. Fortunately, a

representative of the court of Charles V, fearing the consequences of the murder of a man so eminent, intervened. Giberti was brought as a prisoner to Castel Sant' Angelo.

Giberti and six other prelates were taken as hostages to guarantee the extortionate sum the Pope was required to pay for ransom. They were not actually delivered until September. At that time they were consigned to the Chancery, where they were treated filthily by the soldiers and where they remained until their escape the following November. The pope and his companions likewise succeeded in escaping from Sant' Angelo on December 6.

Toward the end of May, Cajetan and his companions saw that their preaching had failed to convert the heretics, that, if anything, the soldiers were becoming more violent. The Theatines decided to leave the streets and retire to their dwelling on the Pincian Hill, that they might give themselves up to prayer and penance. They hoped thus to obtain the conversions that did not come from their public ministry. They multiplied their prayers and watches, and protracted their scourgings, even to the shedding of blood.

The Theatines had laid aside no provisions and the desolation wrought by the imperial army was so complete that the Romans were starving. Before his imprisonment, Giberti, who knew well the poverty of his friends, repeatedly evaded the vigilance of the troops and sent them alms, but, being held prisoner for the greater part of the time, from June until November, he found his help was cut short. The little band was reduced to such want that on certain days the fathers had only a crust of bread to divide among the twelve of them. This did not dampen Cajetan's ardor. Characteristically he remarked: "Even if the entire city of Rome should perish, and with Rome the rest of the world, the Gospel will never perish, and it is the Gospel that assures us that they who expect food from Heaven shall receive it in the same manner as the birds are fed, without their having to harvest their grain."

A kindly Roman knew the poverty of the Theatines and that by their rule they were forbidden to beg. Though himself robbed of all he had, he noticed that when the soldiers looted shops and homes for food, they would in their haste allow large portions to fall to the ground. The man followed the looters and carried the lost booty to the hungry priests of Monte Pincio. The community table, poor in food, was rich in humility, poverty, patience, and trust in God.

It was not long before Cajetan and his men were to experience more directly the *furor teutonicus*. A renegade former servant of the Theatines, now a mercenary, made his way to the Theatine house. When the German Lutheran soldiery forced their entrance they were at first impressed by the courage and simplicity of the Theatines, but avarice won the day.

One of the soldiers insulted them and threatened them with death. Some of them brandished swords while others ran about the house overturning the furniture. Disappointed at finding no treasure, they wreaked their vengeance on the priests, and Cajetan was made to bear the brunt of their cruelty. They threw him on the ground, kicked and beat him, and threatened torture if he concealed his supposed wealth.

Cajetan replied with his customary dignity: "I do not deny that I once was rich . . . But four years ago I distributed everything I had to the poor out of love for Christ Crucified. Now I am not rich, except in the riches of God. If you wish to take this wealth for yourselves, you will be blessed, indeed. I not only wish to give you these riches but I am eager to do so. If you will repent, God will be altogether yours, and at the same time remain forever mine. In this way, you will become rich, and I shall remain with the only wealth I can claim."

Angered by this meek answer, the ex-servant consulted with the other soldiers as to the most effective method of torture. They stripped him and tied his hands behind his back. Taking a narrow chest, which they had found empty of coveted gold, and which they suspected had been

emptied just previous to their arrival, they attempted to force Cajetan's body into the narrow space, which was much too small for any human form. Cajetan's knees protruded from the instrument of torture, but the soldiers tried to fasten the lid over the cramped flesh. When they found it impossible to close the lid, they planned a peculiar atrocity. They tightened ropes about his private parts and, suspending the entire weight of the chest and the body over a beam, they raised and lowered their victim. After a surfeit of such brutalities the soldiers departed.

The other Theatines went immediately to rescue the body of their companion, for they feared that he might have died under this treatment. They released him from his torture chamber and, upon finding him alive, gave fervent thanks to God. They insisted upon putting him to bed, but Cajetan objected: "Dear Brothers, it is not a time of rest and quiet when such outrageous sins are being committed, but rather a time of prayer and penance.

Asked how he had been capable of enduring such pain, the saint answered that the Lord had instilled into his soul such joy for the privilege of suffering for other souls that he could not at times distinguish which was greater – the pain or the joy. For him, the worst pain was the unrepentance of his tormenters.

The Fathers were yet to suffer another attack from the mercenaries. When they were gathered in their chapel in the evening, they heard soldiers forcing an entrance. Although they expected violence like that of the previous visit, the Theatines did not move or show any sign that their privacy had been invaded. They would, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, accept whatever might come. Finding that insolence and boisterousness could not divert the Theatines' attention, the vandals cut the cords suspending the lamps and thus caused them to fall on the heads of the priests.

One soldier approached Father Boniface with an unsheathed sword and threatened to cut off his head, but the priest ignored him. The ruffian then turned the weapon so that he struck him with the flat instead of the cutting edge, while his companions grinned or shouted their approval.

Weary of their futile game, the soldiers bound the twelve priests and their guest, Giustiniani, who had been unable to return to his Camaldolese hermitage because of the general confusion and danger. Jerking, kicking, and insulting their victims, the vandals led them through the streets of Rome to a palace near the church and hospital of St. James of the Spaniards, in the Navona Square, where the Spanish captains had their residence. From here they were dragged again through the streets to the Vatican, by orders of the Spanish captain to whom they had been consigned.

Greater than all their sufferings was the agony they felt in seeing all parts of the Eternal City in ruins. In places, only gaunt skeletons of the former structures remained. No public buildings or private homes had been spared. The hour was dark for the Capital of Christendom. Everything these loyal sons of the Church held dear had been desecrated or destroyed. The absence of the Holy Father, who had been humiliated and was being held in captivity, weighed on their spirits.

But they were spared a longer view of this distressing sight, for they were conducted to a tiny room located over the great Vatican clock; it had no passage to the pontifical apartments. There the soldiers left the captives, with little thought of caring for their necessities. The Spanish captain hoped by this treatment to exact a greater sum from Bishop Caraffa for their ransom.

The Theatines never revealed all they endured while in this prison, but there is evidence that they suffered cruelly. The famous Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, in his account of the sack of Rome, states: "The heretics dared to imprison many holy men, among whom was the Count of Thiene, founder of the Clerks Regular, on whom these barbarians visited every type of injury."

In filth and privation, the unfortunate priests remained in interior peace. Their only possession – their Breviaries – in hand, they raised their voices in unison, like Paul in the jails of Macedonia. They sang aloud the praises of the Lord, for they knew that life could not remain long with them under present conditions.

But this was not the end. Some time later the captain who had imprisoned them invited a Spanish colonel of the army of Charles V to dine with him in the Vatican apartment he had seized. During mealtime, the colonel's attention was drawn to a rhythmic monotone, apparently of male voices. Charmed, he listened for some time and then inquired who was singing and what kind of music this might be. The captain answered: "They are clerics, and what is more they are part of *my* booty."

The colonel curiously demanded that he be shown the room in which they were held prisoners. At the sight of the clerics peacefully chanting the Psalms in their dingy and crowded quarters, he was both bewildered and edified. As he studied their emaciated faces, he asked the captain to release them immediately. But the captain, having in mind his hoped-for ransom, tried to stall. The colonel suspected the reason for the delay and became imperious. The officer then opened the door, and the Theatines were at liberty.



The priests went forthwith to St. Peter's to give thanks and celebrate Mass. That venerable basilica was a place of desolation and ruin. Cajetan and Caraffa held a meeting of the Theatines and consulted whether or not they should leave Rome. They decided that they could do no good in the city and resolved on a speedy departure.

Like true apostles, the twelve placed their entire confidence in God and faced the future with determination. There were still parts of the world in which they could work. God would prove the indestructibility of His Church either by restoring devastated Rome or by effecting a triumph elsewhere. They left St. Peter's penniless, save for their Breviaries. They abandoned forever the house on the Pincian Hill and made their way to the Tiber. When they reached the river, a friend, whose writings indicate him to have been Cardinal Colonna, provided them with a boat and gave them directions on the best route out of Rome. But they still had no food, which they had not tasted since the last bread and water were given to them in prison. As they floated along, they neared the harbor of Ostia. Here they met a blockading vessel, sent to capture ships leaving Rome with loot. The priests feared that they might have fallen into the hands of an enemy and might again be imprisoned. Suddenly, a volley from the ship's guns was heard. As the Theatines had no guns with which to return the fire, the captain soon realized that he was making an attack on unarmed men. He stopped the fire and went to meet the vessel. Upon seeing the utter destitution of the priests, he was moved to compassion and gave them food and provisions for the rest of the voyage.

When the clerics reached port, they were fortunate enough to meet Dominic Vernier, the Venetian Ambassador to the Roman Court, a man of great virtue, prudence, and ability in affairs of state. He had fled from Rome when his palace was robbed and his life endangered. Since the Venetian Republic maintained an army at the service of the League of Cambrai, it had sent two galleys to the mouth of the Tiber a few days before the sack of Rome. This measure was taken that Venetian prelates and statesmen might have a means of egress should negotiations for peace fail. But when the savage hordes fell upon the city, the men were unable to reach the galleys. At the first moment of confusion, Vernier, with some of his countrymen, took refuge in the palace of Idabelle of Mantua. Before long, Mark Grimani, the Procurator of the Venetian Republic,

disguised as a servant, managed the escape of the Marchioness, Vernier, and himself, along with others.

There were also at Ostia other clergy and statesmen who had by one means or another escaped from Rome, so that altogether a considerable number were preparing to sail for Venice. Vernier and the ship's commander now seemed the interpreters of the Divine Will in regard to the future of the Theatines, who did not know which way to go or where to establish themselves. When, therefore, Vernier, who was well acquainted with the Fathers, insisted that they begin anew in Venice, the Theatines accepted the offer as a special intervention of Providence.



The ship reached Venice in the summer of 1527. Authors disagree on the exact route taken by the Fathers. It is evident, however, that Giustiniani did not make the complete trip but went by way of Tuscia, then through the Adriatic, to join the Camaldolese at the Grotte. This was the last farewell the Theatines bade their friend, for the holy hermit died a year later. Upon their arrival, the clerics found it necessary to accept any hospitality that might be offered them. The procurator of the Hospital of the Incurables gave them temporary lodging on St. Clement's Island in the lagoon not far from the Giudecca, and the Confraternity of Charity at the hospital gave them a small amount of money.

The Venetians were glad to learn that Cajetan was once more with them. They remembered the benefits he brought to the republic by the dissolution of the League of Cambrai and in obtaining the forgiveness of the Holy See, as well as through the work he had done for public charity. The saint found, when he appeared on the streets, that the people were prepared to demonstrate their gratitude publicly. But when some over-enthusiastic admirers attempted to kiss his hands, Cajetan fled.

Many of the nobility urged him to come to their palaces as a guest. They argued that he was badly in need of care and proper food after the hardships of the siege of Rome and the fatiguing journey. To their importunity Cajetan replied that it was not for him to rest when he had chosen the Cross as his guide. But he was unable to escape the veneration of the Venetian Senate, and many learned men who came to him for spiritual direction also consulted him in affairs of state.

The residence on St. Clement's Island was intended only as a temporary shelter, and as soon as arrangements could be made the religious moved to St. Euphemia, the parish church of the section known as the Giudecca and just across the canal from the Hospital of the Incurables.

Here the community admitted to their profession the two novices, Jerome Consiglieri and Andrew Verso, who had gone with them through the troubles of Rome. Also accepted as candidates at this time were a Spaniard, given the name of James; two Venetians, Philip and Mark; a Veronese, Bartolomeo; and a Sicilian priest named Ambrose Guerrieri. Even before the community was settled in its new location, the cemetery of the Church of St. Euphemia was opened August 17 to receive the body of Brother Peter Perugino, the first Theatine to go to his eternal reward. The second death was that of Matteo Servall, who had taken the name of Anthony at his profession on September 15, 1528, and died the following February.

The Theatines changed their residence to the Benedictine Abbey Church of St. Gregory on August 30, 1528. The church was held *in commendam*, but the commendatory abbot was seldom seen in the church. Instead he paid a pastor to take care of it. The Venetians were anxious to have the community of Clerks Regular established at this church. The problem of their income would not interfere with the financial arrangements previously existing, since the clerics lived by the

free offerings of the faithful. In this way, also, the pastor's honorarium would be saved for the abbot.

Three years had elapsed since Caraffa had been elected superior. The constitutions called for another election. A general chapter was held September 14, 1527. Cajetan was chosen as the new superior, and Caraffa and the others pledged him obedience.

Cajetan found the house at St. Gregory's too small, and thus an obstacle to their religious observances. Since they were not in full charge of the church they were likewise limited in their pastoral work. They therefore went in search of a place better adapted to their type of institute. Providence put in their way the Church of St. Nicholas of Tolentino and the surrounding buildings, which were offered them by the confraternity of that church.

Under Cajetan's direction the premises were thoroughly renovated and embellished. Soon the reverence and decorum of the clerics were observable. Those who visited the church began to remark that they really felt the holiness and majesty of God there. Immense crowds were drawn to St. Nicholas. Monsignor Caracciolo related that there was such a demand on their time that when Cajetan's relatives came from Vicenza to pay him a visit they scarcely succeeded in seeing him except at the altar. Although the fathers were self-sacrificing in ministering to the spiritual needs of the faithful, they were never seen on the main streets or public places save when their zeal for souls required it. This extreme retirement gained for them the name of "The Tolentine Hermits."

Cajetan was known for his charity in hearing confessions. When the penitent deserved very grave penances, which Cajetan feared he would not willingly perform, Cajetan diminished the satisfaction and obligated himself to assume the rest. He mortified himself relentlessly and begged God to accept the offering he was making for the sins of another. This charity he practiced toward all whom he judged in need of it. In general, the work of the Theatines with souls always showed greater leniency than the custom of that time allowed in regard to severe penances. As has been said before, they were likewise far ahead of their time in insisting on frequent Communion.

The solitude of the cloister was a genuine source of delight to the early Theatines. Caraffa wrote his sister that "the charity of Christ has bound us together so firmly that we are all one soul in the Lord."

Girolamo Maggio, a man of eminent learning and virtue, has left the following description of the lives of the first Theatines:

The rule they profess is this: They are exact and pious toward God, to whom they render the rich tribute of a sincere and true worship with all their hearts, minds, and souls. They are solicitous for the acquisition and maintenance of virtue. They show the width of the kingdom of their charity by continual help of neighbor. . . . Despising riches and pleasure, they love the poverty they profess; they undertake enterprises only for the glory of God and the charity that they hold toward one another. . . . They conform to the same manner of dress and partake of all meals in common. But the source of unbounded admiration has been that, although they do not have anything upon which they can rely with any degree of surety, they live with all their hopes staked on Providence. They receive from their benefactors only what is necessary for their daily livelihood. Thus, having no possession except their incomparable virtue, they live with all their thoughts and desires fixed on God.

The expense involved in establishing themselves in the new dwelling and in making both the church and the house fit their needs was considerable. Daily donations were not sufficient to pay

all their debts. This condition was relieved when a wealthy Venetian, who in his will had left the greater share of his possessions to various religious institutions, donated fifty ducats, a sum that came in time of dire need. At the time of the Venetian foundation they were truly in God's hands.



The Somaschan, Father Andrew Stella, in his biography of the founder of his institute, St. Jerome Emiliani, leaves a vivid and gripping description of the great famine that desolated the Italian Peninsula in 1528. The constant wars had rendered production nil, and want spread throughout Italy. The Milanese were in such need that the people were reduced to eating the flesh of donkeys, or even of dogs and mice. The city of Venice suffered least, but its good fortune was the product of its wisdom and charity rather than chance.

It was the custom among the Venetians that, when the city was struck by an emergency, the government would use public funds, managed by a relief board. The city had attained a reputation for a wise and pious charity.

As a result, when the inhabitants of the surrounding territories were starving, they poured into Venice to find relief. Multitudes of foreigners, filthy and emaciated from long starvation, crowded the streets with the image of death on their faces. Cajetan ordered everything in the house, even the offerings of the faithful, to be distributed to the poor. He left the community's own welfare to Providence.

Besides the distributions made from the Theatines' own slender provisions, Cajetan solicited the rich, and funds were not withheld from him. He was always seen amid the multitude of the starving, who continuously besieged St. Nicholas of Tolentino. The amazed Venetian patricians considered it a miracle that Cajetan, without funds and forbidden by rule to beg for himself and his community, could succor the tremendous number of poor who came to him.

Swift upon the heels of famine sped a terrible pestilence, which had begun in 1528 and raged in Venice for three years. When the city fell victim to its ravages, all public buildings were closed and the streets were deserted; only the cemeteries remained open. Cajetan's compassionate heart was moved. There was no one to administer the sacraments to these poor people, to comfort them in their suffering, to assist them during the final passage to eternity. To the *lazaretti* went this saint and his fellows. He called the places the "kingdom of charity" and he often jestingly lamented: "Cajetan is just one man, but I wish he were a hundred." In truth, he did seem to multiply his personality a hundredfold, for he was a priest to the dying, a servant and nurse to the sick, a doctor to those not too badly off, and a friend or relative to those who were starving for affection. He even followed them beyond the portals of death. While wearing the clothes of a grave-digger, he, like Tobias, took on his shoulders the dead bodies and buried them in the cemetery.

Cajetan's charity bore two remarkable characteristics. First were fortitude and an unconquerable will. He spent many hours with the unfortunate, without food or rest, that they might not be left alone. Second was evidently a special divine assistance, for he and his companions – only twelve in number – escaped all contagion, despite the fact that they heard the confessions of the plague-infected face-to-face and did not attempt to protect themselves in the necessarily close contact of extreme unction.



While Cajetan was superior in Venice the walls of the Theatines' house threatened to crumble unless they could be immediately repaired. A gentleman agreed to loan them forty ducats to save the walls. Scarcely had Cajetan completed the repair when the man came and demanded instant payment. The saint had nothing with which to pay and begged him to have patience. He promised the man that within a few days he would be able to meet the debt. When his visitor became irate Cajetan promised that if he were allowed time to have recourse to Providence he would be able to pay in full. These words did not mollify the creditor. When he found nothing but a prayer as surety of payment, he threatened to put Cajetan in a debtors' prison. Cajetan calmly told the man to come back the next day at a certain hour and he would be paid in full.

Just before the hour, Cajetan returned to prayer and renewed his confidence in the promises of the Gospel to those who first seek the kingdom of God. While still kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the porter calling him. Cajetan supposed that he was being summoned for a sick call. But when he reached the door he met a handsome youth who greeted him courteously and said: "Take this, Father, as an alms that God sends you to help you in your necessity." The youth then disappeared before the eyes of the astonished community.

At just this hour the incensed creditor arrived to demand his money and witnessed the strange event. Cajetan opened the letter in the presence of his creditor and found folded in the paper the exact sum of money needed for payment. The forty ducats were immediately handed over to the man, with the gentle remark that Providence is always swift and liberal to those who trust in it.

The poor man, bewildered by the miracle and softened by Cajetan's gentleness, returned the entire sum to the saint, with the remark that the money should be used for the needs of the community.

The modern Theatines have lost none of their founder's ability to get money out of nowhere. Working in the poorest sections of the slums of Mexico City, they have built two large debt-free churches, to the never-ceasing astonishment of visitors.



When the Imperial army of the League of Cambrai assaulted and took the fortress of Castelnuovo in Griuli, it was bravely defended by a young Venetian noble, Girolamo (Jerome) Emiliani. By command of Emperor Charles V, who was enraged by the bravery of Jerome's defense, the youth was bound in chains and made prisoner in a great dark tower, where he was given only bread and water.

Alone, hungry, in pain from his heavy chains, tormented by the cruelty of his guards, Jerome had recourse to the Queen of Heaven. He promised her that, if she assisted him in this necessity, he would go barefoot on a pilgrimage to her Treviso shrine and that he would amend a life that appeared to him in his solitude grotesquely ambitious, licentious, and selfish. Hardly had he pledged himself when the Blessed Virgin appeared, holding a few keys in her outstretched hand. She said simply: "With these you will unlock the chains and doors that hold you; but be sure that you keep your promise."

Jerome humbly thanked the Heavenly Queen, used the keys to obtain his freedom, and made his way to Treviso. As he journeyed on, weak, hungry, fatigued, he saw forms moving in the distance. It was the army of the enemy. They were too close for him to flee. He fell on his knees and for the second time implored the Heavenly Mother to come to his aid. She immediately appeared, rendered him invisible to the army, and led him to a spot within sight of the city of Treviso.

Not long after, Jerome, who had heard of the poverty and austerity of the Theatines, visited them in Venice. He selected Caraffa for his spiritual director, whose advice he followed implicitly. Cajetan and Caraffa held long conferences in regard to Jerome and they agreed that he possessed heroic virtue. But somehow they did not seem to consider him a likely candidate for their order. A word from Caraffa might have brought about his entrance, but Caraffa did not say the word.

On one occasion, when Jerome was engaged in a long conversation with the Fathers, he spoke of the numerous children who were orphaned by the plague. He remarked how these little ones were abandoned by society and were reaching maturity without profession or trade. Through lack of parental care, they became juvenile delinquents. Emiliani entrusted to his Theatine friends his secret design of providing for these unfortunates through a religious community with members whose lives would be consecrated to their care.

Cajetan encouraged him to go ahead, in spite of the difficulties anticipated. His word was law to Emiliani, and he backed it up by persuasive arguments that completely removed any doubts. The trio, Cajetan, Caraffa, and Emiliani, met repeatedly after this and made plans for the new congregation. Though Jerome placed himself in the hands of Caraffa for his spiritual direction, he looked to Cajetan to formulate the rules of the new institute, as regards both the education and care of the children and the sanctification of the religious. Though in time the Somaschans, as the new order came to be called, were able to be independent of Theatine guidance, the intimate relationship continued, and after the death of St. Jerome Emiliani there was a temporary affiliation of the two orders.



While the Theatines were being established in Venice, their friend, Giberti, was still a prisoner in Rome. In his suffering and solitude he had but one desire – that of returning to his see and the care of his flock. Since this was impossible, he had managed to send word to Caraffa to visit Verona in his stead. Caraffa gave his promise, but he had delayed its execution because of the extraordinary demand made on his time at Venice. But Giberti, in his lonely prison, hoped that Caraffa was in Verona, and sent him this message: “If I had the happiness of hearing that my Spouse (the Diocese of Verona) is enjoying the privilege of your presence . . . I would be able to thank the good Lord for the chains I have to wear.”

Spurred on by Giberti, Caraffa fulfilled his promise before the first of the year 1528. It was a marvelous thing in the eyes of the Veronese to see a bishop without an income from his diocese, without retinue or servants, without equipage. They saw a bishop who maintained the respect due his office by the sanctity of his life, the intrepidity of his zeal, and the sublimity of his doctrine. They sensed the worth of this unusual prelate and sought his blessing and advice.

In the meantime, Giberti and his six companions escaped from their Vatican prison. On November 29, Cardinal Pompeo Colonna learned that the German soldiers guarding the Chancery were lying drunk after a sumptuous banquet. He took advantage of the chance thus offered. He let a rope down through the chimney to a fireplace in the room holding the prisoners, and the bishop and his companions climbed up the rope one by one to the roof. They fled to Narni, and from there Giberti went to his diocese.

Caraffa and the Bishop of Verona planned a complete reform of the diocese. The Veronese were blessed in having two of the greatest prelates of Italy united in zeal, knowledge, and experience. This friendship gave consolation and strength to Giberti. Since he was the first to attempt systematically and unrelentingly the reform of the old abuses, he provoked insults and

was forced to witness a bitter revolt. Caraffa, with his indomitable will and utter disregard for human respect, imbued him with the spirit to continue when the undertaking seemed impossible. But even with Caraffa's support, the reforming Bishop of Verona was to have many sleepless nights in lonely affliction.

He met opposition from those in authority whose support he needed most. In the rebellious faction was the governor, by birth a Venetian noble, who had been excommunicated for his scandalous life. This man felt only contempt for ecclesiastical authority and, in extenuation, it could be said that he had long been a witness of the general looseness of clerical morals. He was thus inclined to placate his conscience and to regard excommunication only as a threat the Church waved at the laity to frighten them into a submission, which he considered it the part of strength and wisdom to despise. He refused to go either to the church or to the bishop's palace to ask absolution. The two prelates decided that this could not go on. For the sake of the people, they agreed that, wherever either of them might meet him, if it were in a situation that presented any possible means of approaching him, they would give him absolution immediately.

One day, as Caraffa and Giberti were walking along the street, they descried the approaching figure of the governor. Caraffa's countenance grew stern as he thought of the way in which the offender had despised the voice of Mother Church. Though a humble religious, he could raise his head higher than any crowned head of the world over a matter concerning religion.

Caraffa fixed his eyes on the governor and began to rebuke him in a commanding tone: "You, who do not fear God, do not deserve respect from your fellowmen. He does not respect anyone who stubbornly resists the holy Catholic Church." Then in his thundering voice he ordered: "Kneel down immediately where you are and ask forgiveness from your bishop." Running the risk that the governor was a little rusty in his Latin, he added in an undertone to Giberti: "*Increpa eum dure*" (rebuke him harshly). But the milder Giberti felt that he had nothing to add. He only fastened his gaze on the humiliated governor, who was kneeling in the street and looking up at him for pardon.

What caused the obstinate governor to become suddenly so meek? He confessed afterwards that he had been overcome by the commanding bearing of the Bishop of Chieti, whom he revered as a man of sanctity. The fact of the matter was that people did not resist Caraffa – the person whom a Florentine ambassador once described as a "man of iron, and the very stones over which he walks emit sparks that could cause a conflagration if his wishes were not carried out." In fact, Caraffa's only "wishes" were for the spread of the kingdom of God and His justice and the sparks were emitted to destroy only the enemies of the kingdom.

