CHAPTER TWO
FROM OSMA TO BOLOGNA,
FROM CANONS TO FRIARS, FROM THE
PREACHING TO THE PREACHERS:
THE DOMINICAN PATH TOWARDS MENDICANCY

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This article proposes to examine how a practice of mendicancy developed within the circles that would eventually form the Dominican order, and particularly its importance to the founder, Dominic of Caleruega. It will thus consider the different configurations that mendicancy took in the *Predicatio* against heretics in the Midi, and in the process of transformation of that *Predicatio* into the *Ordo predicatorium*. From this retelling of history (or at least, a view of history), I will argue that mendicancy itself was subject to the same social pressures as all other ideals, evolving over time, not meaning the same to individuals at the same time, or between different times. I will conclude by suggesting that to focus upon mendicancy in itself is perhaps to be asking the wrong question when looking at the early thirteenth century—it is, in fact, a distortion caused by later developments, one more example of several *ex post facto* reinterpretations of what was going on at the time that we shall see in the course of our stroll through the pleasant lands of Provence and elsewhere within Europe. Since hagiography is essentially recollection embellished by (at best) piety, I shall attempt to give most attention to contemporary documents where possible, rather than the tales told by the order about, and to, itself.

The twin concepts of mendicancy and preaching—characteristic of the Dominican order—are traditionally traced to the activities of the *Predicatio* in Provence, the papally-authorized preaching against those heretics who (to anyone with a smidgeon of orthodoxy) infested the area. Particularly in early Dominican historiography, the bringing together of these two concepts is identified with the decisive influence of a bishop from the Castilian diocese of Osma, Diego, and so it will be with him, rather than with the founder of the Order, that this essay begins. It was his presence of mind that recognized that the horse-and-mule-borne mission of the papal legates, heavy in baggage and in their insistence on being honoured, was useless in confrontation with the heretics of the
Midi; and it was his decisive influence that converted their task into the *Predicatio*, consisting of a body of barefoot, itinerant preachers practising their disputations in poverty.

Diego had already been on two wholly unsuccessful missions in the year that he reached the Midi. He had been sent to Denmark to complete the negotiations for the marriage of the male heir to the Castilian-Leonese crown, but the intended princess had died before anything could come of it. The bishop had returned, however, not directly to Castile, but to Rome, where he failed to persuade Innocent III of the urgent necessity that he should be allowed to relinquish his diocese in order to join a missionary expedition that sought the conversion of the northern pagans. He was sent back to his bishopric.¹ The early thirteenth century was not a time to be deserting Christendom’s southern flank.

Yet Diego’s return to Osma was not by a direct route, any more than his return from Denmark had been. Presumably out of concern for the business of his diocese, he travelled up to Cîteaux, where he received the habit, obtained some manuscripts, and entreated that order’s abbot to provide him with manpower for his own Cistercian foundation of Espíritu Santo in Soria, which he had begun before 1203.² It was also likely at Cîteaux that he encouraged the Cistercians leading the *Predicatio* to adopt his unorthodox methods.

Despite a historiography that sometimes presents Diego’s discovery of heresy as a surprise, this cannot be the case. He would have been fully aware both of the debates held, and consequent legal strictures promulgated against, primarily, the Waldensians, but also the Cathars in neighbouring Aragón.³ There, classification of beliefs as heretical was impor-

