

By 19.1.1582 the Discalced had opened a house in Lisbon, and their supporter and protector, king Philip II of Spain, who had recently seized the throne of Portugal, desired that they should dispatch missionaries to the Portuguese colonies in Guinea, the Congo, Angola. S. Teresa, consulted by the Provincial of the new body, saw in this call a manifestation of the Divine will and gave it every encouragement. In her lifetime, on 20.3.1582, the first party of missionaries was dispatched from Lisbon; but the ship foundered with all on board after a collision, so that many in the Order lost all zeal for missions, a sentiment which became intensified when a second expedition, which left Lisbon in April 1583, was no more successful in reaching Angola, being captured by Protestant corsairs, who marooned the three Religious on a desert isle.

At the Provincial Chapter of the Discalced, met at Almodovar in March 1583, views were decidedly divided between those who considered that their Order should be altogether contemplative, and those who still held to the missionary project as one means of fulfilling their call. Fr. Jerome Gratian of the Mother of God and the majority defended it, and he has left it on record that he had the counsel and aid of S. Teresa herself who—it was not long before her death—let it be known that she considered part of the goal of the “Reform” to be the propagation of the Church and conversion of heretics and infidels, the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ by every manner of means, prayer, penitence, preaching, etc.: and so, for the time being, some twelve Religious were sent off to New Mexico, others continued to feed the enterprise in the Congo.

But Fr. Nicolas of Jesus Mary (a member of one family of Doria from Genoa), who, after the chapter at Almodovar had been sent to Italy with the faculty of setting up houses in that peninsula and who, 6.12.1584, actually took possession for the Order of the ancient chapel of S. Anne at Genoa with the support of the local patricians and clergy, was himself a convinced opponent of missionary work in infidel parts, and by 1588 had had suppressed that in the Congo and elsewhere in West Africa: he indeed set out to smother the existence of any missionary spirit at all among the Religious in the convents of Spain. On the other hand, as to Italy, on 20.9.1586 he obtained a Brief from Pope Sixtus V authorizing the “reformed” province to have a representative at Rome, where in 1591 Fr. Peter of the Mother of God was sent, and (having been recalled to Genoa in 1594) once more in 1596.

Unwillingness on the part of the superiors in Spain and of king Philip II himself to see convents of the “Reform” founded outside Spain, even in Rome, and the acute division of views among the Religious, led Pope Clement VIII (Aldobrandini), informed of the state of affairs, to say:

“Well, if such be the position, let Us separate the Discalced in Italy from those in Spain  
“—let the latter follow the opinion of their sovereign, let them be governed by their own  
“superiors and continue to be as they have been up till now, fervent and observant Religious:  
“those who are in Italy shall remain from now onwards under Our immediate jurisdiction,  
“and with them We shall propagate the ‘Reform’ of the Mother Teresa throughout the  
“world.”

Having learnt that there were not more than thirty Discalced Carmelites in Italy the Pope added that, if two Carmelites (i.e. S. John of the Cross and Fr. Antony) could begin with success the “Reform” in Spain, he, the Pope, might well do it in Italy with thirty. So, in due course, 20.3.1597, Clement VIII separated those Carmelites already in Italy from obedience to the superiors of the “Reformed” Order in Spain. Their Constitutions, modifying those of the Spanish Constitutions, were approved by Cardinal Pinelli, 28.5.1599. The preaching, and numbers of conversions made by the fathers in Italy created such an impression that by another Brief of 13.11.1600 the Pope raised their convents in Italy to the status of a Congregation: at the same time he prevailed on the superiors of the Spanish branch to send a number of Spanish Religious to Italy in order to give the new Congregation not only a solid base, on which to build its new house in Rome, but also the tone, the atmosphere, the cornices