The Bishop of Chieti did not remain long in Verona. When he returned to the Theatine family, he left Giberti helpless and alone. The Veronese bishop felt the need in his diocese of the Clerks Regular, whom he had heartily wished to join. He sent a letter to Cajetan pleading with him to send a few Fathers to Verona to open a house there. Having seen the good accomplished by Caraffa alone, he hoped that their foundation would bring his diocese the blessings it needed.

Cajetan immediately sent Boniface of Colle as superior, accompanied by seven other Fathers.

According to a custom observed by the Theatines, upon their arrival in the city they took up their lodging at a hospital, this time the Hospital of Mercy. Shortly afterwards, they were given the church and the adjoining house of St. Mary of Nazareth.

The new branch of the order at Verona suffered much from the vow of poverty, since the Veronese were not aware of the strictness of the vow that forbade them to beg or to make known their wants. Since St. Mary of Nazareth was situated a short distance from the city, the faithful were left unaware that the religious suffered from lack of food and other necessities. But

Providence did not leave them entirely alone. A certain nobleman of Verona, Count Jerome Giusti, sent his servant with food, giving orders that the supplies be left secretly in an old cupboard that was at the entrance of the house. Great was the Fathers' joy and gratitude when they happened for the first time on these remembrances on their heretofore bare shelves. Often they found there a gift from their unknown benefactor. When they found no supplies, they gave thanks nevertheless, happy to feel the inconvenience and suffering of the poverty they had vowed.

The members of the struggling community were not long in winning the esteem of the townsfolk by their devotion to pastoral duties, but most of all by the sound spiritual advice they gave their penitents. Except for the Theatines' extreme poverty, all continued well during the winter and early spring. But when the season changed and the balmy Veronese evening invited merrymaking, they found to their chagrin that the spacious and beautiful square in front of their church was used as an open park for festivity. The people gathered there for dances and sports, to say nothing of milder recreations. The Fathers tried to convince them that their festivities were highly improper at the very door of the church. But the custom was time-approved and deeply grooved in Veronese social life; the populace disregarded the admonitions.

Boniface of Colle saw that it was impossible to eradicate these inveterate customs and so informed Cajetan. He also complained that the noise was disturbing the quiet of their institute and interfering with their spiritual exercises.

Cajetan immediately replied that the Theatines should return to Venice forthwith, since the proper observance of their rule was imperative and should be preferred to making an outwardly successful foundation in a famous city. When the Fathers received this reply they took advantage of Giberti's absence, and abandoned Verona before they would have to argue the matter out with the zealous bishop, who would undoubtedly endeavor to keep them there.

Despite their brief stay in Verona, it was through the Theatines' efforts and influence that the diocese was able to put through a rigorous program of reform. In 1530, when the canons of the cathedral refused to co-operate in Giberti's reform projects, Caraffa accepted the invitation to intervene. He presented his *transactio Gibertina*, which ultimately became the basis of reconciliation, although permanent peace did not result until 1531.

At this time Caraffa, then superior at Venice, found it necessary to send Cajetan to assist Giberti in completing his work of building up a model diocese. Opposition had become violent. After trying gentleness and kindness and finding that mildness only strengthened his recalcitrant subjects in rebellion, the bishop resorted to excommunication in extreme cases. But the resistance of his subjects to the voice of the Church indicated that the wound from which the diocese was suffering was a desperate one.

The case seemed beyond hope, and Clement, who loved Giberti, thought it impossible to calm the storm. Fearing that the good bishop's life was at stake, the pope ordered his secretary to write to the Veronese bishop to command him to abandon Verona to its obstinacy and to return to Rome, where his life would not be in danger. When Giberti received the letter, his first impulse was to obey immediately and turn Romewards. But he retained a paternal love for his unruly flock and resolved to make a final effort at reconciliation. He knew that Cajetan was loved and revered by the Veronese. Accordingly, he wrote to Caraffa and pleaded with him to send Cajetan at once. The saint realized that he had an arduous task ahead. Before bidding farewell to his companions in Venice he prayed long and fervently and practiced bodily chastisement in a plea for divine mercy on the rebels.

Upon reaching Verona, he visited one embittered citizen after another. His natural eloquence made him the arbitrator of warring opinions. By patience and fortitude he overcame the authors of discord. The clergy and laity were again in the fold and obedient and respectful to their rightful bishop.

Cajetan remained in Verona long enough into the year 1531 to assure himself that the harmony he had established would last. Many persons, after all, who were of standing and influence – including the Pope himself – had failed to bring peace to the diocese. Its final realization was therefore not unnaturally acclaimed a great triumph. All Verona rose in applause. But the Theatine hurried away from these demonstrations.

Through the help of the Theatines, the diocese of Verona became the admiration of all later reformers of the secular clergy. Other dioceses followed its example and Giberti's regulations were used as a pattern. His decrees were set forth in a book translated under the title, *The Model of the Good Shepherd*, which St. Charles Borromeo, the great protagonist of the Catholic Reform, used as a guide in framing the rules necessary for the maintenance of sound discipline. The same book was used as a fundamental code of reform by the Council of Trent. The admiration of St. Charles for the reformed diocese went so far that he placed the portrait of its bishop in his study, that he might have always before his eyes one whom he considered a perfect prelate.



Cajetan, either through preaching or private conferences, was meanwhile bringing many unbelievers back to orthodoxy. Monsignor Thomas Caracciolo has left us a striking example of this work. In Venice, a Greek schismatic and heretic, whose name Caracciolo does not reveal, attempted to hide his unbelief by a show of external sanctity. Though he was a layman, he succeeded in misleading many. Moved by an internal impulse, Cajetan went to confer with the schismatic in order to bring him to repentance. He was first careful to greet him courteously but cautiously until he had won his confidence. Gently and firmly arguing points of doctrine, he uncovered the errors of the heretic and gradually overcame his obstinacy. The saint made it a point to meet him again and again and to answer his questions and objections patiently and kindly. Winning him over, Cajetan received him into his own Theatine house and consigned him to the care of Caraffa who was well capable of finishing with vigor and pertinacity the work Cajetan had begun with gentleness and love. Venice was bewildered as the news trickled through the city that the man who had been applauded as a saint had retired to the Tolentine house and, dressed in sackcloth, was doing penance for his sins in leading others away from the true faith.

About the same time, visitors from Germany sought out Cajetan to tell him that Luther had just translated the four Gospels into German with the intention of spreading his false interpretations throughout the country. Immediately Cajetan began to concentrate his efforts on the study and interpretation of the New Testament. He made it a custom for his religious to carry a copy with them and encouraged the seculars to form the same habit. The Theatines read all four Gospels every month. They meditated daily on one chapter, and then proceeded to preach its true meaning to the people. Meditation on the Scriptures had been routine in the lives of the religious, but special stress was placed on their study at this time for the express purpose of counteracting those heretics who were perverting the meaning of the text.

In insisting on the daily carrying about of the New Testament, Cajetan was merely renewing apostolic life. This was an established custom among the early Christians. St. Barnabas, St. John

Chrysostom, St. Cecilia, Theophila, as well as the pious Emperors Theodosius and Justinian all observed this practice.



The Fathers realized that the strict manner of life to which they adhered was one meant for only a few. Hence they did not expect their institute to grow rapidly. Rather, they held to the principle that it was better for them to accept a small number of select individuals who would be able to continue the austerity begun by the founders. Many youths, however, did not find the ideal too high for their attainment.

One of them in this period was John Marinoni, who has since been beatified. The prelates gathered at the Council of Trent proposed Father Marinoni as a model and example to be imitated by all who preach the Gospel in the Catholic Church.

Striking in appearance was another early candidate, Bernardo da Todi. His gigantic size had earned for him the nickname of Bernardone or Big Bernard. The great-hearted Bernardone had formulated and lived his own rule of life. He was accustomed to observe unusual austerity. He walked barefoot through Italy as a pilgrim, wore a hairshirt, dressed in sackcloth, and carried on his shoulders a huge heavy cross. In this way he intended to imitate the painful journey of Our Lord to Calvary. His public demonstrations of penance made his name known over the entire country, at a time when such public exhibitions were considered in a far different light than in the twentieth century.

By the time he had arrived in Venice, Cajetan had already heard much about Bernardone and desired to seek him out. After listening to him, Cajetan knew that he had a good spirit but lacked guidance. He told him: "I cannot approve your roaming about the world without a spiritual guide to keep you from error. To seek guidance from your own conscience is like asking direction from the blind. Choose a fixed abode and then place yourself under a wise and experienced director. In this way, you will purify your virtue and your penance from all trace of self-will. Your actions will certainly merit more from God if they are clothed with Holy Obedience."

Bernardone wavered, but he was still not convinced that his way of life should be changed. Cajetan did not abandon him. He managed to meet the wanderer often and each time he would gently mention to him that his manner of life should be changed. Cajetan had discovered a strength of soul in this giant of a man which surpassed that of his huge body. At last Big Bernard saw the light, and on his knees bluntly put the question to the saint: "Will you admit this vagrant into your community?"

Cajetan kindly encouraged him, but first he placed him on severe probation. Finally he received him as a lay brother and explained to him: "Instead of bearing the heavy wooden cross on your shoulders, you shall henceforth carry the sweet, mysterious cross of Christ in your heart. This second cross will prove even more meritorious than the first, because upon it you will crucify your will, your senses, your passions."

The converted itinerant did not disappoint the community. His life under obedience was austere, humble, and pious. After twenty-five years the exacting Caraffa, then Pope Paul IV, deemed him worthy of the office of Secret Chamberlain at the Vatican. During Big Bernard's stay there he refused any mark of distinction and continued to wear his simple black cassock. He occupied the smallest room and partook of the plainest food. When his duties permitted he slipped away to a chapel to converse with God. After the death of Paul IV he hurried back to his beloved cloister where he remained until the end of his life.



Upon leaving Verona, after the pacification of the diocese, Cajetan chose a route back to Venice that took him through his childhood home. The news of his passing through Vicenza had reached the ears of his relatives and friends and they were delighted at the thought of receiving him into their homes, for his sanctity had by this time earned an undisputed reputation. Lavish preparations were made for his reception. As Cajetan neared Vicenza and heard of these demonstrations, he directed his steps toward the hospital and contented himself there. His disappointed relatives complained bitterly, but the saint was true to his first purpose and refused to be the object of splendid entertainment.

Back in Venice, Cajetan continued his work in the hospitals. He maintained besides the same busy routine of preaching, administration of the sacraments, prayer, and bodily mortifications. Caraffa meanwhile watched him with meticulous vigilance. In writing to the Dominican Father, Bartholomew Spina, in September, 1532, he stated: "In sending you Cajetan, I am making it possible for you to see the spirit of all the brethren in our religious institute."

It was at Venice that the work of revising, correcting, and reforming the forms of liturgical worship as imposed on the Theatines at the founding of their institute was begun. No part of divine worship was left untouched. Caraffa was in the foreground in this work, where he employed his fluent command of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew and his detailed knowledge of Scripture. But Bernard Scotto bent manfully to what must have been a tedious task. Along with his knowledge of Latin, he assiduously mastered Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic in order to render more exact service. Cajetan's familiarity with the Scriptures made him a figure in this work to some degree, although his time was given largely to strictly priestly functions and the administrative duties of the house.

In spite of this strenuous work, the Theatines continued their practice of reading a complete Gospel each week. They spread devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and popularized the practice of the Forty Hours' Devotion. It was they who made general the custom of preaching in a surplice; formerly, clerics had preached in ordinary garb.

After Cajetan's term of office had expired (1530), Caraffa was elected superior a second time. Caraffa was one whose influence could not be stifled, whether as subject or as superior. During his superiorship, the house of St. Nicholas of Tolentino became a meeting place for men of outstanding virtue and ability. Nor did Caraffa confine himself to the boundaries of Venice. His spirit soared like an eagle over all Christendom and his keen eyes fixed on every important movement that was going forward in the Church.

The activities in which he anticipated a participation caused him to obtain some very special permissions from Clement VII. Among them the following may be noted:

- faculties to absolve in reserved cases;
- permission to reform the hermits of Dalmatia;
- supervision of the Greeks then residing in Venice;
- dispensation for the members of his order from attendance at Divine Office in favor of the intensive work they were performing in rectifying the canonical hours.

VI

The Fire Spreads

✠ *He shone in his days as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full. And as the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God . . . And about him was the ring of his brethren: . . . And as branches of palm trees, they stood round him (Ecclus. 1:7 – 14).*

Caraffa was a Neapolitan by birth and always retained some interest in the affairs of his native city. On their part, the Neapolitans were intensely interested in the career of their illustrious son and on many occasions had requested him to send a band of Theatines to Naples to erect a foundation there. The Fathers, however, felt that they had all the work they could handle with their few numbers and had consistently answered in the negative. But the city would not be satisfied. Its most eminent theologian, Father Seripandi of the Augustinians, was sent to intercede for them. Still, the Clerks Regular insisted that they were not yet capable of the undertaking and delayed four years longer. An unusual incident was to be the occasion of their making the final decision.

There was in Naples a priest, Benedict Tizzone, from the town of Fondi, who had gained some recognition for his knowledge of languages. But more to his credit was the fact that he had merited the reputation of a virtuous life. He, with a few secular clerics, resolved to retire from the world and live together in a rather indefinitely shaped kind of religious life. They chose as the site of their cloister the Church of St. Mary of Mercy. Although Tizzone lacked money and material, he attempted to build a house close to the church, in the confidence that God would provide what was needed. His work came to the attention of the Count of Oppido in Calabria, John Anthony Caracciolo, who, on seeing the zeal and earnestness of Benedict, exclaimed: "This man is not a cold Tizzone [the name in Italian signifies a hall-burnt stump of wood] but a burning one." The pious count was impressed enough to be induced to complete the structure at his expense, and it was not long until the clerics were able to begin their community life.

As Tizzone had no set rules for his religious family, and as he had heard of the austere, apostolic lives of the Theatines, he decided to visit them in Venice in order to observe their manner of life. The count, to whom Tizzone felt answerable on account of his benevolence, heartily approved the plan, and the founder set out for Venice with the intention of soon returning to Naples.

Once in Venice, however, Benedict discovered that God had designed things otherwise. As the stranger cleric observed the well-regulated lives and rigid poverty of his hosts, he began to feel a growing unanimity in all their actions. He respected their exactitude in worship and admired their angelic blending of the active and contemplative life. Instead of returning to

Naples as a founder of a new congregation, he asked for the grace of admittance into the Theatines' house and for the privilege of changing his name of Benedict to that of Severo, which he considered more symbolic of the austere life he was to assume.

Back in Naples the count was perplexed by the unexpected news, but instead of feeling that his charity had been thrown away, he was determined that the house he had sponsored should be given over to the Theatines for a new foundation. Knowing the reluctance of the clerics to come to Naples, he decided to exert pressure. He wrote to Mary Caraffa, in the thought that she might influence her brother; he interviewed members of the nobility and had them put the request in writing; and he insisted that seven of the most prominent men of the city sign the document.

When the Fathers received this last appeal, they felt they must listen to so urgent an invitation. But Cajetan still had one point to settle. "Since our society," he said, "is immediately subject to the Holy See, it would be better, in this very important matter, to depend for our final decision on the Roman Pontiff, who is the surest oracle and most faithful interpreter of the Divine Will."

To fulfill this last condition, they wrote to Giberti, who was then in Rome, and asked him to present the petition of the Neapolitans to the Pope, as well as the difficulties the order foresaw in its acceptance. Since Clement VII had been unduly occupied after his return from Bologna, where he had resided after the sack of Rome, it was impossible for Giberti to obtain an immediate audience. Because of this delay, the Neapolitans feared that the Fathers had disregarded their plea and did not intend to come. They hurriedly sent a delegation to Rome to entreat the pope to send the Theatines to Naples under obedience. No sooner had they arrived than Giberti likewise came with his request. Importuned on all sides, His Holiness responded by a brief of February 11, 1533, giving the Theatines the singular privilege of caring for all the churches that would be given them by the city of Naples and commanding them under virtue of holy obedience to take up this new charge.

Caraffa, superior at Venice, chose Cajetan for the Neapolitan experiment and gave him the privilege of choosing his companion. Although the offer was a kind and considerate one, it wounded the heart of one who had been used to fulfilling another's will since childhood, and Cajetan exclaimed: "O my Lord, never let it happen that I choose a companion according to my own liking." He turned to the crucifix and prayed: "Jesus, grant me the grace to obtain as my companion the one whom Thou knowest to be the most contrary to my own judgment and ideas." But the Lord was to give as his companion the saintly John Marinoni, whom Cajetan loved profoundly.

Some ardent souls who did not comprehend the depth of Cajetan's humility congratulated him on his new appointment. Characteristically he replied: "The Lord has indeed proved Himself the wisest of architects, for in the raising of a new building the workmen first throw into the foundation the roughest and most useless stone, good only for filler. In like manner, the Omniscient wishes to use the most imperfect stone first for the foundation of the institute at Naples. Afterwards, He will raise an edifice of the most precious and polished marble, the Fathers who are truly holy and most profitable to the world."

The two pioneers left Venice August 2, 1533, accompanied by the good wishes of the citizens by whom they were revered and loved. The journey across Italy in the sixteenth century was a time-consuming, tedious, and painful one. It was even dangerous in the severe August heat. The Congregation of Rites goes so far as to state that "it was a prodigy of Providence that through their virtue of obedience they arrived in Naples safe and sound."

Upon reaching Rome, their first thought was to visit Bishop Giberti, to whom the Theatines were deeply indebted. The bishop in turn was overjoyed at seeing Cajetan, to whom he was

equally indebted for restoring peace to his diocese. After their happy meeting, Giberti conducted his guests to an audience with the Holy Father. Upon seeing the tired, sweaty, bronzed, dust-streaked faces, the pope cried compassionately: “My sons, where are you going in this fearful heat? . . . You are risking your lives!”

Cajetan’s answer was that they preferred endangering their lives going to Naples while executing God’s Will than to show themselves slothful in the obedience they owed the Holy See.

The Pope was happy to find the spirit of Cajetan even more ardent than the August Italian sun. After a few questions concerning their institute and its progress, he wished them success in their new venture, gave them his Apostolic Benediction, and permitted them to resume their rugged journey.

Although Cajetan suffered from a deformed foot, which made walking painful, he nevertheless insisted on making the entire journey on foot from Venice to Rome, from Rome to Naples.



The fire of Divine Love that emanated from Cajetan had enkindled the little circle that formed the oratory of that name; it had warmed the poor and suffering in the hospitals he had visited; it had flashed a brilliant ray over a Rome grown cold in neopaganism; and lastly it had lighted the hearts of the Venetians. Now the saint and his saintly companion, John Marinoni, were carrying the fire of their zeal to the hearts of the Neapolitans. An anxious anticipation gripped them as they glimpsed the distant hills dotted with houses that announced that the city was near.

The Count of Oppido awaited the two priests outside the gate of St. Januarius and there made over to them the house built by Tizzone, but which was not furnished and ready for use. The gift was a glorious surprise to the two Theatines. Cajetan wrote at once to Caraffa to tell him of their good fortune and beg him to send more clerics that they might work more effectively in their new location.

St. Mary of Mercy was quiet and pleasant. Situated in a secluded spot outside the city, immediately beyond the Gate of St. Januarius, it was particularly suited for their rule of life, and Caraffa was quick to see the advantages of the site. He complied with Cajetan’s request and sent six additional members from St. Nicholas. Five of these recruits were priests: Marcus of Venice; Peter of Verona; Peter Foscareno, a doctor of the University of Paris and formerly chancellor of the Bishopric of Bayeux; Michael Monopolotanus; and one named Lawrence. The other two members were not yet ordained, Jerome Consiglieri, brother of Paul, one of the four original members, and lastly Andrew Verso, originally from Rome. Upon the arrival of the new members late in October of 1533, Cajetan was elected superior. It appeared that at least some of the hardships that inevitably attend new foundations were conquered.

As they had done elsewhere, the Fathers applied themselves to the administration of the sacraments, to preaching and the works of mercy. Their time was distributed between the Divine Praises, private prayers, and the active life of the ministry. As Cajetan reached maturer years, the peace of soul that comes from the continual homage of faith, confidence, and love became more evident. The source of this peace was the fact that he had removed from his soul all that might impede the action of grace, and that he lived in an attitude of humility and confidence whereby he hoped for everything from God. Whatever disquiet he may have suffered in making his decision to enter the priesthood or in founding a new religious order had passed away. The serenity of his countenance and the calmness of his bearing became the secret by which he attracted souls, while his gentleness and patience gave them confidence as he directed them

toward God. He prayed incessantly, and the purpose of his constant prayer was the conversion of sinners. His desire to see souls share his own union with God was insatiable.

In practicing his heroically penitential life Cajetan first of all made use of the trials God sent, and then of mortifications of his own choosing. In his strict spiritual economy nothing was lost. He employed for God's honor and glory not only his talents but, most of all, his infirmities. His foot deformity made it painful for him to stand; yet he never permitted himself to sit or to lean on any object for support during any religious service or spiritual exercise. The misshapen member also gave him a chance to humiliate himself when in the presence of dignitaries or nobility. His trick under such circumstances was to place it slightly forward in order that attention might first be drawn to his bodily infirmity and that his most unusual talents and graces might remain unnoticed.

The Theatines living in the secluded site of St. Mary of Mercy found ample opportunity to practice the contemplative life, but the distance from the heart of the city hindered their work among the faithful. The functions of the priesthood were hampered in this rarely frequented spot. It became evident that they would not be able to fulfill the precept binding them to the active in addition to the contemplative life, but before they could reach a decision as to their next move, they were forced to abandon their Santa Maria de Misericordia.

The Count of Oppido had adopted the poor religious and made it a point to send them offerings every day that more than supplied their wants. But his enthusiasm for the Institute was not satisfied by these gifts alone; he wished to set aside a certain sum from his own patrimony for their yearly income, in order to assure, as he stated, the permanent and successful foundation of the Theatines in Naples. He was more interested in seeing them make rapid strides in the way that he wished than he was in considering the Theatine rule or its primary objectives. The Count came in person to argue the point. He told Cajetan that an income was absolutely essential and offered him gold to invest in lands or in some other kind of capital that might assure the community a means of support. He insisted that he also intended to make the order the beneficiary of his will.

Cajetan listened courteously to his proposition, but reminded the Count that his order had lived happily with poverty for ten successful years. "The income of our Institute," he said, "is not from the things of Earth, but from Heaven. From it alone we wish to live, as did the first regular clergy, the Apostles."

But the Count only changed strategy. He knew that the manner of life of the Theatines had caused much comment among the other religious houses. Some communities had gone so far as to have a meeting of the various superiors for the purpose of putting a stop to the innovations of the new order, on the plea that the Theatines were provoking God to perform a continuous miracle to provide for them. A deeper motive behind this plea may have been that the Theatine way of life put them to shame, and they were eager to see it changed. The Count may have known this, but he thought that for support in his views it would be wise to join forces with them. Hence, accompanied by a few able leaders of other religious institutes, he went to see Cajetan again.

One of the callers broke into the subject with the words:

The type of life that you, Father Cajetan, have begun, without any funds to provide for your income, and with your mouth sealed to requests for help in your necessities, surely cannot endure. Although in the beginning you have experienced the very liberal charity of the faithful, because new things are usually popular, you may be sure that this charity will cool in time. As novelty wears off, the faithful will grow tired of continually

helping your religious. To expect daily miracles from Heaven smacks more of temerity than of confidence. Other founders of religious houses have accepted incomes for the support of their members, at the same time not permitting any individual to possess anything in particular. By possessing everything in common they were able to provide for the needs of the community. The canons and decrees of the Holy See have recognized that these fruit-bearing funds were necessary for religious families and have forbidden under grave censure any spoliation of them. You should, therefore, accept without delay the generous offering of the count. If you do not, you will incur the censure of the whole world. You will be thought imprudent and obstinate. But above all you will offend the devoted and magnanimous heart of this kind gentleman by obliging him to suspend his accustomed alms.

Cajetan was prompt in his reply to this clever argument:

All these objections have been brought up before, not only by the Count, but also by the cardinals in Rome. Our answer to them was satisfactory and merited for us the approval of the Holy See. God has up to the present supported us without an income, and He will not be less powerful and liberal in the future. Holy Mother Church will appear more and more beautiful as the variety of her ornamentation is enriched. She is adorned with many different religious orders, some rich, some poor and mendicant, and now by our own order of the absolute poor and not mendicant. Certainly, this new adornment has enhanced her beauty. As for the good and pious Count, he can hardly complain of our refusal of his gifts, since he understands that the only reason for our doing so is that we may be true disciples of Christ, to whom it is most proper, in accordance with the Gospel, to renounce whatever one may possess.

But, if the Count's kindness is wounded by our refusal, let him know that there are endless channels in which his charity may be used for the greater honor of God. Since you have mentioned the criticisms of the world, I must admit that I would rather be judged by worldly standards as imprudent, while following the example of the virtue of the Apostles and the counsels of Jesus Christ, than to pass as a prudent man in accordance with those same standards, which often mistake good for evil and evil for good.

Notwithstanding this zealous answer, the able theologians did not lay down their arms. One of them returned to the charge, and reminded him that all the other religious institutes, which were provided with an annual income, lived on more quietly and securely.

The time had come for Cajetan to silence them: "Tell me, dear friends, how are you so sure of having those incomes, when, on account of bad weather – dryness, rain, winds, or even locusts – you may be robbed of your harvest? How can you make sure that the tenants will pay you the annual fees demanded by you for rent when either their poverty or their indolence often makes them unable to pay?" The great source of clerical income in those days was the rent or produce of the land.

When they replied that one year makes up for another and that the barren years are supported by the prosperous ones, and that they had the deeds and documents to pressure tenants who did not pay them, Cajetan rejoined:

But our income is founded on Divine Providence, which suffers no storms, nor is it subject to barren years or the inclemency of the weather. We also possess deeds and public documents, which surpass yours in surety as far as the Gospel is more certain than the human word. Our documents are concluded with the words: "Seek first the Kingdom

of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you,” and they are signed with the Blood of Christ. It is enough that we procure the glory of God and the observance of His Commandments, and I have no fear that He will suffer us to lack the necessary sustenance. . . . We have already experienced this providential care in Venice, and at the exact time in which the epidemic and famine were devastating the entire country. Even under these circumstances we were not without the necessary food and clothing, nor did our church lack the proper adornment for the greater honor and glory of God.”

The theologians were silenced by the Theatine’s unshaken confidence and faith, but the Count persisted. He argued that there was much difference between Venice and Naples. In Naples, he said, custom demanded of the nobility great pomp and luxury in dress, equipage, and banquets; these cost money, and there was little left to provide for the needs of others.

Cajetan made the simple answer that, if Venice is different from Naples, the God of Venice was nevertheless the same as the God of Naples, and the Theatines could find there the same divine generosity.

The Count admired the sublime confidence of Cajetan, but he remained sincere in his belief that the clerics would not be able to continue long without facing starvation. He continued frequently to insist that Cajetan accept his alms, and he was prodigal in his gifts. The saint, on his part, realized that for his religious to remain in their present location meant a constant danger to their strict poverty. In order to preserve his community in its primitive ideal, he made a resolution unique in ecclesiastical history.

On May 24, 1534, after seven months in Naples, an early morning sun found Cajetan with the other Fathers and the lay brothers gathered around him. Each had his mantle thrown over his shoulders and his Breviary in hand. The saint placed himself at the head of the group and said: “Follow me, brethren, wherever I shall go.” With no other ceremony they departed, leaving the house of St. Mary of Mercy intact with all its furnishings. Cajetan locked the doors and sent the key to the Count with this message:

Cajetan and his religious wish to let you know that they have left the house which you so generously donated to them. They were constrained to make this move by the violence of your liberality, which is prejudicial to their institute. With gratitude for the munificence which they were unable to tolerate, they depart to learn whether the God of Naples is the same as the God of Venice.”

The good Count was astonished by this slightly edged message but, far from being offended, he realized for the first time the full degree of detachment to which the poor religious had attained.

With a clearer concept of Cajetan’s holiness, the count sought him out and begged him to forgive his frequent attempts to frustrate their apostolic spirit and to return to the abandoned house. He promised to let the clerics live as they chose, and not to importune them with untimely gifts. The saint, however, could not be persuaded. Since the move had been made, he now hoped to find a place that would be more advantageous for the care of souls.

The Count urged him at least to keep the furniture in the house of St. Mary of Mercy. Although Cajetan would have preferred to have begun the new foundation with nothing, he did not wish to offend so unselfish a benefactor. “This,” he answered, “we shall gladly do.”



The news that the Theatines had left St. Mary of Mercy was not long in spreading through the city. The people naturally supposed that Cajetan and his companions intended to leave Naples, since they were now without lodging. As for the Theatines, it is probable that the public knew quite as much about where they were going as they themselves. At any rate, they had not journeyed far when a delegation of the Neapolitan nobility overtook them, invited them back into the city, and promised them certain churches and houses where they could carry on their sacred functions to advantage. Among the offers there was one that attracted Cajetan most.

It was from a pious matron, Maria Laurentia Longa, one of his penitents. The noble lady was the widow of one who had been secretary of the King of Spain and his regent in Naples. She, together with an intimate friend, the Duchess of Termoli, had turned from the position they had enjoyed in the world and had consecrated themselves to God in the service of His poor and sick. Maria Longa's reputation for charity was widespread. At one time when she found herself financially unable to continue her hospital work, her humility was deep enough to permit her to go from house to house begging alms. She had become acquainted with the Theatines at the time Caraffa and Boniface of Colle visited Naples in order to assist Maria Caraffa in her establishment of a reformed convent. She knew of the importance the order attached to hospitals and she had often wished that the Clerks Regular might establish themselves permanently in the city. Upon their threatened departure, therefore, she hurriedly offered the Fathers a temporary lodging, which she intended eventually to turn into a Convertite convent.

The poor wanderers were grateful for the offer. It permitted them to visit their beloved hospital, where they felt that they served God most faithfully. True to their former practices, Cajetan and his company cared for the sick by cleaning their rooms, changing their beds, and dressing their wounds.

The modern reader should again bear in mind that such ministrations in the sixteenth century were duties in no way comparable to similar tasks performed in the twentieth century. Then, they constituted offices so revolting that one could scarcely be induced to perform them for pay. The unpleasant work fell to those who were motivated by charity alone.

The Theatines were located near the hospital church of Maria del Popolo, where they celebrated Mass, heard confessions, and preached. Though the number of the faithful who came to hear them preach steadily increased, the greatest good the Fathers accomplished was by their example. The parish priests were impressed by the strangers' modest and conscientious bearing, and they began to model their own lives after that of the new religious.

The stay at Maria del Popolo was to be short. The house was too small to suit their needs. Maria Longa, however, had one other building. She offered it to them with the understanding that the property would revert to her if they should leave Naples or move to a different location in the city.

The new abode bore the startling name of the Poor Stable or, according to some authors, La Stalletta, The Little Manger. It had won this lowly title by the fact that at one time there had been a stable on the ground floor. The name alone is enough to signify that the building was not ready for occupancy. But, with their usual ingenuity, Cajetan and his co-laborers made it into a surprisingly different dwelling. The part that had been known as the stable was converted into a church and the rude framework of the manger became the support on which they built the altar. Cajetan fittingly named the new headquarters Holy Mary of the Little Manger, both because of its former character and because of his love for the Savior's crib.

It was not long after the Theatines came to Naples that the moving sermons of Cajetan and Marinoni attracted immense throngs to the church. Holy Mary of the Little Manger (Sancta

Maria della Stalletta) soon became well known in Naples. Its fame was to be even more widely dispersed by a miracle wrought by Cajetan.

A certain lay brother of the Stalletta named Simon, while out of the cloister, had caught his foot in an iron grate. Unable to obtain help, he broke a bone in his leg while trying to extricate the foot. The injury was a rough break which refused to heal. The doctors, such as they were at that period of history, were called in. Unable to prognosticate a cure, they ordered immediate amputation. Cajetan, who was always touched by human suffering, was grieved by the verdict. He begged the doctors to defer the amputation until the following day and meanwhile prayed far into the night at the foot of his crucifix for the health of the lay brother.

After his prayer, he lighted a lantern and tiptoed into the sufferer's room. His caution was needless, for the man was awake and restless because of the terrible pain and his fear of the imminent operation, performed, of course, without anaesthetics. Cajetan removed the bandage and was alarmed to find the infection worse than ever. Throwing himself on his knees, he begged the brother to join him in his prayer. When he arose anxiety had left his face. He made the sign of the Cross over the wound and, after rebandaging it, left the room with calm certainty.

At dawn the doctors came to amputate. But, seeing a strange calm on the face of the patient, they decided to examine the wound again before proceeding. To their amazement, the loosened bandage revealed the leg in its natural integrity. Not only had it healed, but it showed no sign of having been injured. Greatly surprised, they asked the patient how this had happened. He told them that he could not account for it, unless it had been a miracle performed by Father Cajetan, who had visited him during the night. The doctors recognized that it was indeed a miracle. The report of this wonder got abroad, despite all of Cajetan's precautions.

Shortly after the Theatines' establishment in Mary of the Little Manger, the Turks, fresh from the conquest of Tunis, began plundering and sacking many places along the coast of Sicily. Naples itself was threatened. While Christendom was in terror, Charles V, with 50,000 men, left Europe for Tunis, overcame the Turks, and restored the ruler whom they had deposed. Europe was again saved from its perennial enemy.

When he passed through Naples on his victorious homeward march, Charles was accorded what resembled an old Roman triumph. The victor's line of march was spanned by stupendous arches and the entire way was fringed with peristyles and dotted with artificial fountains, playfully juggling the sportive rays of the sun. Standing like gigantic sentinels were huge Egyptian pyramids on which were stamped hieroglyphics supposed to represent the emperor's successful campaign. Luxuriant, gem-studded tapestries draped the principal buildings. Colossal statues of the victor were spaced along the streets. The throngs of those who came to witness this pomp were so numerous that it was said that all Italy seemed to have shrunk within the confines of Naples.

All this would be irrelevant to the present work if it did not illustrate the human side of a saint, and an aspect of penance that we are likely to forget. Cajetan's warm Italian nature loved such pageantry, and when the momentous day of the triumph, November 25, 1535, dawned, Cajetan's ears caught the sound of singing, trumpets, drums, and merry voices. The rhythm of marching feet floated upon the air. A strange, new, compelling curiosity urged him to go to the window to watch the unparalleled celebration he knew was taking place. His companions argued that he should not miss this unique spectacle, especially as it commemorated a victory over an enemy that had brought such woe to Christian nations. But Cajetan stifled the curiosity gnawing at his heart. He turned to his crucifix and asked Christ to accept his small sacrifice and returned to his prayer. Such sacrifices are often greater than prolonged fasts or violent scourgings.



Since Maria Longa had so generously befriended the Theatines when they were homeless, Cajetan took a kind and helpful interest in her Hospital of Incurables. While he advised her as to the management of the institution, he discovered in her soul a vast capacity for sanctity and he attempted to build a lofty edifice upon the secure foundations of holiness she had already laid. Her spirit of self-denial prompted him to encourage her in the foundation of a convent under the strict rule of St. Clare. But Mary had other aspirations; she wanted greatly to go to Palestine to venerate the holy places consecrated by the life and death of the Redeemer. Cajetan advised her to pray to learn God's will. At length she concluded that it would be more pleasing to God if she founded a convent under the protection and patronage of Holy Mary of Jerusalem. With this inspiration came also the conviction that it was Cajetan who should henceforth make God's will known to her. She prepared a house by the courtyard of the hospital and, under Cajetan's direction, wrote a rule to be observed in conformity with the strict observance of the nuns of St. Clare.

Beginnings were successful, and Cajetan applied to the new Pope, Paul III, for a bull of approval. Giberti wielded his influence, and approval was forthcoming.

Not less than eighteen young ladies of the Neapolitan nobility entered the institute with the foundress on July 19, 1539. Cajetan was their spiritual father before the time of formal establishment and directed each of the new members in the way of perfection. Their mortifications, which were admired in their century, would be considered unendurable in an age of scientific convenience. They rose at midnight for prayer, slept on boards, used wool clothing next to the skin, abstained from meat, went barefoot, scourged themselves, and never spoke with outsiders.

Cajetan, with Marinoni, directed their conventual life until 1538, when the Theatines moved to St. Paul's. The house then passed to the direction of the Capuchin Fathers. From that time, the Sisters of St. Clare were called Capuchin nuns, and under that title gradually spread to all parts of Italy and elsewhere.

Cajetan was ingenious in devising means of gaining souls. He turned from the direction of the convent to the realization of another of his plans, which heretofore had appeared to him like the dream of a visionary. His heart was pierced by the many prostitutes in Naples. Though he longed to bring back to grace those souls fastened to a life of sin, he knew it was much easier to preserve the flower of virginity in the cloister among those who had never known sins of the flesh than to raise up those who had served passion's despotism. He saw in their sinful traffic an infernal door always open to ensnare innumerable victims.

Nevertheless, Cajetan set about trying to improve in his city the age-old situation created by "the world's oldest profession." As usual, his first attempt at conversion was a series of cruel penances inflicted on his own innocent flesh by rigid fasts and scourgings. Then he publicly denounced the lives of the public women and attempted to draw them to penance. The Neapolitans were astonished to find even among those whom they considered the most hardened sinners a considerable number of converts. But Cajetan noticed that not a few of those who had repented fell back, for one reason or another, into their old manner of life. He hoped to remedy this by providing a shelter for them, where, removed from the solicitations of their former lovers and the enticements of vice, they could lead a life of reparation and persevere in virtue.

With this intention he went to his spiritual daughter, Mary of Ayerbo, who had shown sympathy for these unfortunate women at the Hospital of Incurables. During her administration a constant stream of them had been brought to her. She had cared for them with her own hands and

had brought many of them to penance. But she, too, had learned that the tears they had shed at a speedy conversion had not given them spiritual strength to continue in virtue after they returned to the world. Together, Cajetan and Mary of Ayerbo planned the beginning of an asylum close to the site of the hospital to be used as a refuge for these souls reclaimed for God.

Through friends in Rome, Cajetan obtained the necessary faculties for the foundation of the institute, and immediately began to scour the Neapolitan streets to convert these wretched beings and bring them to the haven he had prepared for them. Before long the house was filled and came to be known as the House of the Converted.

Cajetan probably proved a far more potent and resourceful spiritual director in the care of these souls than in the direction of those well-founded in virtue. It required far more painstaking effort, care, and patience to sustain those who had been once perverted than it had required to induce them to turn from sin. The thought of their own sins and those of others for which they had been responsible kept them on the verge of despair. Hope alone proved too tender a virtue to take firm root in hearts so lately hardened by sin. It must have cost Cajetan much to excite a pure, affective love of God in hearts so habituated to sensual love. But the difficulty did not daunt the Theatine and in a comparatively short time the number of his penitents reached about 300.

The third Neapolitan religious society of women that Cajetan was to aid had been under his guidance for over two years before his coming to Naples – the Convent of Wisdom, governed by Mary Caraffa.

A short review of the life of this remarkable woman reveals the same forceful traits as her brother displayed. When she had reached the age of twenty-two, she was betrothed by her parents to the Count of Venafro. She did not want to marry, though she knew that it was useless to resist openly. She was too much her brother's sister, however, to be foiled.

That Christmas Eve found her in bridal dress and jewels, as if anticipating the sumptuous wedding ceremony. Dressed in elaborate attire, she obtained her mother's permission to go to the Dominican Convent of the Sisters of St. Sebastian to hear Christmas vespers. Upon her arrival, the convent doors were opened to her, and the sisters were loyal to the little scheme she had contrived with them. A number of them gathered round her pretending to admire the lovely bride in her splendid array. While her attendants were in the midst of conversation, Mary made a dash into the enclosure of the cloister crying: "Goodbye, world; goodbye, vanity; goodbye, parents; and goodbye, husband, for I shall have no other spouse than the Crucified." When the heavy doors closed behind her she exultantly changed her bridal garments for the simple Dominican habit.

When her parents learned that she had foiled her attendants, they went to bring her home, either by entreaty or force. When she refused to listen to their appeals, they threatened to break down the doors and carry her away. But the virgin remained steadfast. Her firm, unyielding manner, not unmingled with a gentle approach, finally calmed the storm, and her parents permitted her to remain.

As the years passed, the constant wars in which Naples engaged threatened the Dominican house, and Mary and others of the St. Sebastian establishment fled to another convent. For a short time she governed a small group of women living under the rule of St. Francis. But Mary hankered to re-establish a Dominican house and to restore to its primitive vigor the rule of St. Dominic, which she knew had not been properly observed, even in the Convent of St. Sebastian.

She wrote to her brother for advice. Caraffa referred her letter to Cajetan, who was happy to learn of the venture. Since it was, however, impossible for him to leave Venice, he sent Boniface

of Colle to consult with Mary. The letter had to make two trips to Rome in order to obtain the papal bull of approval. This having been accomplished, the sisters, led by Mary Caraffa, went in solemn procession to take possession of La Sapienza, the Convent of Holy Wisdom, on June 23. Upon their arrival they changed their Franciscan garb to the white Dominican habit.

Two years later, when Cajetan founded a Theatine house in Naples, he took the matter of the government of the Sapienza into his hands. Mother Caraffa put his enactments into writing under the date of March 6, 1540.

Two of the rules imposed by Cajetan showed his understanding of the needs of the times. The first was the vow of perpetual enclosure. Since most religious women were leaving the cloister with full liberty and were recklessly endangering their vocations, Cajetan bound them to enclosure. Secondly, he ordered a perforated grill to be used by the nuns when conversing with lay people, that their faces might remain hidden and only their voices be heard. If it was necessary to admit doctors, confessors, or other men within the cloister, the nuns were to veil their faces in their presence. The custom among cloistered communities of using the grill subsequently spread to all parts of the Christian world.

Cajetan continued to direct the community until his death in 1547. Mother Caraffa lived four years longer than the saint and was eighty-four at the time of her death. The heroic nun had attained a high degree of sanctity, and the Holy See permitted her beatification process to be begun. It appears from her biographers that she relived in visions the mysteries of Our Lord's life in the course of the liturgical year. Her body was found incorrupt more than a hundred years after her death.

Although Cajetan was influential in bringing into existence many societies of both men and women, he would not permit them to use the name of Theatine, which his own community bore. But after his death the Venerable Ursula Benincasa bestowed the name of Theatine upon the two convents of simple virgins which she founded. Her nuns put the rule of the Fathers into practice and adopted a habit patterned after their simple clerical dress; their institutions were placed under the direction of the Theatines.



The year 1534 was marked by the death of Clement VII, who had been the Theatines' generous friend and loyal supporter. It was he who had granted them the bull of approval and had imposed on them the duty of revising the Breviary and ceremonials of the Church. Upon the pope's death, the conclave of cardinals almost unanimously elected as pope Alexander Farnese, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia, who assumed the title of Paul III. This vigorous pontiff was at last to set in motion the machinery of the Catholic Reform.

Paul knew and loved Cajetan and his religious family, and sent insistent letters to Caraffa at Venice with the request that a house be opened in Rome. "If the Theatine Congregation of Clerks Regular was born in Rome," he argued, "then it is proper that it make Rome its residence." A reason for calling Caraffa to Rome which, prudently enough, was not expressed in the letters, was the hope that by having this powerful man in the center of Christendom the papacy might have the advantage of his advice and elevate him to the cardinalate. Caraffa shrewdly suspected the outcome, but the thought of a return to the restless atmosphere of the curia filled him with repugnance and alarm. He begged to be excused because of his advanced age, and only after repeated and increasingly urgent requests did he yield. He set out with three fathers and two lay brothers, leaving behind him as vicar in Venice, John Bernard Scotto. Caraffa then sent word to Cajetan to meet him in Rome for a general chapter of the order.

Heretofore, the general chapters had been held on September 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the True Cross and the anniversary of the founding of the order. Since, however, the journey to Rome was inevitable, Caraffa thought it expedient for the two houses of St. Nicholas of Tolentino in Venice and of Holy Mary of the Little Manger in Naples to hold their meeting in Rome. Cajetan acquiesced and in the company of two fathers reached Rome in October, 1536. Both groups of Theatines took up their residence in the Dominican house of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, from which they could easily go back and forth to the Vatican.

In the meantime, Paul III had definitely decided to raise Caraffa, with eight other prelates, to the dignity of the cardinalate. From this appointment of nine cardinals, two names have figured prominently in history: Reginald Pole, the famous statesman of Mary Tudor's time, and the invincible Caraffa himself. Though all nine appointments had been foreseen, Caraffa's case provoked considerable comment. Certain personages who had experienced the force of his rare and convincing eloquence warned the Holy Father that if he truly intended to bestow this honor on Caraffa it would be advisable to do it before he had a chance to speak. Otherwise, the papal court would surely be the loser, since Caraffa would be able to convince them of the contrary if he chose. Consequently, upon the arrival of the Theatines, the Pope received them kindly, but dismissed them with a few words and added affably: "Business will be attended to later."

There were not wanting those who opposed the red hat for Caraffa. Many were unwilling to live according to the strict rules the reformer would doubtless enforce if he attained that honor. They capitalized on the fact that he had fallen ill on his arrival in Rome, and hypocritically pleaded his advanced age as a reason for his rejection. What use was there to bestow such an honor on a corpse? Paul was forced to listen to many versions of this complaint, but to all of them he made this reply: "Very well, then, it is proper that we at least honor the merits of a great man, for though he may die soon, the memory of his works will live. I think it is just and right that he carry the recognition of his virtues with him to the grave."

The Holy Father sent a legate to the Minerva with the Cardinal's hat. He had not given Caraffa a chance to resist, since he had not permitted him a personal audience. The Bishop of Chieti was at a loss as to how to extricate himself from this difficulty, since he was deprived of his powerful weapon of speech. Cajetan was present when the legate arrived and he made signs to Caraffa not to accept the dignity. Caraffa, however, thought better of his original resolution. He felt that, since he could not advance concrete and justifiable reasons to the Holy Father personally, it would be an affront to His Holiness, as well as resistance to the will of God made known to him, to refuse to accept the office. He therefore thanked the legate and, since his recent illness had confined him to his bed, he simply asked that the cardinal's hat be hung on a nail on the wall. There was nothing harsh or surly in this action, as some historians have taken it.

When Cajetan saw that Caraffa had accepted, he turned to him and made a memorable prophecy, which was included in his process of canonization: "If you receive this office you will doubtless climb higher still, but it will be at the price of the ruin of your relatives." The prophecy was fulfilled when, as Pope Paul IV, the great-hearted pontiff was deceived by his treacherous nephews, and in grief witnessed the ruin of the noble house of Caraffa.

The newly-appointed cardinal had hitherto repelled this honor, and now in his agitation of mind his illness became dangerous. On Christmas Eve his temperature was subnormal and his pulse barely perceptible, but Christmas morning found him much improved. As soon as he was able to use his pen, he wrote to his sister Mary: "Surely it is impossible to resist the designs of Providence . . . I have deliberated this question seriously, and I have decided to place my neck

under the yoke and to let myself be governed by Him who rules the world. I do not intend to resist Eternal Providence further, as I have sometimes done, under the appearance of good.”

By the end of December, Caraffa was able to attend the general chapter called by Cajetan at the Dominican house.

At this meeting John Bernard Scotto was elected *praepositus* of St. Nicholas of Tolentino and Peter Foscareno, the superior of the Poor Stable at Naples. Cajetan was delegated Ordinary of the Convent of La Sapienza, which was governed by Mary Caraffa. The chapter showed itself favorable to a foundation in Rome, and Caraffa was advised to locate a possible site. Although it was evident to all that Cajetan was the ruling spirit, Caraffa, as cardinal, lost none of his devotion to his order. When the time came for the other Theatines to say farewell, the cardinal’s parting words were: “My heart returns to the cloister with you; you may change my station, but you cannot change my heart.”

As Cajetan left Rome with Father Foscareno, the latter complained of having to take over the superiorship, since he was not accustomed to command and he felt unfit because of his inexperience. Cajetan’s answer revealed the secret of his influence on the lives of others: “The burden of government, I assure you, will be easy, and you will have success, if you endeavor to make yourself beloved in the Lord by all those who are to obey you.” It was the saint’s ideal that the religious guide one another in perfection by a mild command dictated by charity.



Meanwhile, the Church of St. Mary of the Poor Stable proved too small to accommodate the crowds that flocked to the Theatines’ services. Many of those who came turned and went away, for many who came before the last arrival found it packed to capacity. But inadequate space was not the sole difficulty. Mary Longa, who had provided the shelter, was now in need of the Poor Stable. The community of nuns of St. Clare, which she had founded, had grown until it could no longer live comfortably in the small house she had renovated for their temporary abode. Cajetan, sensitive to the inconvenience caused his kind hostess, cast about for other quarters, but in vain. The Theatine band decided to leave the city.

Cajetan asked Father Foscareno to accompany him to Pozzuoli where the Viceroy, Peter of Toledo, happened to be at the time, in order to thank him for his friendship and generosity while they were in Naples. After the first greeting, Cajetan tried to explain the situation: “For almost four years we have been in Naples at the supreme command of the Holy Father . . . But, for four years, no place has been opened to us suitable for our permanent establishment. We have changed abode three times, and always for the same reason, namely, that the quarters were too small. We are inclined to recognize in this misfortune a sign from Heaven that we should return to Venice and, with your permission, we are planning to depart.”

The viceroy was not pleased; he knew what a blessing the Theatines had been to the chief city of southern Italy. He promised that, if they would consent to remain, he would see that they were provided with a suitable church and residence.

In the light of this promise, Cajetan reconsidered. True enough, the viceroy met with a group of religious-minded men whom he knew to be favorable to the Theatines. It was agreed that the Church of St. Paul’s was the most suitable place in the city. Though it was a parish church, and the headquarters of a confraternity, the viceroy had no trouble in obtaining it for the Fathers’ use.

But Cajetan was troubled. He wondered how a group of priests, bound by vow to a strict rule, could live under the same roof with a secular clergy. How could their strict manner of life, their chanting of the Office in choir, their many special observances fit in with parochial functions?

Would their interests not often clash? Surely such a coexistence would lead to differences that would culminate in a breach of charity between the regular and secular priests.

Cajetan represented his fears to the viceroy, who again urged him to give up any idea he might have of leaving the city. He again pledged his word that the band would be at full liberty to lead their own life.

Relying on this promise of Peter of Toledo, Cajetan took possession of the church May 28, 1538. The viceroy kept his word to the letter. He saw that parish services were confined to one corner of the church, and not long afterwards he transferred the parish functions of St. Paul's, by apostolic authority, to the nearby Church of St. George. At last the little community had reason to rejoice! They now were centrally located in the large city of Naples, with a spacious and handsome church at their disposal. They had at hand means by which they hoped to labor unhampered for a bountiful harvest of souls. St. Paul's, because of its historic associations stretching back to the early centuries, was the most loved by the Neapolitans of all their splendid churches.

The very antiquity that caused the church to be venerated, however, was a cause of concern to Cajetan. The building was in a miserable state of deterioration, the walls eroded by the action of time. But the saint saw great possibilities and concentrated his energies on its renovation. Without even the ordinary parish income, Cajetan shortly realized his hope. The interior was refinished and decorated with exquisite murals. The entire church became a model of cleanliness and order. This poverty-bound saint had the power of obliging Heaven to do whatever he asked. He would often say to his brethren: "Let our houses be small; our cells poor; our meals scanty; our apparel mended, provided only that the church be richly and becomingly adorned." It was to this end that he devoted his "spare" time. That Christ's Earthly abode might be suitably prepared for His Majesty, the saint decorated the altars with his own hands, swept the floor, and dusted the furniture.



Enviably situated, the Theatines were not long in exerting a profound influence throughout the city. The services were conducted in the most solemn manner, subject to certain liturgical innovations. Hangings were suspended on either side of the altar that the officiating priest might not be exposed to distractions. Likewise, the Divine Office was chanted behind the main altar, and heavy curtains were hung between the choir and the body of the church. This precaution was taken that the chanters might not be seen by the laity.

This extreme measure was necessary at that time to counteract the custom of singing the divine praises in an open choir in the center of the church and in the sight of all. Heretofore, the choir that chanted the canonical hours was encircled by a partition or low wall about four feet in height, a situation that made the chanters easily liable to distractions. Since the general moral tone of both clergy and laity was low, a feeling of deep reverence for sacred functions was cherished only by the minority. It was not unusual for laymen to approach those engaged in the chant to ask questions or exchange gossip. The sight of this was galling to Cajetan, and to avoid such irreverence he placed the choir members back of the altar.

Since Neapolitan conduct in church had declined to the point of levity within the sacred precincts, Cajetan sought to lessen the distractions in the congregation as well, by separating the men and the women along opposite sides of the church. For precedence in this step he appealed to the Fathers, Ambrose, Gregory, Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and some of the early popes, who were opposed to the mixing of the sexes in church. This separation, introduced – or rather

renewed – by Cajetan, spread throughout Italy. Although considered a superfluous precaution today, it was a great advantage at that time in restoring the pristine fervor of worship. The purity of doctrine and the exactness of the rites and ceremonies that the faithful observed in St. Paul's instilled in them a proper sense of decorum, which had become vitiated. The silence of the immense crowds that flocked to hear the Fathers preach became a matter of comment. To bring the vivacious Neapolitans to this stage of reverence and self-control required a saint and a genius like Cajetan.

Throughout the city, the Fathers were loved rather than feared, despite their forbidding austerities. Their popularity was immeasurably increased by Cajetan's restoration at Christmas of the custom, as old as the days of St. Francis, of erecting a representation of the Holy Manger in all the churches of the city. As the name Theatine became popularized, requests for admission became numerous. Several novices entered from the city of Naples. This fact made the membership of the Neapolitan house sufficient, so that no need was felt of its former dependence on the Venetian community. But the two institutes, St. Nicholas of Tolentino in Venice and St. Paul's in Naples, remained the only permanent foundations of Theatines until after the death of Cajetan in 1547. In November of 1548, the first Englishman, Thomas Goldwell, was admitted to the order at Naples. The comparative slowness in the beginning of new establishments can be accounted for by the severe rule, particularly the strictness with which the Theatines adhered to their vow of poverty. Also, the membership was carefully chosen, for the principal Theatine goal was to produce a select group of priests, and all other objectives were made subordinate to this end. Thus their own internal policy served to restrict membership and hinder the material growth of the society during the early part of its history.

As for Cajetan, he endeavored by every means to extend the frontiers of his charity. In Naples there existed a Confraternity of Albati, or "Whites." Its purpose was to assist those condemned to death, and its name was derived from the white garments they wore at the executions, white being chosen instead of black as signifying the comfort of religion. The Count of Oppido, who had prodigiously befriended the Theatines, was a member, and it may have been through this connection that Cajetan's interest was enlisted. At any rate, he joined the society of linen-garbed sodalists. The organization had been founded in 1430 by St. James della Marca, but its activities had come to a standstill until it was revived by Caraffa when he was Prothonotary Apostolic, a further fact which could not have escaped Cajetan's attention and interest.

From the time Cajetan first became a member, he was frequently seen accompanying condemned men to the tragic platform and encouraging them to receive the fatal stroke of the axe with resignation and in a spirit of forgiveness. How lovingly remembered his work must have been is suggested by the fact that at the time Naples celebrated his canonization in 1671 the members pledged themselves to pay him an annual tribute of appreciation and honor. Cajetan's work was shared by the other Theatines of his times, whose names were always on the society's registry.

By the time the Theatines were permanently established in Naples the order was firmly rooted in Italian life and had begun to have appreciable success among the members of the hierarchy, clergy, and laity. It was during this period of the Neapolitan foundation that the Theatines were to uncover the false teachings of Bernard Ochino, John Valdez, and Peter Martyr Vermiglio.

Sporadic attempts had been made at an early date to introduce the Lutheran heresies into Italy, but it was not until the third decade of the sixteenth century that these efforts became concentrated and vigorous. By 1535 heretical groups were becoming entrenched, but at this time the Theatines were in a position to offer able and effective opposition. The fame of the triumph

of the Clerks Regular over the heresies of men of note and eminence caused an unprecedented swelling of the crowds that gathered at the Church of St. Paul to hear from the lips of Cajetan and his companions the pure doctrine of the faith.

Throughout the years Cajetan spent in Naples, he was always mindful of those touched by poverty. The usury practiced by the moneylenders had nearly ruined the city, and the burden lay chiefly on the poorer classes. The city requested that the Emperor Charles V enact laws to end the illegal business. The emperor responded by banishing only the Jewish moneylenders, which did not eliminate the practice of usury. Cajetan and John Marinoni hence resolved to devise a means of lending money merely for a pawn, without charging interest. They appealed to their wealthier penitents to contribute toward this cause, and in 1539 they established the Monte della Pietà (Mountain of Mercy), which continued to operate in Cajetan's absence during his superiorship at Venice. Upon his return to Naples in 1543, he resumed his duties as director of this financial venture, which was to issue in the credit unions of modern times.

Having resumed the spiritual direction of the Count of Oppido, Cajetan persuaded him to sponsor the cause. He reminded the noble that he was childless and that upon the Theatines' first coming to Naples, he had told them that he wished to make the order his only heir, a generous offer which Cajetan resolutely resisted as something opposed to the rule of his apostolic institute. At the same time, Cajetan saw nothing wrong in counseling the Count how he might dispose of his money with greatest benefit to the common good.

"In regard to the lands and wealth that you wished to donate to my religious," Cajetan told him, "I would rather advise you to bestow them on the young Monte della Pietà, which does not yet have enough strength to succor all those who come to it in need. The spiritual benefits to be derived from this act are great indeed, since you will not only aid the poor, but at the same time close to Christians the avaricious path of the extortioner."

For the Count, the advice of Cajetan bore the force of a command, and he unhesitatingly turned the greater portion of his goods over to the Monte. His example was followed by many other wealthy persons, and even during the early history of the Theatines, the new institution had a capital of 800,000 *scudi* (the *scudo* was roughly a dollar) in gold and 1,000,000 *scudi* in other specie. This would amount to at least \$20,000,000 in terms of modern value.



In 1540 the Fathers held a general chapter in St. Paul's, and Cajetan was elected, contrary to his wishes, superior of St. Nicholas of Tolentino. The news crossed Naples with lightning speed. Cajetan had to withstand the remonstrances of thousands of both the nobility and the commons who had known him as a spiritual father and did not want him to leave.

But Venice was as exultant in its welcome as Naples was demonstrative in its loss. The Tolentine convent was thronged with old friends who rejoiced over Cajetan's return and solicited guidance and advice. Among the old friends he found there was Giberti. The Bishop of Verona remembered the tremendous work Cajetan had performed for his dioceses and he now asked him to return to do mission work there. Cajetan felt constrained to come to his aid. Consequently, with a few followers, he went to Verona that same year. Soon a touching and pleasing sight met the eyes of the bishop. He saw the people from his diocese, which had so nearly slipped beyond his control, coming from the farthest corners of Venetia by the tens of thousands to hear the moving sermons of Cajetan and his Theatines.

But in his enthusiasm the generous heart of Giberti led him to repeat the error of the Count of Oppido. The magnanimous prelate, who knew that these clerics would not even beg alms, sent

them their daily meals, which in content were more proportionate to the unselfishness of the donor than to the professed poverty of the recipients. Cajetan tolerated the sumptuous fare for a few days, thinking it to be dictated by a sense of propriety in welcoming a guest. But when he realized that the gifts were to be continuous, and that sometimes money was also left behind, he was alarmed and protested to his benefactor in the name of the apostolic principle that was to be the most salient feature of his institute.

Although Giberti admired Cajetan's spirit, he nevertheless sent the accustomed provisions every day to the Nazareth Convent where the Fathers were lodging. He continued his visits both from a deep love for the Theatines and for fear that he might lose them if they found it impossible to exist without his help. At this point, Cajetan again protested to Giberti that if the offerings were continued he and his company would leave Verona forthwith. Then at last the donor stifled the generosity of his heart and abandoned the Theatines to the Providence that was always their foremost trust.

Both Cajetan and Giberti were correct in their viewpoints. The Theatines were not well enough known in Verona for the faithful to be acquainted with the fact that their constitutions forbade them to beg. Hence it happened that their customary diet consisted of the vegetables that grew in their garden, and only before the strict fast of Lent did they take a few eggs and other nourishing foods. But it is noteworthy, and in line with the experiences of other strict orders, that the Fathers were happier living in this frugality than when feasting at the banquet provided by the bishop.

The Clerks Regular continued their work in Verona until 1542, when Cajetan felt the necessity of returning to Venice. His return at that time was fortunate, since a clever heretic, Bernard Ochino, was to preach the Lenten sermons in the magnificent Church of the Holy Apostles, and hence for the first time fell under Cajetan's observation and suspicion.



In 1543, a general chapter of the order was held in Venice for the purpose of electing the new superiors. The Fathers from Naples were urgent in their request that they have Cajetan as superior, and it was decided that he should govern the Neapolitan house. Cajetan's life had been intensely active, and now that he was sixty he longed for the peace and rest of a simple subject; but he acquiesced, as he always did when there was a question of a higher command. He set out on the difficult route to Naples.

Theatine poverty obliged the Clerks Regular to make the journey from Venice to Naples by the Adriatic Sea, rather than by land. They left the shores of Venice about the first day of May on a calm sea framed by a cloudless sky. But before they had sailed far a furious storm arose, so terrifying that the sailors gave up hope of weathering it. All on board expected from one moment to the next that the ship would go down. Cajetan withdrew a little from the frenzied passengers and took from his pocket an *Agnus Dei*, saying: "My friends, I am going to throw this image representing the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world into the sea. While I do so you must likewise throw your sins into the gale, and I assure you that the sea will be calmed and the storm will let up.

No sooner had the *Agnus Dei* touched the waves, than the wind and rain ceased. A brilliant sun reassured all those on board. As it began to dawn on their wits that all this had come through Cajetan, they became demonstrative in their gratitude, but the Theatine only preached to them of the necessity of keeping the soul free from mortal sin, since all men are constantly exposed to dangers that may bring them suddenly into the awful presence of the just God.

When Cajetan finally arrived at the monastery in Naples, he went immediately to the church without taking the rest travelers at that time so sorely needed. Here he knelt before the Blessed Sacrament and gave thanks for a safe journey. In the meantime, the passengers and crew had broadcast the news of their miraculous voyage. Suddenly the saint's prayer was interrupted by a crowd that invaded the church to see the wonder-worker. When he saw their number he felt it his duty to address them. Descending to the last altar step he spoke of the necessity of maintaining purity of soul, to avoid the eternal misery of those not prepared to meet God. Leaving the sanctuary, he went directly to receive visits from those who sought his help, notwithstanding that he had not yet broken his fast. Such was Cajetan's way – to take miracles as they came and, whatever happened, to use the occasion to lead souls to God.

As Cajetan's life drew to a close, the miracles related of him became more numerous. The Holy Rota of Urban VII related that on a certain morning the cook informed Cajetan that he had nothing to give the Fathers except one piece of bread. Although they had no funds whatever, the Theatine did not once consider the impossibility of providing for his numerous religious family with such a scanty store. He raised his eyes to Heaven and after a short prayer said to the procurator: "Ring the bell that the Fathers may come to their places at table."

After the clerics had assembled and finished their meal prayers, Cajetan told them of the necessity of absolute trust in God and of how many times he had experienced the solicitude of the Heavenly Father. He encouraged them to see in this particular extremity a trial of their confidence and fidelity. Before he had finished, the door bell rang and the porter found on the step a large basket filled with fine white bread. He looked in all directions, but could see no one. Then he ran with his treasure to Cajetan, who distributed it to the bewildered Fathers. The immaculate whiteness and the exquisite taste of the bread convinced all who ate it that its origin was not of Earth.

No less miraculous are the stories related of Cajetan's government of his community. He ruled by the force of his example more than by authority. He was the first in all the observances of the rule and in the practice of virtue. His joy and fervor caught on and were imitated by the community. He was at the same time superior and subject – superior by right of office, and subject by the menial services he ceaselessly performed. He washed the linen, swept the house, and carried in the wood. While doing these tasks he explained to his subjects that the office of superior was not abased by a lowly act, but rather ennobled, since it was performed in imitation of the God-Man, who came to serve and not to be served.

When example failed, Cajetan did not hesitate to command, but with meekness and clemency. Countless numbers came to him for the wisdom of his counsels and for his solution of their problems. He possessed the tact to send callers away with gentleness and grace and to set them at ease with a very few but significant words. Concerning this virtue, St. Andrew Avellino once wrote in a letter: "I have heard many marvelous things about our Holy Father Cajetan, but chiefly have I heard the praise of his incomparable prudence."



The same mild government that was so pleasing to his subjects was, however, distasteful to Cajetan, since in his humility he felt it safer to obey than to command. His one desire was to be relieved of his superiorship in order to attend to his own soul and to works of mercy. Some biographers testify that he had a premonition that his life was nearing its end. Whether or not Cajetan had this special gift, he did have a sincere desire to exercise himself more intensely in

recollection as a preparation for death. Consequently, at a general chapter held in Venice in 1544, he requested to be relieved of his duties as superior, and the Fathers granted his wish.

Relieved of the duties of office, Cajetan now employed himself more intensely in the sanctification of his own soul. At this time a striking incident is related of his self-renunciation and detachment. The Thiene family resolved to take advantage of their holy relative's return to Naples to pay him a visit. They made their journey to the city with the pomp and magnificence befitting a Renaissance family. When the saint learned of this ostentation, he refused to visit them in their apartments or to join them in any of their worldly pomp. It may be remarked here that Cajetan's spirit of detachment exemplified two characteristics. Firstly, it was continuous, through his entire life, and secondly, it was constant, under all the trials that might have vanquished it.

It was likewise during this short period of retirement that an incident occurred showing Cajetan's great love for the Blessed Sacrament. As was not infrequent in those times, a man being pursued by the authorities for a crime he had committed took refuge in a church, in this case, that of the Theatines. The officers of the law entered and attempted to drag the culprit away. His screams caused Cajetan and a number of the Fathers to rush within the precincts. They attempted to dissuade the officers from continuing in this violent action before the Blessed Sacrament, but they paid no heed. They tied the man and forced him out of the church, while Cajetan wept to see such sacrilege. The vehemence of his grief was such that he could not take food for the rest of the day.

Another of these incidents in the saint's later life attests his gift of prophecy. A wealthy young libertine of the city was enslaved to pleasure and an impure love. One day, Cajetan met him on the street, stopped him, and looked intently into his face: "Young man," he said, "it will not be long until a marvelous mystery from Heaven will be revealed in your person.

The young man was puzzled and not a little excited. He recognized in the priest one whom the popular voice acclaimed a saint. He hoped that the prophecy might mean a brilliant career for him. But Cajetan continued: "The dissolute life that you are living will soon be bound by your own free will by holy vows in a cloister."

The libertine sneered at this surprising turn of the prophecy and replied that it would be more impossible for him to leave the world than it would be for Cajetan to leave the cloister.

Cajetan was insistent, and even specified the community he would enter and the day he would enter it.

Although the youth returned to his sinful way of life for a time, he was soon seized with such a horror of his sin that he fled from his former companions and pleasures. On the date foretold he was admitted to the order prophesied, where he persevered in a life of penance.

In 1545 St. Cajetan was again in Rome. On this occasion he met Ignatius of Loyola – and thereby gave rise to an interminable controversy as to just what was said in that historic meeting. To the modern reader it is no great matter whether or not Ignatius ever considered joining the Theatines. The thing of import is that two saints, acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, succeeded in fulfilling the will of God each in his own particular domain. St. Cajetan was renowned for his work in bringing his own order into existence, as well as for formulating regulations that were to govern not only newly founded institutes but also reformed houses of the older orders, and it would not have been at all surprising if Ignatius had sought his advice. As the Manresan was contemplating the founding of an order at this time, it is the most logical conclusion that he would thus consult a man known for his sanctity and prudence before beginning such a stupendous undertaking.



The last visit Cajetan made to Rome was in 1547, the year of his death. Cardinal Caraffa had again called a general chapter of the order, this time to be held in his own palace. The Fathers were insistent that Cajetan resume superiorship, and it was the Neapolitan wing that clamored for him most. The saint was now sixty-seven, and the thought of taking up the duties of superior again was distasteful to him. He voiced objections, but resigned himself to the unanimity of the clerics' wishes, saying: ". . . not what I will; let my age break, let my humility be put under strain, let my own spiritual welfare be sacrificed. I desire only that the obedience that is imposed on me triumph over everything, for in it I recognize the voice of God."

Sensing that he would not be with his order much longer, Cajetan was particularly concerned at this chapter to establish a few permanent regulations concerning his institute before he left this world. He emphasized especially the points fortifying the Theatine ideal of poverty.

A very important question was settled at this chapter. St. Jerome Emiliani had died, and the Somaschi, recognizing Caraffa as their founder's spiritual director, had petitioned the Theatines to permit the two orders to amalgamate. The first petition was made by four outstanding Fathers the preceding year, when the Theatines were holding their general chapter at Venice, and it had been left pending. Both the pope and Cardinal Caraffa favored the union, and the Somaschi were incorporated into the Theatine congregation. The arrangement lasted about nine years, at the end of which time experience proved that the purposes and mode of life of the two institutes were too diverse for harmonious union. The Somaschi, with their countless noisy orphans and their huge farms, which provided both food and recreation for their energetic charges, could hardly live in accord with the ideal of the poor and contemplative Theatines. Consequently, Paul IV, who as Cardinal Caraffa had brought about the amalgamation, dissolved the union in a brief of December 23, 1555. Thus each institute was permitted to return to the purity of its original ideals. But the union of hearts was not dissolved. When, at a later time, the Somaschi found themselves ill provided for in Naples, the Theatines took their sick members into their own houses and buried their dead in their cemeteries.

After the general chapter of 1547, Cajetan paid his last loving tribute to the remains of the martyrs in the Roman catacombs. He had cherished a life-long desire to be a martyr, and had compensated for his unsatisfied craving by frequently visiting the tombs of those who had scarleted Rome with their blood. After satisfying this pious urge, he went to say goodbye to Caraffa, whom he realized he would not see again on this Earth. At this final parting he was unable to control his emotions. Cajetan probably understood some of the sufferings the cardinal's valiant soul was to endure before he finished his stormy career.

Cajetan left Rome accompanied by Father Peter of Verona and a cleric named Jerome. Since the days were nearing for the feast of the Ascension, they hoped to reach Naples in time to chant matins with the community. Although their conveyance traveled with the greatest speed possible in those days, they were not in Naples on the vigil of the feast, but only in Aversa, eight miles distant. It was already dark when they reached the town, but they asked the driver to continue. He however found it necessary to feed the horses and perform other time-consuming chores, and only after much persuasion did he consent to drive on in the darkness. Then, it is recorded, the black of night became for them the light of day. Reports say that a Heavenly messenger in human form walked before them as torchbearer illuminating the way to the doors of the Church of St. Paul, and then disappeared.

The Fathers entered their monastery as the first bell for matins was sounded and went immediately to the Blessed Sacrament. Cajetan put on a stole and cape in order, as superior, to

celebrate the Divine Office of the Ascension. His chroniclers record that the brilliance of his countenance showed him almost as truly a citizen of Heaven as of Earth. Indeed, Earth had a short claim on him now; it would hold his soul captive only for the time between the Feast of the Ascension and the following August.

VII

Devastating Flames

✠ *To Him that giveth me wisdom will I glory . . . My soul hath wrestled for her, and in doing it I have been confirmed . . . The Lord hath given me a tongue for my reward, and with it I will praise Him (Eccles. 50:23 – 30).*

Many writers have expressed the opinion that Cajetan was sent by God into the world predestined in a very particular way to fight heresy. Though this seems to be stressing only one phase of his comprehensive work, the idea is worth considering. Innocent X, in Cajetan's bull of canonization, went far enough to state: "Divine Providence raised up the spirit of St. Cajetan, His faithful servant. . . . The Order founded by him [was] of no little help in restraining the unbridled folly of Luther." Caracciolo relates that when Cajetan heard of Luther's revolt he was seen prostrate on a rock, weeping inconsolably. Even before the establishment of the Theatines, when he was a member of the Society of Divine Love, he answered, in reply to one who asked him why he wept so often: "Do you not wish me to weep when I see the Church, the beautiful robe of Christ, so impiously stained and torn to shreds?"

Cajetan was born three years before the birth of Luther, who tore part of the continent of Europe away from the Faith, and died in the same year that saw the death of Henry VIII, who wrested England from her sacred heritage. Hence his lifetime coincided exactly with the first and most decisive period of the Reformation. His career was in striking contrast to that of Luther's.

Cajetan founded his order in 1524, the same year in which Luther formally forsook his Augustinian congregation and apostatized.

Luther blasphemed the Cross wherever he saw it engraved, painted, or sculptured. In a public sermon, according to Lorenzo Surio, he stated that if he could collect all the particles of the Cross of Christ he would throw them into an abyss so deep that no one would be able to retrieve them. His discrediting of this venerable sign of faith in the eyes of the people reached such a degree that the Papal Legate, Cardinal Campeggio, refrained from exhibiting it in public, and in the year 1524 the German people witnessed for the first time a papal ambassador in public procession without his being preceded by a cross. On the contrary, Cajetan founded his order in the same year on the Feast of the Exaltation of the True Cross, placed the Cross on his coat of arms, and ordered the community to keep the vigil by a fast and the feast by a solemn celebration.

Luther said: "The feasts that I hate the most are Corpus Christi and the Immaculate Conception." To oppose his heresy Cajetan renewed in the faithful a lively veneration for the Blessed Sacrament and initiated the practice of exposing the Eucharist outside the tabernacle for public worship. He chose the Blessed Virgin as a special patroness of the order and defended her

in his sermons. No less than thirty Theatine Fathers have notably defended the prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin in their writings. Furthermore, they have assumed the spreading of devotion to the Blue Scapular as a special work of the order.

According to Cardinal Bellarmine, Luther stated: "Would to God that it had never entered the minds of the ancient Fathers to use the word clergy." He sought to raise the laity to the level of the priesthood by teaching the easy doctrine that baptism alone imprinted a priestly character on the soul, and each person, therefore, could boast that he was a priest, a bishop, even the Pope. His hatred for the papacy was so great that he called the sovereign pontiff an Antichrist and the Roman Court the Synagogue of Satan. Cajetan, on the other hand, increased the glory of the hierarchy by giving it an order of reformed priests and obtained in the bull of approval the right to impose on them the name of regular clergy. The Theatine Order professes a special veneration and immediate subjection to the Holy See; it promises perfect obedience to the Roman Pontiff.

Because of his sacrilegious detestation of the sacrifice of the Mass, Luther wrote a book, *De Abroganda Missa* (On the Abolition of the Mass). Cajetan, to oppose him, prescribed a rule that had not heretofore been observed: All his priests were to celebrate Mass daily. He also insisted that the faithful assist at the Holy Sacrifice on weekdays. When Cajetan heard that Cardinal Caraffa was not offering the Holy Sacrifice every day, on account of the heavy duties imposed on him by the pope, he made a special journey to Naples, in the intense heat of summer, to correct him and persuade him to begin again the practice of offering daily Mass.

Luther preached that it was impossible for human frailty to live in chastity and that celibacy was a snare of the devil. He drew virgins consecrated to God from the cloister into the world. Cajetan diligently reformed lax houses of cloistered women, founded new institutes of virgins, and provided shelter for unfortunates rescued from a life of sin.

Luther scorned the writings of the Fathers. He wanted the canons and all the laws of the Church burned outside the walls of Wittenberg. His spirit was counterbalanced by Cajetan's. The Theatine imposed upon his religious the obligation of pursuing a special course in canon law after theological requirements had been completed. He specified that the writings of the Fathers, especially those of St. Augustine, were to be read during meals.

Luther denied the existence of Purgatory. Contrastingly, Cajetan infused into his brethren a deep spirit of compassion for the suffering souls. His own devotion to the Church suffering continually heightened and became a daily subject of his discourses during the last years of his life.

When the hardened Luther heard of the foundation of the Clerks Regular he betrayed his lack of confidence in his own work by saying to John Campano: "Great indeed is the war that is being waged against us in Rome."



The infiltration of Lutheranism alarmed the Theatines in all the cities where they worked. In general, they found the people infected with the heresy. The principles of justification by faith appealed to large numbers and assuaged their consciences. Most of them, however, still held to the Catholic faith and were not aware that they were being deceived in doctrine. The Fathers, who saw the danger to the integrity of the faith among the masses, were incessant in their endeavors to bring the falsity of Lutheran principles to light. It was mainly toward this end that they employed their most forceful preaching.

Their example had an influence on the quality of the sermon material of the time. John Capycius Caleata wrote about 1560 that the quality of preaching within recent decades had

undergone a decided improvement, and he left the reader to understand that the generally improved tone was the work of the Theatines. The priests were especially esteemed for their effective preaching against heresy at St. Paul's in Naples, where large crowds were attracted by St. Cajetan and Blessed John Marinoni.

As for the heretics brought to account by Cajetan, his experiences may be confined to three of the most famous successes: the exposure of the heretical teachings of Bernard Ochino, John Valdez, and Peter Martyr Vermiglio. Ochino, the most notorious of the three, was born in 1487 at Siena, in the same quarter honored by the birth of St. Catherine. In his youth he entered the Franciscan Observants. He was genuinely ill at ease under the lax discipline he found there, and he soon attached himself to their reformed offshoot, the strict Capuchins, for whom Caraffa had intervened for papal approval. Unfortunately, the Capuchin was endowed with an animated imagination and striking eloquence. His words were given added force by his ascetic and inspiring appearance, and he soon became the most celebrated preacher in Italy. It was commonly said of him that he could draw tears from stones.

Early in his variegated career he provoked the suspicion of the Theatines. In 1534, Caraffa sent a lad, Francis Filago, from Venice to Naples as a candidate. He had instructed the youth that, if he sincerely desired to be a Theatine, he must also make a novitiate in the Neapolitan house, since he had not sufficiently proved himself in the Venetian community. When the young man reached Rome, he visited some relatives and bade them farewell before his entrance. His own people, however, were opposed to his entry because of his youth and begged him to seek the advice of the renowned Father Ochino.

It was not strange that the Capuchin should be chosen as an oracle. The enthusiasm evoked by the preacher's magnetism had by this time swept over the city. The largest cathedrals were not large enough for the crowds. Many who would not be turned away removed the tiles from the roof and entered through the holes. Since the days of Savonarola, no preacher had enjoyed such a whirlwind reputation. During the season of Lent, when the various churches were seeking special preachers, the demand for Ochino was so pressing that the pope had to intervene and decide which town was to enjoy his eloquence.

When the orator heard the boy's timid story he feigned a paternal interest and condescendingly advised: "Beware, my boy, of the great and irreparable mistake of becoming a religious. Surely, God's law contained in the Ten Commandments is sufficient, and difficult enough to observe. One should be on his guard against increasing his obligations by vows and the additional restrictions of an institute. To make yourself liable to the violation of self-imposed laws renders the way to Heaven more difficult."

The young man returned to Venice; he had given up his cherished hope of becoming a religious. Since he felt it proper to return the kind letters of recommendation Father Caraffa had given him and to acquaint the Theatines of his decision, he went to the Fathers and told them all that had been said to him. Caraffa's countenance suddenly became wry. He explained to the boy the Gospel's truth about religious vocations with such clarity that he completely expelled the false impression given by Ochino. The lad again took the long road to Naples, but this time he scrupulously avoided Rome. He was warmly received into the Neapolitan house, where he persevered in his self-imposed restrictions.

In the meantime, Ochino was at the height of his form. During Lent of the same year, he preached at St. Lorenzo in Damasco before congregations that included cardinals. He employed a reckless freedom of speech and had a trick of criticizing sharply those in high positions. All Rome streamed to hear and see him. One of his most ardent admirers was the most famous

poetess of the day, Vittoria Colonna, who favored him and the Capuchin order wherever she could, and thought thereby to advance the Catholic Reform, which she sincerely sponsored.

The Theatines remained vigilant in order to detect any hint of Lutheranism in either Venice or Naples. They received the news of Ochino's arrival with apprehension, and it was not long before they found that the trail of Luther led through Naples. Cajetan, while attending a sermon preached by the Capuchin in 1536, detected a change in one of the texts of the Fathers from which Ochino quoted, a clever change, made in such a way as to make easy the interpretation of justification by faith alone. The preacher took the words of St. Augustine, "He who made you without your help will not save you without your co-operation," and changed them by a mere inflection of the voice, converting the identical words into a question. The Italian was thus rendered equivalent to the English sentence: "Will God, who has created you without your help, not also save you without your co-operation?" Cajetan left the church with the resolve to ferret out every connection Ochino had in the city and to expose his heresy.

Upon investigation, Cajetan found that the sentiments that the friar expressed were not confined to the mistaken judgment of one man. As early as 1535, a priest of Catalonia, John Valdez, had established himself in Naples and had made the acquaintance of the Capuchin. Like Ochino, Valdez possessed a pleasing personality and was a gifted speaker. He was at disagreement on important points with the Church and he had put his teachings into writing and had attracted followers. Ochino was fascinated by Valdez and permitted him to prescribe the subject matter and scheme of his sermons. Subsequently, he came through this same friendship to know the writings of Luther, Bucer, and Calvin. Ochino became the third member of a heretical trio, of whom the second was Peter Martyr Vermiglio, Superior of the Hospital of St. Peter. Peter Martyr was a man of more than ordinary attainments, who possessed not only the classical languages but was a noted Scripture scholar and professor of apologetics.

Cajetan's alarm was increased when he learned of Ochino's clandestine relations with Valdez and Vermiglio. The three had divided the city of Naples among them in order to reach the people more effectively. Valdez was teaching in a private house, Ochino in the principal churches. Vermiglio was explaining the Epistles of St. Paul in his own monastery, where he was abbot. The church connected with the institute had incorporated with it the Confraternity of the Whites, and Vermiglio had succeeded through this society in making a great many contacts. His followers listened avidly to his discourses, which cleverly insinuated Luther's doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Together with Father Marinoni and a few other well-chosen companions, Cajetan visited the houses that fell under his suspicion. After they had obtained evidence sufficient to conclude that the men were truly teaching false doctrine, they forbade their penitents and friends to hear the heretics or to have any communication with them.

Cajetan then saw Caraffa and through him had the matter brought to the attention of the Holy See. This effort did not at the time have the effect he desired, and Ochino continued to enjoy the same prestige among Catholic thinkers that he had heretofore possessed. The agitation raised by the Theatines caused the viceroy to forbid Ochino to preach, but the heretic defended himself so adroitly that he was allowed to continue with his Lenten sermons. The few voices raised against the Capuchin had no effect outside of Naples. Upon hearing of the accusations, Vittoria Colonna explained it as the envy of other preachers, and this opinion was general. Viceroy Ferrante Gonzaga made continued attempts to procure him for his city of Palermo, and Venice claimed him through no less a spokesman than Peter Bembo. Ochino remained in the eyes of the world the ideal preacher and greater honors awaited him. In 1538 he was to be raised to the highest position in the Capuchin order, that of vicar-general, and in October of 1539 he was

recommended for the cardinalate. In 1541 he was again chosen vicar-general of his order and had his appointment confirmed by the pope.

During the great year of his triumphs, which was 1539, the Theatines repeated their charges against him but were unable to convince Catholic minds of his errors. He preached justification by faith so cleverly that only a few keen listeners scented heresy. In the meantime, Cajetan had been made superior of the Venetian house. In Lent of 1542, he was alarmed by the news that Bernard Ochino was to preach the Lenten sermons at the Holy Apostles Church of that city. The saint remembered the ruin his clever tongue had wrought in Naples and went in person to observe his talks. There was no mistake. In the same paragraph, even within the same sentence, Ochino was mixing orthodox Christian principles with heretical doctrine.

Cajetan permitted himself no rest. He knelt on the floor during the night and scourged himself repeatedly. After offering this penance for purity of doctrine within the Church, he composed the letters that he was sending to Rome. He went to the apostolic nuncio and laid the case before him and demanded that something be done. On this occasion, he had a point in his favor which strengthened his plea. Ochino had failed in human prudence. He had intervened on behalf of a certain Milanese theologian and professor of theology, known as Julius of Milan, who had been accused of heresy. Although the populace upheld the cause of their preacher hero and brought upon the nuncio such pressure that he permitted the sermons to be resumed within a few days, the incident was enough to set in motion a series of events that were to lead to a climax.

Cajetan proceeded cautiously. He made sure that his correspondence was directed to Caraffa personally. He hoped that thus the issue would be brought to the special notice of Paul III. That pontiff, who had grossly overrated Ochino, now became alarmed. But he was opposed to taking any steps against one so revered among all classes. He resolved to proceed only after thorough inquiry. He chose Cardinal Caraffa to write a courteous letter under date of July 15, 1542, inviting the preacher to come to Rome without unnecessary delay in order to discuss the "religious views of certain Capuchins."

When the letter reached the heretic he was at Verona preaching to his brethren of the order on the Epistles of St. Paul, which he interpreted to his own purpose. He was still inflated with pride and self-assurance. Upon receipt of the missive he felt no great alarm, but his sense of guilt was sufficient to cause him to seek a respite. He answered by requesting that, on account of his health, the visit to Rome be postponed until the hottest season was over. Up to this point even the staunch Giberti had supported him. Now the excuse was irritating. Giberti felt that if Ochino was at fault he should show humble submission to his highest superior. Others shared this view and the number of those whose eyes were opened increased. On July 27, the invitation was renewed. In the second letter, the heretic was ordered under pain of disobedience to start for Rome at once, as his advice was urgent and indispensable.

Unable to delay longer, the Capuchin set out. He traveled as far as Florence and stopped at the Augustinian monastery on the way to visit his old friend, Peter Vermiglio, who was under a similar cloud. The Augustinians had been checking on the teachings of their famous abbot and had summoned him to Genoa for a chapter of his order. Vermiglio had already decided to evade the issue by flight. When he heard of his friend's summons to Rome, he urged that the two, together, flee Italy for Geneva or some part of Germany. He produced a letter of invitation from the Duke of Saxony and assured Ochino that he had the means to flee.

Ochino realized that his friend had analyzed the situation shrewdly. He lacked the courage to face the Roman tribunal. Removing his religious habit and giving the seal of his order (he was still vicar-general) to the friar who had accompanied him, he fled to Geneva, soon to be followed

by Valdez and Vermiglio. The trio joined the forces of Calvin, and Ochino's apostasy was consummated.

In this instance, Caraffa showed that, as long as there was a chance for a conversion, he was willing to deal with heretics with the utmost leniency. Instead of condemning the offender when his apostasy was known to all, he wrote him a letter trying to persuade him to reconsider and return to the true faith. So as not to put the false preacher to shame, he blended an appreciation for all that Ochino had represented in the Church with rebukes that gave him no false hope of returning with the aim of continuing his former line of conduct. The letter, besides showing tact and solid argument, offers a brilliant display of Scriptural texts.

Ochino's reply was a volley of acrimonious letters directed to the pope, which to the harm already done by his cowardly flight, added the danger that the Capuchins whom he headed would be suppressed. It was only through the intercession of certain members of the papal court who were convinced of the integrity of the reformed Franciscans that the order was spared. Ochino continued his hazardous way without restraint. His polemics were prolific and he dared even attack the mystery of the Trinity – a step that antagonized even his own followers.

In Rome and all the other large cities of Italy the apostasy and desertion of the Capuchin superior was what Ludwig Pastor called "a scandal without parallel." When the apostate wrote to Vittoria Colonna from Geneva in an effort to defend himself, the loyal woman unhesitatingly took up the Catholic cause. She took the matter up with Cardinal Pole, her spiritual director, and upon his advice she turned her letters over to Cardinal Cervini. All the outstanding members of the papal court who had supported him up to the date of his apostasy were firm in their denunciation of his defiance of Roman authority.

Cajetan analyzed Ochino's case in a generalization aimed at all teachers of false doctrine: "Preachers come forth in the name of the Church; but if they teach according to their own way of thought and for their own profit the things about which they have insufficient knowledge, they cannot pass as representatives of the Church. One cannot wonder that in such cases they fall into error."



From the time of Ochino's apostasy, the struggle against heresy became an intense, bitter fight. Upon every provocation the powerful voice of Caraffa thundered accusations against them. Without regard for person or station in life, he launched violent attacks in order to blot out every taint of false doctrine. Gradually, two schools of thought arose as to the best method with the erring. Cardinals Contarini, Pole, Morone, and Sadoletto were of the opinion that the offenders should be dealt with in a gentle, friendly, and charitable manner. They felt that by this procedure fewer members would fall from the true faith. Opposed to this group was the strict party, headed by Cardinals Caraffa and Alvarez de Toledo, who felt that, in view of the universal peril to which Christendom was exposed, heretics should suffer the Inquisition as it was employed in the thirteenth century against the Waldensians and Cathari.

Caraffa's fiery zeal, which fostered the establishment of the tribunal in 1543, in the bull *Licet ab initio*, may have been somewhat rashly directed. He had seen the operations of the Spanish Inquisition when he was papal nuncio to the court of Spain, and never doubted that the same measures would be equally effective in Italy in achieving the desired results. The tribunal which the severer group used, although violent in its means, did check the further invasion of Protestant doctrine in Italy and cleared out that which had previously existed.

When Cardinal Caraffa became Pope Paul IV in 1555, he was in a position to make the most of the dreaded instrument. In the Campagna, he completely extirpated Waldensianism. He himself sat through the trials of heretics once each week. As for Lutheranism, its every infiltration was washed away before it had had time to become entrenched. Surely, these methods are not in accord with modern thought, lay or ecclesiastical, but they were effective and had the sanction of perfectly sincere and even saintly men. Kunkel, in his dissertation on the Theatines in the Catholic Reform, testifies to their effectiveness: “Caraffa stood as an immovable stone wall, thwarting its [heresy’s] every effort – against that wall, as against the Rock of St. Peter, heresy was impotent.”

The heretics, utterly unable to cope with this invulnerable warrior of the Church, felt that the bells that tolled the death of Paul IV in 1559 might at last be taken as a sign of victory. They formed a mob and pulled down his statue from the capitol and threw its head into the Tiber. They destroyed the arms of the Caraffa family wherever they were to be found. Confident of success, they made energetic attempts to re-organize, and only then realized the thoroughness of his warfare and the hopelessness of their own defeat. Italy never again became a prey of heresy. A nation had been saved for the Church and for God.



A brilliant expression of Theatine thought on the reform of the Church is the famous Memorial submitted to Clement VII by the Clerks Regular of St. Nicholas in Venice. Drawn up by Caraffa, who was the superior of the community, it suggests necessary remedies and outlines urgent reforms with a vigor of expression and a firmness of purpose that both impresses and edifies.

The Theatine Memorial deserves to be remembered for its extraordinary importance and exceptional interest as a source of historical exposition, and more yet as a synthesis of reform ideas, as a mirror of the thought and the life of the Theatines, inspired throughout by the principles and reforms contained in this document, which was destined to be the model and foundation of another report, no less famous, which was presented to Paul III in 1537 by the commission named by him for the reform of the Church. This too was drawn up by Caraffa, who was at that time a cardinal. It was the base of the reforms realized at Trent.

Memorials and proposals of reform there were before this, but none of them constituted a concrete and organic project of Catholic reform from a complete and integral point of view.

In this consisted the merit and importance of the Theatine Memorial. None of the many aspects of the vast and complicated problem of reform were left out of account, and for all the abuses an opportune remedy was skillfully suggested. It eschews the political aspect, and makes no reference to a general council. The Theatine point of view was – as we have said so many times – that practice, in any case, must precede theory, that first the necessary reforms must be realized, and then put down in writing.

In the dogmatic aspect, allusion was made with a certain irony to the love of novelty that was attributed to the Protestant doctrines: “The heresies of these rebels,” it was said, “are all ancient things, refuted and condemned long ago by Holy Church.” A plea was made for the continuation of the age-old practice of the Church of Rome, which saved her in the thirteenth century from the heresies of the Cathari and the Waldenses – to extract from the program of the heretics genuine elements of moral reform and take advantage of them to combat the disorders and abuses of the Church – then to press the attack against the doctrinal errors of the heretical movements.

The Theatine Memorial, drawn up in the City of the Doges October 4, 1532, was sent to Clement VII through Father Buenaventura of Venice. In the letter of presentation, Caraffa begged the pontiff to grant to the bearer the same “kindly audience” that he would have given to his own person.

The Memorial can be divided into three parts. The first refers to the Lutheran heresy and deploras the irresolution of the action against it. An outstanding remedy for this was the placing of the Inquisition in the hands of the Ordinaries, instead of the Observantines.

The second part of the document refers to the conditions of the priests, especially the regulars, who were destined for preaching and hearing confessions; it repeats the suggestion of Caraffa, made three years before, that no one should be allowed to preach or hear confessions without the previous approval of his Ordinary. It urged the end of the toleration of vagabond friars, discussed means of impeding the spread of heretical books, and saw in the lack of any residence requirements for bishops a fruitful source of abuse. None but fit men should hereafter be made priests, and Holy Orders should not be bestowed outside the territory of the ordaining bishop.

The third part spoke of the religious orders, “a thing,” said the Memorial, “that is of the greatest importance, since on them depends the health of the world, for they are extended like veins throughout the body of Christendom.” With touching insistence, the Memorial endeavored to convince the Pope of the necessity of their reform, since in the relaxation of monastic life lay one of the most potent causes of the calamities that had befallen the Church. Concrete solutions were proposed, such as the separation of the more fervent members in special convents, where they might follow the perfection of the founders’ rule.

The Theatine point of view on the power of the press as a means of the diffusion of both good and bad ideas, which was condensed in the Memorial of 1532 and in the letter of Cajetan to Bartolome Scaino, was to culminate in the first Index of Forbidden Books, drawn up in 1559, the work of the Theatine Pope, Paul IV.

Such, in broad outline, was the content of the Memorial submitted to Clement VII in 1532 by the Clerks Regular under the signature of their “Father Bishop.” Anyone who knows the wise decrees of the Council of Trent in its reform sessions of 1562 will see that the labor of the council was reduced to making effective the disciplinary measures outlined in this document, and that the action of the council constituted in this respect the full consecration of the spirit and directives of the work of St. Cajetan.



Upon the occasion of the fourth centenary of the Council of Trent, in 1945, the Vatican Post Office offered the public a new series of stamps, which was in the form of a tardy vote of appreciation to the most illustrious epoch of the Catholic Reform. One of these stamps bears the image of St. Cajetan. Yes, whatever other work may be attributed to him, the primary mission of Cajetan and the order he founded was reform.

In the Sacred Rota, as well as in the bull of canonization, it is recorded that Cajetan’s benefits extended to all classes, but especially to the clergy of whom he was a reformer. In confirmation of this view, the Jesuit Father Vincent Balestieri panegyricized before the saint’s canonization: “Blessed Cajetan, the reformer of the clergy, the founder of an apostolic congregation, the contemner of the world, the victor over self, the worker of miracles of our own times”; and another Jesuit, Thomas Strozzi, referred to him as the “first reformer of the clergy, the teacher of the world, the new Moses of the Evangelical Law.” St. Charles Borromeo, usually recognized as the Catholic reformer *par excellence*, would often say: “The Church will enjoy a happy era when

all those who eat the bread of the Church are like the Theatines in their manner of life.” Following the example of the early Theatines, St. Charles reformed the priests over whom he had jurisdiction and founded the Society of Oblates of St. Ambrose, an order of secular priests.

Amply attested is the fidelity with which the Theatines adhered to their self-imposed obligation of becoming the living example of true priests. In 1627, when the principal representatives of the order were gathered before Urban VIII on the occasion of the beatification of their founder, the pope addressed them with these significant words: “This institution of your holy founder is one of the most precious pearls that adorn the Church, the Spouse of Christ. It is a prodigy of poverty, a daily miracle of Divine Providence.”

In calling the congregation a daily miracle of Providence the pontiff had reference to the type of poverty observed by the members. The statement is of prime importance in considering the Theatines in relation to the Catholic Reform movement. The early founders rightly thought that in order to correct the evils of their age, it was necessary to begin at the fountainhead from which the muddy waters issued. They recognized that fountainhead to be the dissolute life of the clergy, and this in turn resulted from the misuse of wealth. The Theatine, Bernard Scotto, was to write in 1539: “Poverty is the only means at the present time of maintaining the clergy in independence and the Church in dignity.”

Beginning with the year 1503, about twenty years before the founding of the Theatines, there was a noticeable attempt on the part of the successive reigning popes to return to the spiritual. Notwithstanding that the reign of Julius II (1503 – 1513) was blighted by militarism and that of Leo X (1513 – 1521) by a pagan humanism, there is in those years a plainly discernible hankering after the fervor of past centuries. The reign of Adrian VI (1522 – 1523) and that of Clement VII (1523 – 1534) were even more sharply marked in this regard, and for a time it seemed that the papacy would assume leadership in reform, but neither pope fulfilled the expectations of the age.

Adrian VI was a man of undisputed virtue and eager for reform, but he was handicapped. By nature, he was a man of forbidding personality. The fact of his foreign birth probably added to the cold suspicion in which he regarded those about him. In spite of this, he made bold plans and showed a stern resolve. After the most prevalent and scandalous abuses were pointed out to him, he determined upon a line of action. The city of Rome and the papal curia itself were his first objectives. He set the example by cutting down his own revenues and then forbidding prelates to go ostentatiously about the city in luxury. He directed reform measures against plural benefices, nepotism, and other abuses of the time. Because of his short reign (a year and eight months) credit cannot be given to Adrian for much that was afterwards accomplished as a result of his zeal, but at least he can claim the merit of instituting a definite program and taking the first steps which lightened the task of his successors.

Clement VII had been an energetic reformer as Archbishop of Florence, and the first part of his reign indicated that he would continue as such. He called numerous assemblies of the curia and invited prelates from Italy, Spain, and elsewhere to formulate a general program. From his time, the enactments of the Fifth Lateran Council (1512 – 1517), which had been largely disregarded, began to be enforced. On September 2, 1524, he issued a decree providing for a visitation of the churches of Rome and for an examination of the clergy. But the character of this well-meaning pontiff was too irresolute and vacillating for an energetic reform regime. Political and family interests demanded too much of his attention and achievements fell far below hopes. Fortunately for the Church, he was an ardent admirer of the Theatines, having been a personal

friend of each of the original members of that clerical band. He leaned upon them for strength and for the power of decision he so sadly lacked.

Cajetan and his Theatines were like sharp-edged instruments of the Church. They were excellently qualified to cope with the disorganization of the Church. Although they numbered only four at the time of their founding, they were an *élite* group. Each personality among them was courageous, intelligent, and capable. They were moreover saintly men who subordinated every Earthly advantage to faith, to virtue, and to God. Though much credit is due to the Oratory of Divine Love, it would have been famous if its only accomplishment had been to possess men so eminent as Cajetan and Caraffa. These two were conspicuous even among the great of the day.

Each accomplished his goals in his own characteristic way. Cajetan was the gentle apostle, winning his victories through love. Prayer was his sword, humility his shield. He reigned in the sphere of the spirit; Caraffa was supreme in the realm of deeds. Yet Caraffa's life was directed and dominated by the intense spirituality of the saint. The story of Caraffa's achievements is nothing more than a narration of St. Cajetan's aims fulfilled. Caraffa was a strong, uncompromising champion of right. He loved the Church intensely and defied all its enemies. No hardship daunted him; no opposition slackened his pace. Despite their differences of temperament, Caraffa and Cajetan were in perfect harmony of purpose.

Even before the founding of the order, Caraffa had a reputation for severity; it was generally known that he could be unyielding when the good of religion was in question. When he took over the bishopric of Chieti he found clerical discipline in a deplorable state. The former bishops had neglected to insist on canonical residence and upon Caraffa's formal entry into the diocese his dominating aim was the discipline of the clergy. His temperament required that he always be busy. By training and natural ability he was a leader of men, recognized for his habit of getting things done. He succeeded in making Chieti a model diocese. Caraffa was in fact so completely absorbed in seeing that his program of disciplinary reconstruction was put through that he did not find time to attend the Fifth Lateran Council until after the sixth session had begun.

His reforming zeal could not but attract attention at a time when discipline was in such general decline. Adrian VI and Clement VII realized their need of this mighty figure to carry out their programs of reform of the Roman curia and the clergy of the city. They felt relief in the assurance that they had at last found a man who possessed the moral courage and strength of will to assume an unpleasant task, which was enough to make even a strong man faint of heart.

As might have been anticipated, many prelates opposed Caraffa bitterly. He found priests ignorant and untrained, or lax and remiss. He changed the whole aspect of their ministry. Priests were examined and properly prepared for their sacred functions. The careless and lukewarm were suspended. A letter of January 5, 1527, written by a member of the Society of Divine Love, attested Caraffa's success:

Christ is now more feared and more honored than before. The proud humble themselves, the good praise God, and the wicked are without hope. Let us pray for their conversion, for the Fathers and, above all, for Caraffa. God uses him in the Church. Just think, the first prelates and lords of Rome, who at first despised us, come to us daily as humbly as if they were our servants, so that I am quite embarrassed. They give evidence of the greatest readiness to do penance, for prayer, and for pious works. They do everything that the Fathers tell them. Yet more: Daily the Pope asks us miserable sinners for our prayers.

The fearless Theatine joined intense zeal to great ability, and by bringing his influence to bear on the papal curia he spread a healing lotion over Christendom. The universal Church could scarcely elevate itself above the moral tone of its head. By his work in and outside the papacy, Rome became again the central figure toward which all Christian eyes turned for leadership and example. By strengthening the central administration of the Church, he clothed the reform movements with the force of his sanction and energized them by his example and zeal.

The promotion of Caraffa to the cardinalate constituted something like an official approval of the reforming methods of the Theatines. The program of restoration outlined five years before in the quiet of the cloister of San Nicola in the Venetian capital was to begin to make itself felt in Christendom through another report of an official character, drawn up by the Theatine cardinal in 1537.

This document was the famous *Consilium Delectorum Cardinalium de Emendanda Ecclesia*, which represented the labors of nine prelates appointed by Paul III to frame a plan of reform for the Church. Among them, John Caraffa was the guiding spirit.

The nine members of the commission named by Paul included five cardinals – Caraffa, Contarini, Aleandro, Sadoletto, and Pole; two bishops, Federico Fregoso and Mateo Giberti; the Benedictine abbot, Gregory Cortese; and the Dominican Thomas Badia, Master of the Sacred Palace.

“The extraordinary importance of this Memorial,” says Ludwig Pastor, “consists principally in the fact that by its means the Pope placed the axe to the very root of the evils existing in Rome by reducing to practice the principle of Caraffa that action must begin at home.” •

The Theatine concept, according to which the greed of certain sectors of the clergy and hierarchy was the most potent cause of the evils of Christendom, was indicated – and this is symptomatic – in the memorable report as the deadly root of the abuses that afflicted the Church.

The first of the abuses, according to the Reform Commission, was the very one indicated in the Theatine Memorial of 1582, which is here specified in almost the same words: “The first duty incumbent on the Pope is to see that the members of the clergy, bishops as well as priests, are of irreproachable life, wise, virtuous, and worthy.” What other motive than this had inspired the foundations of the Clerks Regular? Like the Theatine Memorial, the report informed the Pope of the lack of selectivity with which ignorant and unworthy men were admitted to Orders, to the infinite hurt of the ecclesiastical state and the decay of divine worship. The remedies proposed coincide, even in details, with the Memorial of Caraffa.

The report then urged the necessity of bishops and priests with the care of souls to exercise their office in person, and the scrupulous fulfillment of residence requirements. This was one of the measures most insisted on in the Theatine Memorial.

To remedy the enormous abuses arising from the conferment and resignation of ecclesiastical benefices in spite of canon laws, it was proposed that in no case should these be conferred on the cardinals of the curia, much less by princes.

Simoniacal procedures in the concession of dispensations and special graces in the name of the sovereign pontiff were stigmatized; the traffic in indulgences by alms collectors was denounced. Also under censure came the concession of the faculty to contract marriages by those in Holy Orders, over-liberal matrimonial dispensations, immoderate indulgences, the easy commutation of vows and last wills, etc.

Against the relaxation of the rule of cloister the Reform Commission protested in energetic terms. It proposed the provisional suppression of those religious orders whose relaxation was

• *History of the Popes*, Vol. XI, p. 160.

notorious, and the closing of their novitiates until they were again filled with good religious. This measure coincided with that proposed by the Theatine Memorial, which advocated the separation of fervent religious in special convents as in cities of refuge.

The great work of reform outlined by the Council of Trent in its closing session of 1563 was marked out and substantially prepared for by the Memorial of 1537, which has rightly been styled the “Golden Memorial.”

Parallel with this labor, Caraffa and Contarini, with Cardinals Simonetta and Ghinucci, received from the Farnese pope another important mission, the reform of the Datary, the office through which ecclesiastical favors and dispensations were granted. On no other point of ecclesiastical administration did so many bitter quarrels arise against the Church, and particularly against the Roman curia, than on the continual huge demands for money in the concession of spiritual favors. But it needed all the zeal of a Paul III, and the inflexible decision of a Caraffa, to carry out a reform in an administrative department that gave an annual return to the curia, through the concession of favors, dispensations, privileges, indulgences, and benefices reserved to the Pope of no less than 110,000 ducats, that is to say, almost half of all his revenues.

The necessity of clerical poverty as advocated in the reform of the Theatines can be appreciated from this frank letter of Adrian VI, in his famous instruction of November 25, 1522, to Francisco Chiericati, a native of Venice and a relative of that other famous Cajetan, who was Nuncio at the Diet of Nuremberg:

You must say also that we freely admit that God has permitted this affliction [the Lutheran heresy] to befall the Church because of the sins of men, and especially of priests and prelates. . . . Holy Scripture tells us clearly that the sins of the people have their origin in the sins of the priests. And for this reason, as Chrysostom observes, our Divine Savior, when He wished to purify the sick city of Jerusalem, turned first to the Temple to reprove above all the sins of the priests, in imitation of the good physician, who cures the disease in its root. We know well that even in this Holy See there have been taking place, for many years, things deserving of rebuke; that ecclesiastical things have been abused in violation of the precepts, and that they have been wholly perverted. Thus there is no wonder that the illness has spread from the head to the members, from the Pope to the prelates.*

In his instruction to Luis de Zuñiga concerning the business of the Council of Trent, Philip II of Spain declared:

What the heretics have principally published and emphasized, and which has contributed greatly to the alienation of many from the obedience of the Holy Roman Church, and not only to alienate them, but to make her name odious with calumny, sacrilege, and blasphemy, has been that which is said to happen in the Roman curia, so that in matters of justice as well as of grace, and not only in respect to heretics but even in the Catholic provinces, there have arisen a great murmuring and scandal, bitterness and quarreling.†

From the day he entered the curia, Cajetan noted the gravity of the problem and took time to analyze it and to prepare a solution. For the reform of the Church “in head and members,” the most urgent thing was not that the pope or council should establish norms by new decrees. The

* Pastor, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 107—108.

† Tejada y Ramiro: *El Sacrosanto y ecumenico Concilio do Trento*, Madrid, 1853, p. 641.

word was already given. What was needed was that everyone take the Gospels to heart and begin sincerely to reform himself.

In accordance with his judgment that it was better to keep silent and work than to be content with mere censure, Cajetan tackled the evil in its root by proceeding to the reform of the clergy through a system of select minorities which, by the example of their detachment, condemned the ambition and greed for Earthly goods and created the moral climate in which the decrees and teachings of the Holy See and the councils could bear fruit.

The historic *Consilium* was the product of an official ecclesiastical investigation ordered by Paul III. It opened the eyes of the Christian world to the parasitic abuses which were draining the Church of her pristine strength and vitality. Those who produced this document were courageous men. By it they placed boldly before the world a humiliating accusation, in which all, enemies and friends, could learn unmistakably the depths of the decline in the discipline of the Church. One can detect Caraffa's deliberateness in the steered and measured terms he used to describe the papal curia, ". . . the fountain whence spring such grave abuses that make the Church ridiculous among the nations."

After striking at the head, Caraffa continued the attack against the entire body: cardinals unmindful of duty at the curia, bishops not observant of canonical residence, religious casting aside religious garb, ignorant priests, simony and trafficking in benefices, dirty vestments, laxity in granting dispensations, neglected hospitals, destitute widows, houses of sin – there was no equivocation, no partiality in the list.

After the *Consilium* of 1537, Christian nations for the first time were keenly aware of the desperate plight of the Church. The holding of a general council came to be considered universally an urgent necessity. The Church, however, moves slowly, and eight years elapsed before the first session of the general council met in Trent in 1545. That it was the stem document of the *Consilium* which urged the opening of the ecumenical council should not be overlooked. The immense good achieved by the council is known to all. Within the span of a lifetime it reformed all sides of ecclesiastical and religious life, from that of the highest dignitary to that of the lowliest hermit of the Apennines.

The spirit of Caraffa was active in the council until his death in 1559. Nine cardinals under his charge were given residence in Rome for the duration of the council in order to communicate freely with the Pope. It was only to the Theatine leader that Paul III entrusted his innermost thoughts on the subject of reform, as Cardinal Salviati attests. While other Theatines contributed appreciably to the success of the council, it was the powerful mind of Caraffa that shaped many of the decrees that were later enacted. The enactments bore his unmistakable stamp, for they were traceable to those he had formulated for his own diocese and that of Matthew Giberti, Bishop of Verona.

"The Pontificate of Paul IV," writes Pastor in his *History of the Popes*, "marks an important chapter in the history of Catholic Reformation, for which it prepared the victory."

And again:

The breaking with the tradition of appointing cardinals according to the will of princes; the calling of outstanding men to the senate of the Church; the pitiless struggle against simony in all its forms; the suppression of commendams and venal incomes and offices, the reform of the monasteries, the Datary, and the Penitentiary; and finally the introduction of the obligation of residence for bishops – all this is the great and lasting merit of Paul.

We need to recall the wretched conditions of the times of Alexander VI and Leo X to appreciate Paul IV as he deserves. The suppression of abuses so ancient, so deeply rooted, and so widely extended was possible only by a violent procedure that had to carry with it all the harshness of an inexorable repression. But for that Paul IV was the man.

The hopes of the Church were realized in the Theatine pope. Paul IV carried out, from the Chair of St. Peter, the very plan of reform and ecclesiastical apostolate that was conceived and developed in intimate collaboration with Cajetan of Thiene. When the Council of Trent decreed his wise reforms of ecclesiastical discipline, it limited itself to making its own the salutary ordinances promulgated by the co-founder of the Theatines. The essence of Church discipline after four centuries still lives and is fed from the lifeblood of the pure Theatine spirit, injected into the vital organs of the Spouse of Christ by Cajetan of Thiene through his personal action, and through that of Caraffa, who worked from the strategic posts that he occupied in the hierarchy, first as cardinal and afterwards as sovereign pontiff.

In fact the successors of Paul IV, and the Council of Trent itself, did no more, in matters of reform, than continue and develop the work of Caraffa. "The popes of the time of the reform," writes Pastor, "could continue building successfully on this foundation so solidly established.*"

Giberti, practically speaking, achieved his reform when he sent a collection of his decrees to Paul III. According to Pastor, his edicts treated of the worthy manner of clerical life; the clerical garb; the general behavior of the priesthood; the proper celebration of divine worship, especially the Mass; the profitable exercise of the preacher's office; the duty of pointing out errors of doctrine; the administration of the sacraments; the becoming care and adornment of churches; the abuses of the system of indulgences; cases of reservation; processions; wedlock; the management and expenditure of church revenues; the punishment of clerical offenders – in short, almost all ecclesiastical questions were herein handled in the spirit of a thorough Catholic reformation.

St. Charles Borromeo was enthusiastic in his praise of the enactments he later found in force in the Diocese of Verona. He wished to enact the same in his own Diocese of Milan and recommended them to the prelates at Trent, who adopted them and ordered their observance in the entire Catholic world. That the members of the Tridentine Council did not disdain the enactments of a comparatively small diocese as the model after which they would fashion an all-embracing program of reform is a tribute to their sincerity and earnestness. By this action they proved that their only object was uniformity of worship and the general welfare of the universal Church.

There is a letter extant in which Giberti stated: "The spirit and zeal of my very close friend Caraffa have been the author . . . of these noble constitutions," and on the title page of the same constitutions, Giberti wrote a testimony, which reads:

Both Caraffa and Giberti . . . enacted the laws of the orthodox Fathers of the Holy Council of Trent, concerning which ample testimony is given of how profitable they have been, not only in regard to the diocese of Verona, but also to the entire world, because from these constitutions were taken the decrees that have been so profitable to the Catholic Church of Christ.

* *Op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 362.

The Theatines take pride in the reforming work of Giberti and consider it their own. In spirit and purpose, Giberti always remained a Theatine. In his private life he placed himself under a strict discipline and divided his day between work and prayer. This he had done after asking Boniface of Colle to explain to him the essentials of the Theatine Constitutions in order that he might imitate the spiritual life of the order. By his probity of life under Father Boniface's guidance, he merited the title of *Exemplar Boni Pastoris* both from contemporary and succeeding reformers.

Caraffa, together with the other Theatines, became more and more an effective instrument of the sovereign pontiff. The papacy showed him continued favor and kept him in close contact with the curia. But the cardinal's unyielding ways of instilling salutary changes were not the chief weapon of the Theatines in enforcing a reform program. They continually kept in mind their primary purpose of coming into existence – to achieve a thorough regeneration of the Church by the return of the Catholic ministry to the apostolic simplicity of early Christianity. They were to accomplish this by their example as model priests. Their aim was to present in their own lives a vital definition of an *Alter Christus*.

From the start the Theatines regarded secular matters as contaminating. Their minds clung to the spiritual. They wished to serve the altar freely, for its own sake, not for gain. An acknowledgment on the part of the Church as to the praiseworthy work of the Theatines as priest models is found in the papal bull of March 7, 1533. In this document, Clement VII renewed and extended their privilege and granted them generous concessions. His action is surprising, since his favor was shown at a time when the order had only one house and numbered less than twenty religious. He granted full recognition of their aims, under vows, and their studies of theology, Scripture, and the sacred canons. The Pope lauded their accomplishments and extended to them, though they were only clerks regular, the status of a religious order, with all the exemptions and privileges of other religious establishments.

Undoubtedly Caraffa won favor for his order in the papacy. Yet the Pope could hardly have shown this magnanimous – indeed almost partisan – attitude toward the Theatines and have encouraged them in all their undertakings in the way he did without reason to justify his action. This attitude of respect and deference toward the early Theatines was maintained by St. Charles Borromeo, who wished three of the Fathers to act on the commission for the reform of the clergy. Furthermore, he frequently left to their discretion the solution of the most important problems. He had a deep reverence for St. Andrew Avellino and considered him the “best living idea that we can form of a true apostle.” His correspondence with St. Andrew is frank and intimate, indicating the bonds of a sincere and devoted friendship.

To show the powerful influence exerted on the life of the Church by the early Theatines, it is sufficient to quote from *Portraits of the Illustrious Men of the Congregation of Clerks Regular*, by Bianchi: “Of the 4,500 Fathers belonging to the Congregation during the first 244 years of its existence, almost one-third have been honored with ecclesiastical jurisdiction and dignity.” The Jesuit Oliva wrote in regard to the Theatine authors: “The writers of this learned community have enriched the libraries of popes and kings with precious volumes filled with wisdom in every branch of science.”

Other Theatines dominant in the Council of Trent were Bernard Scotto and the English Thomas Goldwell. Goldwell became Bishop of Asaph in England and was the last survivor of the old hierarchy of England and Wales. In this position he worked indefatigably in councils, directing his interests toward the preservation of the faith in England, where it was being cruelly

persecuted by Elizabeth. Cardinal Scotto, according to the annals of the order, influenced the council under Pius IV, who depended on his prudent advice.



“The history of the religious orders,” writes Father Ventura Raulica,

. . . comprises four great periods: That of the anchorites, headed by St. Paul, the first hermit; that of the monks, led by Benedict; that of the mendicant orders, of which Francis of Assisi was founder and model; and finally that of the institutes of Clerks Regular, of which Cajetan of Thiene was the master-in-chief and patriarch.

Pastor in his *History of the Popes* states:

The strict manner of life among the Theatines very soon became proverbial, and their example pointed the way with irresistible force to the reform of the clergy throughout Italy. In fact, a genuine enthusiasm for reform had gripped the people. New foundations patterned after the Theatines came into being while numerous older orders were eager to free themselves from their corrupt conditions.

The reformed institutes were: the Camaldolese, the Augustinian hermits, the Benedictines of Monte Cassino, and the Franciscan Observants. Among the new foundations are numbered the Somaschi, the Barnabites, the Capuchins (from the Franciscans), the Jesuits, the Congregation of Regular Clerks Minor, the Ursulines, and numerous houses of women, especially during the pontificates of Sixtus V, Gregory XIV, and Clement VII.

The order is also honored for the introduction of many religious institutes into various cities. “It has been a matter of routine,” wrote the Theatine Silos, “for us to co-operate in the foundation or reform of other societies. This zeal has come down to us as a sacred heritage from our fathers.”

In Naples alone, through their help, were introduced the Camaldolese of St. Romuald, the Dominicans of the Abruzzi, the Discalced Carmelites of St. Teresa, the Fathers of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, the Clerks Regular of the Somaschi and the Barnabites, and a religious institute called Ministers of the Sick. Probably their greatest efforts were expended in their endeavor to introduce the Jesuits into Naples. Father Oliva, S. J., testified throughout his works that the Theatines were often of great help in assisting the spread of the Jesuits into new territory.

The connection between the two societies in their foundation is so close as to merit further examination.



At the end of December, 1535, there arrived at the Queen City of the Adriatic Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. According to an agreement with his companions, made after the vow at Montmartre, Ignatius was to wait for them in the city of St. Mark, where they were to resume their journey to the Holy Land.

What contact did Ignatius have with the Clerks Regular in the capital of the Signoria?

The firmest supporter of Ignatius in Venice was the nobleman Pietro Contarini, a disciple of Caraffa and an intimate friend of the Theatines; he had been the protector of the hospital since 1524.

In 1537 there came also to Venice the companions of Ignatius – among them St. Francis Xavier.

We know that Cajetan was absent from Venice from the beginning of August, 1533, when he went to Naples to look after the founding of a house of his order. Probably, therefore, the two founders never met.

When Ignatius came to Venice the Company of Jesus was only a sketchy project, which did not begin to take shape until four years later, after the deliberations held by the saint in Rome with his first companions in the spring months of 1539. The future founder of the Jesuits was housed in the Hospital of the Incurables.

It is easily understandable that Ignatius was curious to know the Theatines, to study their institute, and that the new type of religious life impressed him. An athlete for the greater glory of God, he must have felt the attraction of this singular band of workers of the Gospel, made up of simple clerics with religious vows, who united prayer and work, solitude and ministry, retirement and apostolate. He sought and obtained one or several interviews with Bishop Caraffa.

As Pio Paschini noted, would it be hazardous to suppose that the practical and perspicacious mind of Ignatius had taken example from the hard experiences of the first Clerks Regular in Rome and later in Venice? The practice of trying postulants by service in hospitals – did not Ignatius see that in use among the Theatines? The prohibition of fixed revenues in the professed houses of the Company – was not that a capital point in Theatine discipline? If it was a novelty that the Theatines did not bind themselves to the services of the choir with the same rigor as the canons regular in the mendicant orders, Loyola took one more step and suppressed the choir in his order. In this he did nothing else than imitate Caraffa, for whom preaching, hearing confessions, and the study of the sacred sciences were of greater importance than assistance at choir.

The renunciation of a special garb and the adoption of the dress in use among the clergy of the country, the suppression of music in the churches of the institute, the naming of a prefect given to the superior general and the superiors of the houses, the very name of “company” applied to the whole order, were all elements of Theatine organization before the publication of the bull *Regimini militantis* of September 27, 1540, by which Paul III formally approved the Company of Jesus sixteen years after the foundation of the Theatines.

The structural similarities of the two religious societies and the apparently similar means for the attainment of the same end were for the Theatines a sword of Damocles during the pontificate of Pius IV, for a variety of reasons that it is not our purpose to analyze. The third of the Medici popes determined to incorporate the Theatine Congregation into the Society of Jesus, on the ground of institutional identity. The danger was averted by the good offices of Guglielmo Sirleto, then Prothonotary Apostolic, and afterwards Cardinal, who lived with the Theatines.



One of the aims of the society at its origin was to establish among the clergy a dignified and exact performance of the rites and ceremonies of the Church and the punctilious observance of divine worship. The large number of liturgists whom the order has produced attests their devotion to this cause. Cajetan sought always to attain the dignity befitting the liturgy by insisting on simplicity. The Psalms particularly, he insisted, should be chanted in a simple inflection of the voice, but without melody, that the spirit of the early Church might be renewed. His purpose was that every sacred function be performed in its proper time and in an orderly manner.

Cajetan's zeal was inflamed, to oppose the heretics who scorned and rejected the custom of singing the divine praises as introduced into the Church by the Apostles. Luther considered chanting in choir *laborem inutilem* (a useless work). The same error was held by Wycliffe before him. But Cajetan, like St. Bernard, thought of the chanting of the Psalms as "a sweet violence done to the Lord." In the choir he was absorbed in God, and he wished his spiritual sons to chant the Psalms in the same spirit as that of the early Church. According to St. Isidore, of the sixth century, the first Christians "praised God in a voice not high, not low, but so modest that it resembled a simple pronunciation more than a composed chant." It was this simple apostolic way of chanting the Psalms that was renewed by Theatine devotion.



In all their efforts directed to divine worship the Theatines chose the Eucharist as the subject of emphasis. At the time of the founding of the order, false doctrines and novelties would have destroyed belief in the Sacrament of the Altar. The Theatines initiated the custom of public adoration, and largely through their example it was spread throughout Italy. To counteract false notions of the Real Presence, the Theatines exposed the Blessed Sacrament above brilliantly lighted and elaborately decorated altars. The first date for the public exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was the year 1521. The reason given for the innovation was to counteract the influence of Protestantism and save the Venetian Republic from the calamities of war. From the first exposition, for which Cajetan was responsible in the Oratory of Divine Love, the custom spread elsewhere and the Theatine Fathers introduced the practice into Naples when they opened their house there in 1533.

The origin of the custom of extending the adoration to a period of forty hours is clouded in obscurity. At least as early as the beginning of the Middle Ages a devotion of this length of time was kept at the Holy Sepulchre. Its purpose was to commemorate the time in which, according to popular belief, the Saviour remained in the tomb. This custom prevailed until the beginning of the sixteenth century, when adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the altar displaced the vigil at the Sepulchre.

The actual development, however, is hard to trace. In Milan, by 1527, Anthony Bellotto seems to have observed this length of time in connection with a confraternity belonging to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. There is also evidence that a Capuchin, Joseph Piantanida da Fermo, organized the program by which the forty hours' exposition was transferred from church to church in Milan. In view of the close connection of the Capuchins with the Theatines in their beginnings, it is logical to conclude that this practice is the direct result of Theatine influence and a continuation and expansion of their first exposition in Venice. And, if the Barnabite, St. Anthony Mary Zaccharia, organized a period of forty hours' adoration, as some claim, this again refers in its origin to the Theatines, on whose guidance the Barnabites at first depended.

It is safe to say that the custom of public exposition was begun in Venice by Cajetan in 1521 and propagated by the Theatines. No adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed outside the tabernacle antedates this. Once instituted, the practice was transferred to other seasons of the year. In the year 1539, Paul III gave his approval to the transfer of the forty hours' devotion from ceremonies at the Savior's tomb to a period of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and enriched the practice with many indulgences.

The early Theatines devised other means of showing their love and devotion for the Eucharist. They considered it sheer ingratitude that the Body of the Lord should be left alone in the tabernacle for days and nights without adorers. Hence they solicited the names of volunteers to

make special visits to the churches under Theatine care. After the lists were made up, they divided the hours of the days and nights among volunteers for the period of a year, that the Sacred Host might not lack adorers. Their first success was in the convent of Theatine Sisters founded by Venerable Ursula Benincasa, who in her constitutions obliged the members of her community to practice this perpetual adoration. It then spread to France and next to Cremona and Brescia, where the Theatines founded the Congregation of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In the general chapter of the order held in Rome in 1710, the spread of devotion to the Eucharist was recommended as a distinctive mark of the Theatines.



The Theatine congregation, destined to provoke a vigorous reaction against the worldliness of wide sectors of the clergy of the time, could not neglect that vital part of the Church's life which was the liturgy. The ornamentation of churches, the beauty of sacred vessels, artistically woven vestments, the solemnity of sacred functions, the impressive gravity of ceremonies – above all the spirit of the liturgy, intensely lived by the clerics of the congregation, are notes of the work of Cajetan.

Apart from the confusion and anarchy existing in the liturgical office of the sixteenth century because of the fact that every diocese and many particular churches had their own Breviary, as they had their own Missal, the subject matter was often so poor, so extravagant, so absurd, that it provoked the indignation of the humanists of the Renaissance. “What stomach can stand such an accumulation of silly legends from apocryphal books, such paltry fiction?” wrote Caraffa to the Bishop of Verona in 1533.

After barely five years of study, the Theatines presented to Clement VII from Venice the fruit of their labor: a reformed Missal and Breviary, and a new Office of the Virgin. The pope authorized the recitation of the new office in the Theatine churches for one year.

Thirty-six years later, upon the elevation of Caraffa to the Chair of Peter, he included in his program of ecclesiastical reform the fundamental revision of the *Roman Breviary* and asked for the collaboration of the Clerks Regular. His successor, Pius IV, referred Caraffa's unfinished labors to the Council of Trent, which submitted its work at its closing session to St. Pius V.

That saintly pope, in his bull decreeing the *Roman Breviary* for the universal Church, declared that the much-wished-for restoration of the *Roman Breviary* was carried out basically according to the reforms conceived and elaborated by the Clerks Regular.

The splendor and decorum of the Divine Office had shockingly deteriorated by the sixteenth century. Caraffa, as we have seen, lamented in a letter to Giberti that he was annoyed in his recitation of it by its incorrectness and apocryphal insertions. Some of the lessons were not approved by the Church; the narratives were not worthy of credibility; the rubrics were confusion; the language employed was often merely vulgar diction. Traces of superstition pervaded the lessons. Attempts at revision had been made from the time of Gregory VII (1073 – 1085), but no effectual and lasting results had been obtained.

After the rise of humanism, two schools of thought arose about the reform of the Breviary. One faction believed that beauty of diction, perfection of construction, and other ideals of the Renaissance should be given first consideration. The second clung to the ancient customs and traditions of early Christianity. The Theatines headed the second school; Quiñónez was the leader of the first. Clement VII commissioned each group to offer a revised and corrected model. He permitted the Theatines to use the Breviary they had revised both in private and in public prayer.

The revision of the Breviary was a tremendous burden on the young community, with fewer members than could well attend to their daily duties and with no fixed abode during a great part of the time. Although they worked under hardships apparently insurmountable, they applied themselves energetically and ceaselessly to the task. They discarded the homilies of Origen and others of doubtful repute and replaced them by the writings of the Fathers. They remodeled the meter, rhythm, and wording of the hymns according to Caraffa's exquisite Latin and prescribed fitting rubrics for each season of the liturgical year.

On January 21, 1529, they presented to Clement what they considered a finished product. They had been five years at this work, and they completed it seven years before Cardinal Quiñónez was able to present his performance. The Pope, however, procrastinated in his acceptance. Since he had given two commissions, he felt that he must hold up the final decision until both revisions could be studied thoroughly. Death deprived the Theatines of their loyal supporter before Quiñónez could finish his revision. The succeeding pontiff, Paul III, was humanistically inclined, and he gave the work of Quiñónez temporary acceptance. The labors of the Theatines seemed to have been fruitless.

Upon the ascendance of Paul IV, however, the publication of another edition of Quiñónez's Breviary was forbidden. It appeared that the curia intended to adopt an official *Roman Breviary* that would incorporate the efforts of the Theatines. Again, delay was caused by the death of the sovereign pontiff, and it seemed that the order might be deprived forever of the recognition of their services.

But the commission established by the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent, headed for a time by the Theatine Cardinal Bernard Scotto, advocated the publication of the Theatine Breviary. Pope St. Pius V placed the final censure on the humanistic work of Cardinal Quiñónez.

The praise accorded the order for its work on the *Roman Breviary* has been boundless. Its completion contributed inestimably toward shaping the holy rites to the state of elegance in purity that they possess at the present day.

Cajetan's reform in matters of liturgy and music, within the framework of the ecclesiastical restoration in the period before Trent, contributed to create the moral climate that favored the submission of the problem of sacred music to the council. The lively discussions of the Fathers at Trent show to what point the renovating impulse of the patriarch of Thiene had succeeded in opening a path to the reform of sacred music.

The liturgico-musical reform undertaken by the Theatines of the sixteenth century, and imitated by other prelates and reformers, was to crystallize four centuries later in the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X regarding religious music. Perhaps because of it, Pius X, the pontiff who restored the Order of St. Cajetan, ordained that in the future the norms and prescriptions of the *Motu Proprio* should rule among the Clerks Regular. The *Motu Proprio* constitutes the culminating point of reform in liturgico-musical matters that received its first impulse under Cajetan.

If Cajetan shared in the reform of the Missal and the *Roman Breviary* with Scotti, Goldwell, and Vicente Massa, he also had a share in the correction of the *Martyrology* with Massa and Antonio Agellio, as well as in the reform of the Pontifical and the bishops' Ceremonial with Michael Ghislieri, and in the publication of the Vulgate and the Septuagint with Agellio, who brought to this enterprise labor of such merit that he was said by the Bishop of Viterbo to "hold first place in the restoration and elucidation of the Greek Bible."

It will always be a title of glory for the patriarch of the Clerks Regular that the classical authors in the field of sacred rites have been almost exclusively Theatines for several centuries.

They have given to the sacred liturgy the same impulse that theology received from the Dominicans. Suffice it to cite Andrew Castaldo, Francisco Maggio, Cajetan Morati, Paul Maria Quarto, and particularly Blessed Joseph Maria Caro, elevated to the purple in 1712.

Another of the ancient customs revised for the Church by the Reformer was the recitation in a standing posture of the Mass and the Psalms of the Divine Office. “It is not for the minister to sit but to stand,” says St. John Chrysostom. Thus was a great aid to fervor and devotion restored.

Here it is well to note the influence Cajetan’s love of the Mass had on the more frequent celebration of the sacrifice. At that time even pious priests were not accustomed to say Mass every day. Caraffa omitted it when his duties as cardinal did not permit him to say it with the necessary preparation. Cajetan went to Rome with no other purpose than to convince his friend of his error.



Throughout Theatine history, the alleviation of the suffering and the ministering of the consolations of the Church to the dying have been continuous activities. According to Kunkel:

The Clerks Regular found their happiness laboring for the good of others . . .
Whether the good of others implied the saving of their souls by encouraging the use of the sacraments and by preaching, or whether it meant the performance of works of charity among the sick and dying .

Heroic is the word for their ministrations, not only during the great plague in Rome in 1526 but also in 1528, when Venice was pest-ridden. The same extraordinary charity was shown in Padua in 1576, in Milan in 1577, in Genoa in 1579, in Palermo in 1624, and in Naples in 1656.

The number of Theatines who died from assisting the plague-infected is beyond estimate. Upon many occasions, the priests arose from their beds when prostrate with fever in order to attempt to reach a dying person in time to hear his last confession. It is suggestive of the action of Providence to note that in many instances in which the Fathers contracted diseases characterized by a fever that normally deprives its victims of reason, they retained perfect command of their faculties to their last breath. Stories are told of dying Theatines receiving visits from the Blessed Mother, the saints, or angels as their end drew near. On other occasions it is said that the bodies of the Fathers that had been buried in nameless graves miraculously rose to the surface with their faces bearing the natural color of life – a miracle performed to fulfill the wish the deceased had retained during life: that of being buried in a Theatine cemetery.

VIII

The Consuming Flame

For the Kingdom of Heaven Is theirs; who despising the life of this world, attained to the rewards of Heaven and washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb (Apoc. 7:14).

Once again it must be said that of all the virtues of the early Theatines, it was their utter fidelity to the strict observance of holy poverty that enabled them to reach sanctity in the age of flesh-loving humanism.

Frequently, in the Neapolitan foundation, mealtime found the Fathers without provisions, but, before mealtime was over, an abundant meal somehow came to them through the hands of an unknown benefactor, after they had had recourse to God in confident prayer. The Fathers living in a convent in Palermo, which was dedicated to St. Joseph, received welcome provisions from a venerable gentleman who brought them fish when an abstinence day found them in want. In various establishments the Theatines, thinking that the doorbell was summoning them to a sick call, found at the door meat, fruit, flour, bread. If these gifts were from an Earthly benefactor, he was not only clever enough to make a quick getaway, but also artful enough not to reveal his identity thereafter.

No author has seemed to understand how it was possible for the Theatines, who possessed nothing, to engage continually in ambitious building programs. The archives of the order, however, offer a possible explanation. When the Fathers were building churches, the superior would often call the group together in the evening to tell them that it was necessary to dismiss the workmen. But before another dawn, money came through some unforeseen, incredible source and construction was resumed for a few more days. In this manner they continued, faithfully building from day to day. Finally a magnificent structure reared its noble spires to thank the Providence that had made its completion possible.

In Cremona, while the Fathers were passing through an unusually severe trial of their poverty, they noticed something glistening in the sun as they walked through their gardens. The next moment they were picking gold coins from the ground. In Ferrara, the clerics suffered from the extreme cold, accentuated by the dampness that blew in from the Po. Since they were without means to buy wood for the winter, they prayed before retiring that God would protect them from the inclemency of the weather. Somehow, during the chilly darkness, wood was stacked along the cloister wall. As the early morning sun cleared the fog, it shone on the Fathers, who were diligently storing away their new supply of fuel.

Every credible source attests that the early Theatines lived in close and intimate dependency on God. These men emptied themselves of the world in order to be filled with Heaven. Detachment from all that is not God and adherence to all that signifies God is Divine Charity.

The longing for Heavenly things came to consume their being. They shared in the consuming desire of Thérèse of Lisieux, who pleaded: “That I may live in one act of perfect love I offer myself as a victim of holocaust to Thy Merciful Love!” That spirit is exemplified in a number of sixteenth-century Theatines worthy of special consideration.



Father Paul Consiglieri, one of the original founders, went through all the hardships attendant on the sack of Rome and the subsequent search for a suitable location. His life as a priest was simple and hidden. But when Cardinal Caraffa became pontiff he immediately requested that Consiglieri take up his abode in the papal palace. There had always been a close relationship between the two, and as pope, Caraffa wanted his confrere’s prudent advice in the guidance of the Church. He appointed him *Maestro di Camera*, with the intention of raising him shortly to the cardinalate. The humble priest remonstrated so earnestly that Caraffa reluctantly compromised. Instead, he created Paul’s brother, John Baptist, also a Theatine, cardinal.

Paul IV compensated for his disappointment by making Consiglieri a Canon of the Basilica of St. Peter. He hoped that by this appointment he might promote an exact observance of rites and ceremonies. According to Jacobelli, during the two years that Consiglieri spent in the basilica, his zeal and vigilance in stabilizing the observances of religious ceremonies did bring the results Paul desired.

This was the last service he was to render to the Church. When his weeping mother saw her dying son, Consiglieri told her that she should rejoice instead of weeping: “I want you to know that I am leaving the world with a body as unstained as when you brought me into it. The grace of God has preserved my purity undefiled. I know that the same Divine Mercy will soon introduce me to that joy reserved for the undefiled who follow the Lamb.” He died April 14, 1557, at the age of fifty-eight.



Father Boniface of Colle, likewise one of the original four, bore all the hardships of the founding of the first regular clergy. Early historians of the order agree that Father Boniface’s outstanding grace was his marvelous power over his penitents. He had the ability of appealing to the most obdurate.

An incident is related in which a criminal went to confession to Father Boniface. The priest kindly took him into his private room, and there the sinner carelessly rehearsed a prepared list of sins without evident compunction. His confessor explained to him the necessity of internal repentance and of a firm resolution to abandon his manner of life. The man, who today would have been called a gangster, frankly answered that this was impossible, since it would mean giving up his livelihood. Upon being refused absolution, he tried to bribe his confessor. When Boniface indignantly repudiated such a suggestion, the criminal became angry, drew his dagger, and threatened to kill him. Boniface rose from his chair and uncovered his breast, saying: “I have no dearer wish than to give my life for remaining true to the holy sacrament of penance, my Faith, and my God.”

The sinner was overwhelmed by the heroism of the confessor, but he remained impenitent and ran precipitately from the room. The fact probably would have remained unknown had not the criminal chanced to see an eminent senator of Venice paying Father Boniface public respect and veneration. Curious as to why this stubborn priest should be given such honor, he inquired as to

the cause. The only answer he could obtain was: “He is a saint.” The gangster then related his own experience, and the story spread throughout the city. Sinners were impressed and many of them came to the priest to reform their lives under his stern direction.

When Paul IV ascended the papal throne, he sent a messenger to Boniface to ask him to come to Rome to live in the papal palace that the Church might profit by his virtue and wisdom. His answer was simple and humble: “Please tell His Holiness to permit me to enjoy the joy of poverty and the quiet of the cloister. I expect the grave to be my palace. Meanwhile, I wish to prepare for that last journey of my life, which is far more important than the wearisome trip to Rome.”

He died in Venice two years later, in 1557.



The last of the four founders to consume his life in the flame of Divine Love was the unyielding Pope Paul IV. By the year 1559, the 87-year-old Pontiff had completely exhausted his energies in the cause of reform. As the hour of death drew near, the valiant Theatine met it in the same spirit he had met every situation in his life. He began to chant in a strong voice: “Rejoice at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord. Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem” (Ps. 121:1 – 2). He died August 18, 1559.

The bells of St. Peter’s tolled the solemn hour, while the faithful wept and heretics rejoiced. Probably few men have been as tenderly loved and as intensely hated. He had been a port of salvation to the believer, and a scourge to the heretic. John Paul Falvius, who preached the funeral oration, summarized the situation as most Catholics of the time probably viewed it: “Wicked men rejoice to see Paul dead. Why? Because he was zealous for the glory of God . . . because he destroyed the impious . . . because he sought to correct the morals of the curia.

Because of his sternness in dealing with the enemies of the Church, Paul IV is commonly regarded today as a just rather than a saintly man. But we must remember that the judgments of one age are not those of another. No less a saint than Paul’s successor, Saint Pius V, wished to begin the process of his canonization. John Baptist Castaldo of Portugal wrote of him: “Some called him Paul the Great . . . he was very holy . . . and eminent for his learning and famous for his zeal in matters concerning the Holy Catholic Faith. He was held as another saint in St. Peter’s Chair.”

Pius V, as a token of his veneration, was accustomed to wear the badly worn pontifical robes of his predecessor. Many cardinals shared the views of the sainted pontiff, and felt that for his heroism and sanctity the Theatine pope merited the honors of the altar. Cardinals Salviati and Arigone made the sweeping statement that “everything that was left of faith, religion, and divine cult in God’s Church must be attributed to Pope Paul IV.”



Of Blessed John Marinoni it might be said that he was born with Christ, lived with Christ, and died with Christ. He was born with the coming of the Infant Jesus in 1490, while the bells announced the approach of Christmas Day. He lived with Christ, for at the age of three he showed an unusual love of suffering and of prayer and wept at the sight of the crucifix. When he was five, it is said that Christ Himself spoke the words of initiation into the life of the Cross: “My Son, the love I have for you has nailed Me to this rough cross.”

At the age of seven he consecrated himself to his Heavenly Mother on the vigil of the Immaculate Conception by a vow of perpetual chastity. His unusual signs of sanctity caused his pastor to permit him to receive his First Holy Communion at the age of seven, which, be it remembered, was an extraordinary age in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Lastly, he died with Christ, bereft of everything. On December 31, 1562, he uttered his last words: “Mary, Mother of Grace, Mother of Mercy.”

Although Blessed John had been ordained in his early twenties, he did not become a Theatine until his thirty-eighth year. His acquaintance with Cajetan dated from the time of their working together in the Incurables Hospital in Venice. Upon entering the order, he received the holy habit from the hands of the saint and had merited from him the appellation of “angel in human flesh.” In 1533 he was Cajetan’s companion in the Neapolitan venture, and from that time Naples became the arena of his spiritual labors.

Prayer was so familiar to Blessed John that he never lost the sense of the presence of the deity. On the street, in the midst of boisterous crowds, sojourning in public inns – under all circumstances his soul was fixed on God. Ecstasy was common to him. Once while he was preaching on the mystery of the Ascension in the Church of St. Maria Agnone, the congregation saw his face become resplendent and his body slowly rise until he was walking in mid-air, although he did not pause in his sermon. But his sound logic and natural eloquence were quite as powerful in swaying his audience as these marvelous charismata from Heaven.

Leaving aside the gifts of grace, we can say that his life was one of simplicity, humility, usefulness, and singular success. The wisdom of Blessed John was the foolishness of the Cross. His hours of study were spent at the foot of the crucifix and the lessons he learned there won for him a place of honor in the Lord’s service. He became enamored with the spirit of suffering and self-sacrifice, and he manifested this spirit in an eminent degree toward the discomforts of body resulting from his ill health.

The sanity of his sanctity is found particularly in the results he achieved in the religious whom he directed while master of novices. Foremost among them was St. Andrew Avellino, who attained the honors of the altar through the guidance of Blessed John, and afterwards chose the saint as his own confessor and director. Another spiritual son of Blessed John was Blessed Paul Baruli of Arezzo, Bishop of Placencia.

Most of the wonders of the inner life of this privileged soul were never passed on to posterity. St. Andrew Avellino, who realized his sanctity, made a minute collection of the most secret facts of his life, but an imprudent hand destroyed his notes, and the life of Blessed John remains unwritten in detail, except in the records of Heaven.



It is often said that there are two types of martyrdom, that of blood and that of the heart. For some the martyr’s crown is won by having sufferings inflicted from without; for some, by a lifelong bridling of the cravings of the flesh, until death frees the imprisoned soul. Cajetan nourished a continual desire to shed his blood for the love of Christ, but in God’s designs he was to gain the palm of glory by constant self-abnegation. And this martyrdom God inflicted on him in a very special way.

No greater pain can be imposed on a heart that truly loves God than to see that God of Love despised and outraged by His ungrateful creatures. The sight of sin is a tyrant’s sword to the heart aflame with Divine Love. In the acts of his canonization, it is recorded that the saint knew the secret sins of his penitents by a special revelation. Moreover, he understood the far-reaching,

deplorable harm that those sins wrought in the Catholic world. God also made known to him the extent to which the Lutheran heresies had spread. He could see by a sort of spiritual vision the harm to religion caused by the Ottoman wars and the extent of idolatry and superstition among the pagans. Christ Himself asserted that He wished Cajetan to share His joys and His sorrows. He spoke thus to the saint: “This is the heaviest cross that I have ever given to any of My servants. Although charity reigned in all of them, they enjoyed a great tranquility. But to you I have assigned My Cross from your earliest years. It was especially in this that I wished you to imitate Me.”

Cajetan always remained crucified by his love of the Cross. He bore on one side the vision of all the evils of the world and on the other the sight of his crucified Redeemer. His bitterness of soul increased during the days of carnival, immediately preceding Lent, when the votaries of pleasure fell into excess and licentiousness. By the depths of his comprehension of the hideousness of sin, Cajetan was irresistibly impelled to free souls from its power. Father Albert Ambiveri, C. R., said of him: “This great zeal for the salvation of souls had taken possession of his mind so forcefully that he seemed to have lost sight of all else. It seemed that he had been born for no other purpose than to save souls.”

Cajetan followed anywhere that he thought he might find a fugitive soul. He often traveled hungry and endured the extremes of heat or cold. When travel was interrupted he scourged his worn body and offered his life in a plea to God to loose upon him the punishment that was in store for some sinner. In his ardor for obtaining the grace of conversion, he would pray: “My Lord, if not for this sinner, then not for me; if You wish to give me grace, give it also to this sinner.” Cajetan possessed but one desire – that the whole world would love his God whom he loved with inextinguishable ardor.

His most fruitful harvest was gleaned in the confessional, where he was often occupied until far into the night. He had a rare gift for guiding souls, and it was said of him, as of St. Philip Neri, that he could detect the state of a person’s soul by the sense of smell. In his presence a soul in the grace of God emitted a rich fragrance and one in the state of mortal sin a loathsome foulness. His patience in hearing confessions was a matter of comment for his contemporaries. He was unmoved by the shortcomings of those with whom he dealt, whether their defects were mental or physical. With a holy indifference he heard the muttering, the stammering, the stuttering, the deaf, the ignorant, the slothful. He gave the same consideration to the verbose, the taciturn, the scrupulous, or those ashamed of their guilt. Because of his universal compassion, he was sought by those who possessed defects of mind or body. Other priests asked him how he could work patiently for hours without rest with such persons. The saint answered: “I consider that Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance in a spirit of long-suffering and I feel constrained to imitate Him in the wonderful patience with which He tolerates our imperfections or even our great faults. I would rather die oppressed by suffering than to show the least boredom or displeasure to the penitent while hearing his Confession.”

Another way in which Cajetan came into contact with souls was through his work with the destitute. The sight of the poor made him envious of those saints who had sold themselves into bondage in order to free their brethren. When performing some work of charity he would say: “It is not I who do this, but it is my God who dwells in me.”

Detachment from self and service to others are nothing more than the complete vanquishing of the passions. Irascibility and concupiscence are the passions that dominate man; if these two are subjugated, the rest are also subjugated. St. Cajetan enjoyed the calm of the victor. He

dominated his passions; they did not dominate him. Since the Holy Spirit had announced peace to him, peace ruled his soul.



Although willingness to suffer is a test of love, a truer test is the degree of union of man's will with that of God. The many letters Cajetan has left testify to the degree he had succeeded in this union. The sentiments he expresses in these excerpts show clearly how well he had learned the secret: "I have no other desire than that God's will be done in me"; "Let God's will be always preferred to mine"; "If there were no self-will, there would be no Hell, no Purgatory in which souls must stay until they are purified of their own will"; "As the fish out of water must die very soon, so the religious who shuns obedience cannot live long in God's grace but will fall into the most detestable vices." Such thoughts in his letters are endless.

During his life as a religious, Cajetan merited the title of the "Perpetual Obedient." He practiced this virtue so thoroughly that he would lament: "I fear I have no merit in my obedience, since my self-will does not oppose me in anything."

As often as Cajetan, toward the close of his life, asked to be relieved of the superiorship, he was asked in the name of obedience to resume it for the sake of the brethren. Though positions of authority were distasteful to him, he accepted them to gain the merit of obedience.

He exacted a like submission from his subjects. His usual mildness was turned to rigor if it was a question of a fault against this virtue. He would say: "It would grieve me less if one of my subjects were afflicted by a long illness than if I should see in him even one disobedient act."

The leaven of this spirit was so thoroughly dispersed through the lives of the early Theatines that it was noted by St. Philip Neri, who remarked: "I cherish in the Theatine Fathers a very special virtue – an obedience that is at the same time prompt and blind. They exercise an assignment without considering or weighing the command, which is certainly the obedience demanded by Our Savior."

The obedient man is a humble and patient man. The low estimation of self in the sight of God and the desire to remain unesteemed among one's fellows come only after a very enlightened appreciation of the action of grace on the soul. Cajetan attained this internal humility, which is conceived in a thorough knowledge of self. His personality was characterized by meekness, modulation in voice, modesty in gaze and gesture, and poverty of dress. He not only tried to hide his special gifts, but he studied every means of disclosing his imperfections. He seldom used the title "Don" when signing his name, although it was commonly used by the regular priests of his order.

The high regard with which the saint held the virtue of humility can best be judged by his own words. To his community he would say: "My brethren, to avoid vainglory you should make humility your constant companion – humility in your emotions, in your actions. You should behold yourself in the mirror of Jesus' life. Compare His virtues with yours and recognize that Our Lord's virtues are so heroic that they eclipse yours. With this comparison . . . feelings of vain-glory will disappear." He would tell them that the soul would ascend the higher in Heaven the more profoundly it practiced humility during life, and that in the alphabet of Christ the first letter that we are to learn is humility, "for if we do not learn this letter we shall never be able to read in the book of the virtues of the Christian life."

Patience logically follows humility. When Cajetan was slandered, he would say: "Slander, even though it is ignominious, forms a crown of glory for the religious. This is true with the

exception of calumny in regard to incontinence. Even though this kind of defamation be false, it leaves a blight on the spotless mirror of chastity.”

Cajetan would pray that this kind of slander would be prevented. The favor was granted. Though Cajetan and the other Theatines were calumniated through hatred provoked by their reforming zeal, their reputation in regard to chastity remained untarnished.

Cajetan was to have abundant opportunities to practice patience to a heroic degree – at the time the cardinals opposed him upon the presentation of the rules for his congregation; during the horrible sack of Rome; in the hospitals, in the midst of pestilence and in dealing with condemned criminals and difficult penitents; in the hardships endured during his journeyings, in hunger and cold and heat and sleepless nights; in mortifications imposed by his superiors, who tried him severely, since they realized that he was advancing rapidly in virtue under such supervision. Although they admired his heroic virtue, they reprimanded him sharply on the slightest provocation, as if he had been a novice of untried virtue. The saint was convinced that such humiliations were imposed on him as a part of God’s plan for his sanctification, and he would prefer the severity of others to any kind of self-imposed mortification.

In his patience, he lived the conviction of his words: “Although we must suffer, let us suffer with joy. Although we must weep, let us be without sadness and worry. Thus with our tears we will become worthy of the promise of Jesus to change our tears to peace and joy.”



Cajetan, having completely subjugated his passions from early years, enjoyed the delights of the unitive way during the greater part of his life. According to Venerable Louis de Blois, a soul thus purified

. . . goes out of itself in order to pass wholly into God and be lost in the abyss of eternal love . . . dead to itself, it lives in God, knowing nothing, feeling nothing, save the love that inebriates it . . . All consumed by the flame of Divine Love and wholly melted thereby, it passes into God by uniting itself to Him without any intermediary; it forms but one spirit with Him, just as gold and brass fuse to form one metal. Those who are thus ravished and lost in God reach different heights, for each one penetrates further into the divine depths in proportion as he turns toward God with greater sincerity, earnestness, and love, and as he foregoes more completely in this quest all personal interest.

Dwelling in the state of bliss described by Venerable de Blois, Cajetan’s soul reached the summits of union and contemplation in the presence of the Sacrament of Love. In spite of the time and care demanded by the foundation of the order, in public works of mercy, and in the ministrations of the priesthood, Cajetan often spent as many as eight hours at a time in adoration. He was never quite satisfied when not before the tabernacle, and he was happiest when he was chanting the office in the presence of his Eucharistic God. He prepared himself for this intimacy by daily confession and frequent spiritual Communion.

Before distributing Communion, the saint would give brief exhortations in which he frequently commented: “We should not feed ourselves upon the Flesh of the Son of the Immaculate Virgin in order to change Christ into ourselves, as happens with the ordinary food we eat, but in order to transform ourselves into Christ and to overcome our own will so that we may fulfill His Divine Will.”

The ardent lover of Christ is never satisfied until he sees the knowledge and love of the Word Incarnate spread throughout the Kingdom of God. It grieved the saint that the people of his times did not receive Communion often. Even devout persons approached the altar rail only twice or thrice a year. Cajetan resolved to insist on frequent reception of the sacraments. Through his sermons, the confessional, and his cogent preaching, he succeeded in reviving the custom of frequent reception in areas under the charge of the Theatine Fathers. His desire to see the faithful approach the Holy Table was expressed in a letter written during the early years of his priesthood to Father Paul Giustiniani:

Christ waits and no one approaches Him . . . There are persons of good will who are ashamed to go to Confession and to receive Holy Communion. Oh, I shall never be satisfied until I see all Christians go, as if starving, to the priest to nourish themselves.

A saying of Cajetan's was spread throughout Italy during the saint's lifetime: "It is very strange to me that a Christian who is able to receive his Lord and his God within his bosom does not care enough to make the effort to do so. Some Christians wander in the dark through the thick entwined ambush of life, which is full of the snares of the devil, and disregard their surest guide and defense, the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. While imbibing the poisons of the devil, they do not take the antidote contained in the Heavenly Banquet."



Cajetan always had the consciousness of being under the constant and loving protection of the Blessed Virgin. In a letter addressed to the Augustinian nun, Laura Mignani, he declared: "The Blessed Mother has given me certain gifts that show that she possesses a tender love for me . . . By her I have been loved, reared, and clothed."

His devotion was continuous. He not only dedicated himself to her in earliest childhood, but he renewed the dedication every day he was to live. He said the rosary daily on his knees, and in its recitation he especially honored the Immaculate Conception. Throughout the early history of the Theatines, he named every new foundation in honor of the Queen of Heaven. The first, in Rome, was called Blessed Mary of Monte Pincio, the others, St. Mary of Mercy, St. Mary of Jerusalem, St. Mary of the Little Manger.

But his love for the name of Mary caused him never to separate it from that of her Son. In his sermons and exhortations he would say: "Mary, Mother of Jesus," or "Jesus, Son of Mary." He never denied anyone anything that was requested in the name of Mary, and the Mother of God in her turn seemed to deny Cajetan nothing that he asked in her name.

The saint propagated devotion to the Blessed Virgin in all the ways made possible by the priesthood – sermons, conferences, confession, special devotions. He had a special devotion to the Shrine of Loretto, which he visited whenever possible.

It is related that on one occasion the saint had a longing to see the Blessed Virgin in the unveiled splendor of her Heavenly brilliance. But the Blessed Virgin sent an angel to console him, saying: "Our Queen sends me to tell you that your desires are most pleasing to her, but they are not timely and shall not be fulfilled immediately. The Heavenly portals are not opened to reveal the radiance within until the end of life's pilgrimage. . . . In due time your wishes shall be granted. Meanwhile, accept these Heavenly refreshments which are sent as a gift from the Heavenly gardens [the angel held out a basket of fruit]. With them you may sustain your fainting spirit, which so earnestly desires the delights of Heaven."

The Jesuit, Father Balestrieri, exclaimed: “Who can tell of Cajetan’s constant communications with Heaven, the ecstasies, the raptures, the levitations! It would seem that his soul disdained the world and was striving to go toward its origin.”

Cajetan considered meditation so efficacious that he advised it twice a day. In his estimation, prayer was as necessary for the laity as for religious. To him, prayer was a “powerful weapon, which not only opens Heaven, but batters down the ramparts of Hell.”

Together with many other extraordinary graces, Cajetan possessed the gift of prophecy. He often predicted things that he could not have known except by special revelation. For this reason, the lessons of the *Roman Breviary* place his name in the catalog of illustrious prophets.

But Cajetan was not canonized for these charismatic gifts, but rather for his life of love, which merited them. “I desire to serve Him only through love,” he characteristically wrote in one of his letters.



More than sixty-five years had passed since the hand of God had placed the glowing ember of Divine Love in the heart of the infant Gaetano. The ember had been fanned into flame by the presence of the Incarnate Word. The flame had burst its walls of flesh and had done its work of holy destruction. It had burned the seeds of heresy and had seared the weeds of vice. Now the source of the great conflagration, the heart of Cajetan, was itself being wholly consumed.

Just seven days before his death, he was in his private chapel meditating on the Passion. He received a vision of the Lord bearing His cross, who said: “Cajetan, I have given you my cross without an image. It does not appear well thus. It is fitting that someone be nailed thereon.” The saint wept, and Christ said: “Why are you grieved, Cajetan? I give you the cross without a figure. I want it to be yours in order that you may become more like Me. You should be crucified like Me, but instead I choose to be crucified again for you.”

Cajetan replied: “O my God, Thou knowest that from the first moment I enjoyed the use of reason I have chosen martyrdom. Now, more than ever, I wish to be crucified . . . I desire that by dying of this suffering I may be able to repay Thee love for love.”

With arms outstretched and head bowed, Cajetan received the answer of the Lord: “If I permitted Myself to be crucified for love of you, now let yourself be crucified for Me.”

Cajetan was raised from the Earth and suspended on the bare cross, as Our Lord continued: “With My Divine Power I impress on you, Cajetan, all the pain I experienced during the three hours on Calvary.

The saint at once began to experience the lashes, the thorns, the anguish of desolation, the thirst, the gall and vinegar, the indescribable agony of hands and feet. The Voice continued: “I leave you without sensible consolation, as My Heavenly Father left Me.”

At the end of the three hours the exhausted spirit of Cajetan breathed through his parched lips, “*Consummatum est.*”

Following the mystic crucifixion, Jesus appeared again, but this time with brilliance, joy, and love. He embraced the saint and took him down from the cross, saying: “. . . Now you may rest; after seven days I shall await you in Heaven, where you shall enjoy a special portion with Me, because of the sufferings you have endured. Spend the time that remains to you in putting your religious house in order. Leave your subjects with an orderly government and good discipline. When your time has been fulfilled My Mother will come to take you to Heaven. There you will be constituted the head of your spiritual sons with the certainty of obtaining from the Eternal Father all that you will ask for their needs.”

Cajetan felt the singular nature of the mystical crucifixion, which had been granted to no other saint. Filled with consolation, he spent the remaining time in preparing his sons for his death. He admonished them to adhere to the principles upon which their institute was founded, especially the observance of apostolic poverty and trust in Divine Providence. Then, feeling that his Earthly mission was completed, he sighed for the happy day of his entrance into eternity. But still greater sacrifices were to be demanded of him, through seemingly natural occurrences.

At the very time of the vision, lawless mobs were ruling in Naples. The cause of the riots was the enforcement of the Inquisition, which had been re-established by Cardinal Caraffa. Two Dominicans under the protection of the viceroy, Peter of Toledo, had been commissioned by the papal court to carry out the unpleasant order in the face of a rebellious populace. The city was more seriously infected with Lutheranism than the faithful Catholics realized, since these doctrines had been spread secretly. The viceroy's decree was therefore inexorable and prosecutions were begun. The leading agitators took advantage of the situation to hasten violence. The streets were darkened by threatening mobs. When the viceroy resorted to punishment, total insubordination ensued.

At the height of these disturbances, a man was seized for non-payment of debt. As he was taken through the streets he cried out that he was made a prisoner for opposition to the tribunal of the Inquisition. Duped by the story, the people freed him by force. When the viceroy heard that three young nobles were directly responsible for resisting the law, he had them executed. The agitators retaliated by placing the bodies in the public square as an example to passers-by of what could be expected from the dreaded Inquisition.

Riots broke out in all parts of the city. Cannons belched fire. Blood ran in the streets. In an attempt to quiet the city, messengers of peace drew Cajetan from his seclusion. With crucifix in hand, he went about the streets preaching concord and love. But the enraged mobs refused to listen. Cajetan was to drink the dregs of the Master's Chalice.

When Cajetan saw that his endeavors were futile, he retired to his cell, where he asked God to let him take on himself the wickedness of the people and die for them. He ordered his brethren to keep vigil before the Blessed Sacrament. He ordered litanies to be sung in the churches under Theatine care. Still there came no answer to these prayers.

In his grief, Cajetan succumbed to a violent fever. While prostrate, he received word that the Council of Trent had closed its sessions. With this unexpected news, his fever heightened and his illness was declared fatal. A general council such as that of Trent had been the object of his prayers and sacrifices from the time of his ordination. The council had begun just two years before and with its interruption came the feeling that his life's work had been a failure. Cajetan did not know that the council was soon to resume and not finally to close until sixteen years after his death, at which time it was to complete business which he and Caraffa had done so much to set in motion, and which meant the rejuvenation of Catholicity. He did not know, and his love of God and love of neighbor could not endure the two great disappointments, the Neapolitan revolt and the apparent failure of Trent. Cajetan was dying of a broken heart.

The doctor who attended the House of St. Paul realized the nature of the malady and felt powerless to prescribe a remedy. He wished to consult other doctors, but the Theatine constitutions forbade the engagement of the services of any but the ordinary physician without the consent of the superior. Cajetan was superior, and he would not give the necessary consent in his own illness. He explained it thus:

Since it is written in the constitutions, it is the will of Heaven . . . Extraordinary doctors and expensive remedies are for the great persons of this world. The common

medicines are sufficient for a poor religious, who should trust in God as in a loving Father and expect from Him all on which life and health depend.

Dr. Capponi was given full care of the saint. He ordered that the straw mattress be replaced by one of wool. When Cajetan heard the suggestion he protested: “A bed of comfort does not become a sinner who needs to do penance. . . . Should I, at the end of my life, surrender in the war against the flesh and make peace with the senses?”

The dying man was experiencing a joy that those attending him could not know. He had longed for this hour. He had wished it to be just as it was – bereft of every human consolation and bodily comfort in order that it might be a small memorial of the death of the God-Man.

Cajetan was given the Last Sacraments. A few black-clad priests knelt nearby and asked the Creator to receive the soul that the things of the world had never subdued. His voice was feebler now as it reached the bystanders. They bent their heads to hear. He asked forgiveness for his faults or for any sorrow he may have unintentionally caused them. Then everything was quiet. It was two o’clock in the afternoon of August 7, 1547.

As the soul of Cajetan was freed from the body, St. Peter of Alcántara in distant Spain saw it ascend into Heaven in brilliance and glory, accompanied by the Blessed Virgin and an angelic host. Turning to his religious family he remarked: “Today one of the main pillars of the Church of Christ has fallen.”

The Flame Unextinguished

There are men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed: Good things continue with their seed . . . and their children for their sakes remain forever (Ecclus. 44:10 – 13).

With the news of Cajetan's death, a calm descended upon Naples. The arms of the rioters were discarded, the cannons of the state were hushed; brother became reconciled with brother. A multitude marched to St. Paul's to venerate the holy body – the sacrifice immolated on the altar of concord. Men but lately armed remembered only the zeal that Cajetan had shown for them and their country.

By his death the saint had revived the city, and the authorities proclaimed that a solemn high Mass would be chanted on each anniversary of his death, with all the officials present.

The pacifying influence of Cajetan was soon to be felt in a much larger and more important area. The Council of Trent, the organ by which he had hoped to accomplish his life's ambition of reform, resumed its sessions and was to complete his work. That Cajetan, through his intercession in Heaven, obtained these special favors was the opinion of many, among them James Lubrani, the Jesuit, who said: "To his prayers we owe the resumption of the Council of Trent and the restoration of peace and concord in our city."

Shortly after Cajetan's death he obtained his greatest victory over Lutheranism. John Frederick, Duke of Saxony and Elector of the Holy Roman Empire, the son of the ruler who was Luther's patron, declared war against Charles V and mustered a powerful army of Lutherans. But in the army of the emperor was a cousin of Cajetan's, Count Ippolito Porto, who was general of the cavalry. He prayed to Cajetan to obtain the strength and sagacity necessary for victory, and in fact he did overcome the enemy and take the Duke of Saxony prisoner. The Duke was delivered to Charles V, who deprived him of his electorship. This victory turned out to be a significant setback to the power of the Lutheran princes.

It is recorded that before the death of Cajetan the Lord appeared to him and told him: "Ask of Me any grace and I shall give it to you.

After Cajetan's disclaimer that he had done any good that he should be so rewarded, the Lord insisted: "Yet, ask of Me, for I am ready to grant your desire."

Then Cajetan expressed the earnest longing of his heart:

Since You wish to show Your mercy to me and to favor such an ungrateful servant, I beg through the merits of Your Holy Mother that I will not be remembered in the Church; I ask that no one know that Cajetan has ever been in the world. When my body is interred, may my name be buried with it.

Heaven respected the wishes of the saint. He was buried in a common grave without a marker, near the Church of St. Paul. The remains of other members of the order were placed near his so that in time no identity could be given the grave of Cajetan. All that remained to tell the world that the reformer had lived was his Breviary, a New Testament, some letters to friends, and his personal clothing and staff. The remembrance of Cajetan of Thiene was effaced from the minds of men.

Not only was the saint forgotten, but it seemed that an era had passed with him, that the mills of time had ground out another period in history too fine to distinguish the minds that had made it. That staunch reformer, Matthew Giberti, had died in 1543, and the year 1547, the year of Cajetan's death, saw the demise of the humanist, Peter Bembo; the illustrious Vittoria Colonna; and lastly James Sadoletto, whose funeral sermon was preached by the lonely Caraffa.



In 1588 the nave of the Church of St. Paul was lengthened. In the process, it was necessary to extend the building over a portion of the cemetery – that section that contained the unmarked graves of the first Theatines. With no attempt to distinguish one from another, the workmen placed the remains beneath the floor of the church. Again silence descended over the grave of Cajetan. Even the delegates sent to investigate the grave in the process of canonization revered his desire to remain unknown even in death, and they satisfied themselves of its identity with external evidence.

After a few years, a widespread devotion to St. Andrew Avellino caused interest to be revived in the holy founders of the Congregation of the Theatines. The place where the remains had been buried in 1588 was determined and in 1625 a subterranean chapel was erected near the vault, which bore the inscription: “Under this crypt rest in the peace of Christ the bodies of Blessed Cajetan of Thiene of Vicenza, and of Blessed John Marinoni of Venice, and of the first Fathers whose memory is in benediction.”

One might say that Cajetan, who had bowed to God's will on Earth, had also bowed to the Divine Will in Heaven. At any rate, his request to be forgotten was of no avail. Omniscience had weighed seemingly incongruous promises – that of respecting the Theatine's desire to be forgotten and that of fulfilling the Gospel promise made to the humble. The first had been satisfied; the second must follow with the certainty of the word of God.

After more than eighty years of oblivion, Cajetan's fame and influence were to return to Earth. There was no kind of miracle that was not attributed to the saint. He brought about the reconciliation of enemies, the cure of diseases; he drove away evil spirits, quieted civic turmoils, protected chastity, and aided the destitute.

These manifestations of his power in Heaven resulted in his beatification by Urban VIII, on September 22, 1629, and his canonization by Clement X, on April 6, 1671. His Office was authorized in 1629, and after being revised by Cardinal Bona was admitted in 1674. The feast is double and is celebrated on August 7.

Naples, where he died, is the center of the greatest devotion to the saint. It was the Neapolitans who advanced the cause of his beatification; it was they who placed his statue bearing the inscription, “Public Liberator,” on the city wall. The feast of St. Cajetan is one of the great festivities of the Neapolitan year. When in 1656 Naples was visited by a merciless plague, the 800 Theatines living there showed the greatest generosity in the care of the stricken. In gratitude, the city chose St. Cajetan as its patron. The subterranean chapel then became a popular

place of pilgrimage. An earthquake of 1688 ruined the church that was erected in 1625. It was rebuilt as it stands today by the Theatine Grimaldi in 1691.

From Naples as a nucleus, devotion to St. Cajetan spread in all directions, to Loretto, Venice, Verona, and even Prague. The royal house of Bavaria chose the saint as its special patron – a choice inspired by Cajetan’s special interest in the sick, for the Bavarian house was endeavoring at the time to introduce scientific methods into the hospitals of the land.

Rome, likewise, has great devotion to St. Cajetan. The principal Theatine church, St. Andrea della Valle, has been the scene of numerous miracles worked through his intercession. The prothonotaries apostolic, of whom Cajetan was a member in his youth, chose the Theatine church as their annual meeting place until 1870.

Devotion to St. Cajetan is pronounced in Spain, Bohemia, Poland, China, India, Ethiopia and other parts of Africa, the islands of Sardinia and Corsica, and the Eastern islands of Sumatra, Borneo, and Ceylon.

The religious orders other than the Theatines which show special honor to the saint are the Capuchins, Barnabites, Somaschi, Oratorians, Redemptorists, and the Servants of Mary.



“I would like to save the world without the world’s knowing me.” – St. Cajetan.

When the white man settled in Brazil, he brought with him a lively devotion to St. Cajetan. The Portuguese petitioned the Theatine Fathers in Rome to send some of the Fathers to the new colony. It was impossible at the time for the Theatines to assume a mission in the New World, but the Benedictines stationed in Brazil propagated the devotion, and St. Cajetan is loved and revered in the vast republic to this day.

A striking incident is recorded concerning the introduction of devotion to the saint in New Spain, toward the end of the seventeenth century. Father Francis Saverio Saetta, a Jesuit, relates the occurrence in a letter to his brother, Cajetan, a Theatine. When the Jesuit came into parts of Mexico where the Cross of the Redeemer had not yet penetrated, he was astonished to find a universal devotion to St. Cajetan among the barbarians. There was scarcely an Indian abode that did not have its picture of the saint. Through his intercession, the Indians were cured of cholera, epidemics were averted, and help was obtained in many necessities. His surprise was greater when he found that there had never been anyone who entered these parts to propagate the devotion. The only information he could obtain was that it was introduced by Cajetan himself.

Father Saetta related another instance by way of comparison with his own experience. The second story was obtained from a letter written by the provincial of the Fathers of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy to the father general of the Theatines, Cajetan Pinelli. In this letter the provincial told what he had experienced upon his visit to the Fathers of Our Lady of Mercy in Lima.

On reaching his room in the monastery, he put his valise on the floor and went about setting the room in readiness. When he returned to pick up his valise he found that a new book was lying on top of it, although no one had entered the room. He curiously took the book in his hands and found that it was the life of St. Cajetan in Spanish. When he showed it to the other religious, he found that none of them had ever seen it and had no idea who could have left it. The provincial then ordered the book to be read at table. Its contents confirmed him in his belief that it had been placed on his valise by the invisible hand of the saint in order that his devotion might be propagated in the New World.

Father Saetta also mentioned a letter written by Gregorio de Moglieda, Bishop of Isauria and resident of Peru, to Father Gaspar Cajetan Oleden, superior of the Theatines of Palma de Majorca, in which the bishop stated:

The most wonderful thing about the devotion that the natives have for this prodigious saint is that there has never been a Theatine in the country. Neither can it be found that anyone else has introduced the devotion. In spite of this, there is a solemn novena in honor of the saint every year and his picture is revered in practically every home.



The Theatine Order was to spread slowly at first, and then to expand into practically all parts of the world before coming to the Americas.

With the election of Caraffa to the pontificate in 1555, both the membership and number of houses of the order increased. From Italy, the order spread in all directions. Missions were established in India, Arabia, Armenia, Georgia, Persia, Ceylon, Borneo, Sumatra, and other distant parts of the world.

In 1626 the Clerks Regular began a remarkable series of missionary activities in the schismatic East. Thanks to the labors of Fathers Pietro Avitabila, Antonio Ardizzone, and Francisco Manco, significant conquests for the faith were made in Georgia, Mingrelia, Armenia, Iberia, and Colquida, together with the kingdoms of Imerica and Curiel, whose kings and Orthodox bishops accepted the supremacy of the Roman Church and recognized Urban VIII as Vicar of Christ and head of Christendom.

The Theatines, while extending their frontiers, maintained their prestige in learning. While in Armenia, Father Galano, author of a history of the Armenian Church, negotiated and concluded the temporary reconciliation of the schismatic Church with that of Rome. The College of the Propagation of the Faith in Rome owes its foundation to the counsels of Father Michael Ghislieri, spiritual director of the Spanish prelate, John Baptist Vives, who founded the college. Urban VIII appointed a member of the order, Father Mark Romano, rector of the institute. The Theatines were in charge of the departments of philosophy and dogmatic and moral theology in the college.

Science is also a debtor to the Clerks Regular for many outstanding figures in their domain of knowledge (to say nothing of eminent theologians, moralists, liturgists, and mystics); the order has produced astronomers like Joseph Piazzi, the Columbus of the Asteroidea, who in 1801 discovered Ceres, the first of the planetoids; physicists and mathematicians, like John Baptist Scarella and Jerome Vitale; architects like Bernard Castagnini, Andrew Ricci, Anselm Gangiano, Francis Grimaldi, Guarino Guarini. Then, too, there were painters like Matthew Zoccolini, Francis Maria Caselli, James Maggi, and Philip Maria Galletti.

It is not the least merit of the Theatine Congregation that it has given the hierarchy – almost exclusively in Italy – more than ten per cent of its members, that is, more than 800 bishops, nine cardinals – two of them on the altars – and one pope.

These facts are clearly shown by manuscripts ranging in date from 1580 to the nineteenth century. But by the latter half of the preceding century the order had been reduced to a shadow of its former greatness through governmental suppression of religious congregations.

In twentieth-century Europe, the period of reconstruction began which made possible the extension of the order to North America. The first Theatines arrived in the United States in 1906.

Bishop Nicholas C. Matz of Denver, on his *ad limina* visit to Rome, had asked the Theatine General, Francis Paula Ragonessi, for priests to work among the Italian and Spanish-speaking in Colorado. On May 9, 1906, the first group of Theatines arrived in Durango, in the southern and heavily Spanish part of the state. They were assigned to Durango in the La Plata County and to Pagosa Springs in Archuleta County. In a short time they established Sacred Heart Parish in Durango and from these headquarters served surrounding areas.

On October 29, 1920, the Theatines acquired Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Conejos, the oldest parish in Colorado. But the Fathers chose Antonito, rather than Conejos, as the site of their monastery. From this center they served thirteen towns in Colorado and New Mexico.

In 1922, the order began work in Denver. The Fathers used the basement of St. Leo's Church to minister to the Spanish-speaking of the city. In the meantime, they built a church of their own. The cornerstone was laid June 11, 1924, and less than two years later, March 21, 1926, Bishop J. E. Tihen consecrated the new Church of St. Cajetan.

Outside of Denver, the Theatines have established themselves in three parishes of Colorado: San Luis and Holy Family, in Fort Collins; and St. Joseph's, Capulin. In Denver, St. Andrew Avellino's Seminary, the only major Theatine seminary in the Western Hemisphere, has a capacity of fifty Spanish-speaking students.

In addition to their North American parishes and missions, the Theatines have two parishes in Buenos Aires and have established three parishes in Mexico City.

The present writer has himself been a witness to Theatine achievements in Mexico City. On a tour there some years ago, I was taken through the most depressing slum quarter I ever saw: "Shanties" would be far too dignified a name to describe countless dwellings that seemed made of nothing but four slabs of corrugated iron and a rag door. Naked children played in great pools of muddy water. But the Theatine church of this district was a wonder of architecture in a city of beautiful churches. It was large – and it was crowded! When the Theatines came to this and another slum area the people were given over to Protestantism, Communism, and Spiritualism. In the little church of this district, fifty people, all told, attended the three Masses. Other priests would not abide the hard conditions.

When the Theatines came, they started building – with what? Hardly a thousand dollars could have been collected from the whole poverty-wracked quarter. True, they did succeed wonderfully in soliciting funds from wealthy Mexicans, but even today the Theatines cannot tell you how they built that church, and another like it in a suburb equally poor. If I seem in this book to have overstressed the miraculous, I can assure my readers that what happened in these two suburbs of Tenoxtitlan and Gertrudis Sanchez seemed to me as wonderful as anything else I have recorded.

But the material triumph of the Theatines in building these two wonderful churches was as nothing compared to the spiritual achievements. The fifty practicing Catholics in Colonia Tenoxtitlan and perhaps as many more in Colonia Gertrudis Sanchez multiplied into the thousands. Communism, Protestantism, and Spiritualism died out altogether.



We can sum up the Theatine contribution to the Catholic Reform in no better words than those used by Pius XII in 1947:

Through four centuries, this order has served the Church so well, especially as a molder of worthy and holy priests, that we hope with good reason that it will continue in

this glorious tradition. . . . The times in which we live, characterized by ignorance and forgetfulness of divine things, present a marked resemblance to those of St. Cajetan. . . .

-- *Acta Apostolicae Sedi.s*, October 7, pp. 448 – 449.

On one occasion, Cajetan's soul is said to have appeared to a dying man in Palermo in Sicily, and, after reviving him, revealed that at some future time, during a period of unparalleled calamity and distress, he would come to the assistance of the needy. That time may be close at hand.

Bibliographical Note

The present work is not intended to represent any original research; rather it is an attempt to put into the English language a life of the Saint which draws freely from the research which has been done in the Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French languages. There is no biography of Saint Cajetan in English which has any appreciable claim to authenticity. The English biography, *Saint Cajetan*, by R. de Maulde La Claviere (a translation from the French by George Herbert Ely), London, 1902, cannot be recommended without reserve.

The principal source for this work has been *Vita de S. Gaetano Tiene*, by D. Gaetano M. Magnis (Naples, 1845). The author of this hagiography, in Italian, derived his information directly from the archives of the Theatines, as well as from the chronicles and archives of the other religious institutes mentioned in the work. Other sources were the papal bulls of canonization, the Sacred Roman Rota, and the archives of the Vatican. The chief writer from whom Magnis drew was Father Joseph Silos, the early historian of the order, whose most outstanding work was *Historia Clericorum Regularium*. The works of Father Anthony Caracciolo stand second in importance. He compiled a detailed and authentic life of both St. Cajetan and Pope Paul IV and also an account of the Neapolitan foundation. Probably the third most important author from whom Magnis borrowed was Father Maggio, who attempted to preserve the writings and sermons of St. Cajetan. Other authors who provided reliable material were John Castaldo, who wrote a life of St. Cajetan and of Blessed John Marinoni; Bzovio, an early chronicler; Zaccaria Boverius, who wrote a history of the Capuchins; Thomas Caracciolo, and other biographers.

The work cited above has been used as a guide and a check by the author in regard to specific events and dates, and it has been taken as a final authority in disputed matters. The author has borrowed most freely from it.

Hardly less useful was the *Theatines in the History of the Catholic Reform Before the Establishment of Lutheranism*, a dissertation prepared by Paul A. Kunkel, who obtained hand-copied material direct from the archives of the order through Father Julian Adrover, the Theatine Procurator in Rome.

For material of a historical nature, Dr. Ludwig von Pastor's *History of the Popes* (translated by F. I. Antrobus, R. F. Kerr, and E. Graf), principally the first twelve volumes, was quite valuable.

